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Symbols, Cultures and Identities in a Time of Global Interchange

edited by

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INTRODUCTION

Due to national transitions, global communication and global interaction, peoples, nations and local communities now feel their cultural identity threatened and put at risk. It is broadly and inevitably a time of cultural transition; for some it is even one of multicultural belonging. Lest identity and values be lost rather than opened to interaction and enrichment, it is important to take note of what is happening to cultures, and to understand more deeply their components.

Symbolic expression is key to what is specifically human, to personal identity, and to particular cultural identities. Cultures may be considered as networks of signification and figure centrally in geopolitical interaction. They hold the keys to the way people interpret and react to the world around them; and they are central in most definitions of civilizations, which, in turn, are founded on the great religions.

This volume studies the role of the symbolic in establishing cultural identities and values, their ideological manipulation, and their key role in negotiating transitions of, and between, civilizations. This includes ethnic and national symbols, rites, aesthetic and folk expressions, and the prevailing forms of communication and religious symbolism.

Related topics of study include the history of symbolic forms in a culture, semiotic and semantic analysis, philosophies of the symbolic, ritual studies, cultural criticism and social criticism, all of which engage images and processes of symbolization. Studies of communication and its forms, the relation between ideological regimes and the arts, and studies on religious symbolism in both its official and its popular forms must also be taken into account.

In brief, in order to negotiate the changes deep within cultures and the complex interactions between cultures in these newly global times, there is need to bring to bear all available scholarly means to understand the role of the symbolic in the development, transformation and interchange of cultures. This is the goal of the present investigation.

The chapters are laid out in three parts, first, the general theoretical understanding of the nature of the imagination and of its role in symbolization; second, the form taken by the cultures of the different regions of the world: Islam and Africa, the Caucasus and Asia; and third, the ability of symbol and ritual to take one beyond self to other and to the ultimate religious Other which founds a global unity that retains and integrates the many cultures.

Part I. "The Nature of Symbols"

Chapter I, by George F. McLean, "The Emerging Role of Imagination" articulates the profundity of the imagination as a unique human capacity foundational to understanding the nature of the symbol. Following

Heidegger, this offers a promising method for situating the affiliated junctures between subjectivity and objectivity, self and others, the personal and the universal, spirit and matter. Turning first to Aristotle and then to Kant, the imagination is considered in relation to thought, practice and art. The new human experience of globalization urgently calls for such a perustration.

Aristotle's inquiries into the soul (*De Anima* and other works) consider the distinctive features of the imagination in relation to other human faculties: imagination is rooted in the soul and thereby manifests a character that is specially independent and creative. The exercise of the human imagination itself (*poesis*) is defined by freedom and productive action.

Specifically, imagination works upon objects of sensation to generate images in ways that allow for inexhaustible renewal by the intellect, to which Aristotle refers as "deliberative imagination."

Through an examination of the first and third critiques of Kant, the imagination is shown to be central to human freedom and has pervasive social and cosmic significance. As aesthetic judgement the productive imagination is all-inclusive, profoundly personal, and based upon each human being's purposive and free response as an integrated person (body and spirit). This interplay between imagination, intellect and will opens important roads for moral growth in which the aesthetic plays an important role. As such, it becomes our task – as self-determined, unique selves – to "imaginatively propose" how we will manifest our creative freedom (on personal, metaphysical, social, and historical levels) in our assessments, actions, solutions, and response to God's love.

Chapter II, by Magdalena Dumitrana, "Symbols in Daily Life," draws upon Karl Jaspers' analysis of modern thought as abstracting from the properly humane dimensions of knowledge and hence of life. This paper points to the essential role of the symbol in restoring human access to the dimensions of human meaning.

Chapter III, by Alison Scott-Baumann, "Active Tolerance: Ethics in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur," takes up the challenge of applying universal moral norms to concrete circumstances. This is exacerbated by dialectical thinking, embedded even in the language we use and which dichotomizes all between good and bad. Indeed, the difference – even conflict in Ricoeur's famous title – conflict of interpretations enables and even imposes different understandings. Does this plunge us into relativism or are there modes of non-dualistic thinking that can enable us to live responsibly in our newly pluralist contexts?

Chapter IV, by Hristina Ambareva, "Name, Signature and Image as Symbols of Personal Identity in the Epochs of Oral, Written and Image Culture" analyzes the principle modes of personal identification through human history and their significance as symbol-systems that reflect and reify the cultural values of their time. In the contemporary epoch, the symbolic powers of the name, sign(ature), and image have been combined,

culminating in “image-making” as the major currency of today’s media world. In the context of a global market and consumer culture, image is the predominant symbol of personal identity, subject to endless refashioning and deployment as a symbol of personal success and worth. In considering the alienating forces of a “virtual reality” and the commodification of the self in the present era, Ambareva ends her essay with a pressing question: from what resources might future generations draw to resolve their existential dilemmas?

Chapter V, by Mamuka Dolidze, “Phenomenology and the Unconscious” compares the Oedipus complex and the experience of the Fall as symbolic variations of the unconscious. In this phenomenological approach that draws upon Kant and Freud, unconsciousness is understood as an “object-in-itself” (existing beyond consciousness), but whose self-existing feature is its “openness” toward consciousness. As such, both the Oedipus complex and the experience of the Fall are characterized by this double nature. However, if the major motive of Oedipus is fate, the motive of the Fall is freedom. Through confession and belief, regret is freed from the determinism of original sin. Furthermore, Dolidze explains how the Holy Trinity corresponds to the phenomenological concept of unconsciousness. Like unconsciousness, the Trinity is both absolute substance (self-existing essence) and endlessly open to the world (as phenomenon).

Chapter VI, by Dvoretzkaya Ekaterina, “A Personal Approach to Symbolic Reality,” draws upon Florensky (and to a lesser extent other thinkers, such as Berdyaev and Geertz) to argue that the unique and unrepeatable person can contain within him/herself the universal [*Logos*] as positive quality and attainment. The author cites from Florensky’s *At the Watersheds of Thought* and *The Pillar and Ground of Truth*, deploying the concept of “resonance” and even the ancient Egyptian language, which tellingly distinguishes between two kinds of time, *neheh*-time, which is time as a forever incomplete stream, and *djet*-time, which stresses the unalterable state of perfection.

Chapter VII, by Geeta Manaktala, “Culture as Accomplishment of Symbolic Meaning,” defines culture as “a living metaboly of signs, not limited to a convention but in trans-action with the inner recesses of the person, and with the qualitative, physical and significant signifying environment.” The author draws upon Tagore and Aurobindo, among others, to flesh out this approach, and assimilates to it Toynbee’s notion of “ethe-realization,” understood as “the tendency of a ripening culture to withdraw itself from the life of the external world and concentrate more on the human element.”

Part II. “Symbols and Cultural Identities“

Islamic Perspectives

Chapter VIII, by Karim Douglas Crow, “Imagination and Meaning in Some Islamic Symbolic Narratives,” supplies a review of Islamic theo-

logy/philosophy in relation to the “imaginal realm.” Pointing out that Islam from its very beginnings generated two currents, one ‘traditionalist’ and the other ‘rationalist/literary’, the author demonstrates in particular the subtlety and sophistication of the latter. Topics treated in detail include (1) the role of metaphor in Koranic exegesis, (2) the status of the ‘Active Intellect’ as an emanation between the Divine and Human levels, (3) the ‘recognition of Allah as Lord’ to which every human being has been summoned before birth in the body, and (4) the Shi-ah notion of ‘model archetype bodies,’ intermediate between the present material world and the Afterlife.

Chapter IX, by Ahmad Kazemi Moussavi, “The Role of Ritual in the Shi’ite Muslim Community of Iran” traces some of the most distinctive features of Shi’ism, namely its emphasis upon certain rites of visitation (*ziyarah*) and mourning (*Muharran*), back to the time of their emergence in the Safavid period (1499-1720 CE). The expansion of obligatory religious ritual was strategically mounted by the Shi’ite ‘*ulama* (clergy, legal scholars) and served to benefit them economically and politically. Moussavi explains how the popularization of ritual practices not only contributed to the strength of the ‘*ulama*’s power, but also gave rise to a hierarchical structure within the body of ‘*ulama*.

Chapter X, by Adel Sarikhani, “Symbol and Symbolic Outlook on the Ashura Event in the Time of Globalization,” takes us back to the early days of Islam and recounts the narrative of the martyrdom of Husain. In its symbolic sense this opens to the decisive encounter of good and evil, of suffering and redemption that is essential to all religious understandings of life.

African Perspectives

Chapter XI, by Andrew Ifeanyi Isiguzo, “African Culture and Symbolism: A Rediscovery of the Seam of a Fragmented Identity,” seeks ways of healing the “crisis of African identity” through symbols discovered in different African cultural settings. Despite the cultural diversity of Africa, the destruction wrought by Western colonial domination, and the secularizing forces of contemporary Western capitalism, there exists still a unifying feature for African identity. In the face of such violent fragmentation, the revivification of *Ubuntu* – a communal worldview, as enshrined in the Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, “a person is a person through other persons” – is imperative for African empowerment.

Chapter XII, by Maduabuchi Dukor, “The Philosophical Significance of Myths and Symbols: the Zan-gbeto Cult,” analyzes the Zan-gbeto religious cult of the Ogu people of Badagry, Nigeria. In this context, the author argues for the relative homogeneity of all African tribal religion, which is characterized by three features, ‘poly/monotheism’, ‘theistic panpsychism’, and ‘humanistic theism’. The cult’s moral code, social role, and ceremonies are described carefully, and the validity of African religion is defended against Western accusations of ‘primitivism’. The role of religion is to make

humans 'at home' in the universe through symbols. This is exactly the role the Zan-gbeto cult performs for the Ogu people.

Central and Eastern European and the Caucasian Perspectives

Chapter XIII, by Yaroslav Pasko, "The Influence of the Symbolic Tradition on Contemporary Ukrainian Transformation in the Context of European Experience," analyzes the symbolic content and formation of an inchoate Ukrainian national identity, especially as it relates to Ukraine's historical incorporation into the Russian Empire, its peripheral position vis-à-vis Western Europe, and its current processes of post-communist transformation under independence. The specific symbolic importance of land, home, family, and of the hero T. Chewchenko (Ukraine's "national Prometheus") and other "archetypes" of Ukrainian identity demonstrate how symbols help contemporary Ukrainians adapt to a difficult reality and at the same time contribute to a client society. The national development of Ukraine in the future depends on how Ukraine will be able to restrict fascism and transform its best symbolic traditions to adapt to the demands of globalization.

Chapter XIV, by Liubov Chetyrova, "The Ethnic and Cultural Identity of the Kalmyk," presents the Kalmyk People, a Finno-Ugrian race whose genesis began in Asia, but who have been in greater Russian territory since the Kalmyk Khanate (part of the Russian Empire since the 17th century). The author demonstrates how they have been and are to this day a case-study in the meeting of East and West (Asia and Euro-Russia). Topics treated include cultural clash and adaptation in the Russian Empire, and then in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The Kalmyk forms of Buddhism and shamanism, and the relevance of native language are analyzed in detail.

Chapter XV, by Paata Chkheidze, "Culture and Democracy in Georgia," looks into the ancient culture of Georgia to find as its basic symbolic figure Amiran. This symbolizes a search for freedom which is ever in process. It not only gives sense to the traumatic history of the nation during the 20th century but provides orientation for its present effort at social reconstruction.

Asian Perspectives

Chapter XVI, by D. Balaganapathi, "The Richness of Indian Symbolism and Changing Perspectives," begins with references to White and to Geertz, establishing that humans are humans and cultures are cultures precisely because they are symbol-making. The author presents and explains six types of Indian symbolism: national, political, social, objective (objects as symbols), natural, and religious. The conclusion deals with such issues as changes in symbolism, arguing that globalization threatens to modify or destroy meaningful symbolizing.

Chapter XVII, by Robin R. Wang, “Decoding the Philosophical DNA of the *Yinyang* Symbol,” is a penetrating treatment of the role of the symbol in Chinese thought and the way symbols have enabled this culture to be not only abstractly universal but concretely comprehensive. This is done by an analysis of the origin, evolution and the modality of the ability of the *Yinyang* symbol to express the flowing complementarity of all of reality.

Chapter XVIII, by Hoang Thi Tho, “Vietnamese Buddhism in Intercultural Communication,” demonstrates how contemporary Vietnamese Buddhism is a mixed product developed in and through many influences over the centuries. The first wave of Buddhism reached Vietnam from India before the Common Era, and acculturated to the native Vietnamese religion; the second wave came later, during the period of Chinese hegemony, and introduced Chinese forms which mixed with the Buddhism already on site. From the viewpoint of declared civil policy in Vietnam today, the ongoing contribution of Buddhism to building the social good is its combination of an exalted morality and non-theistic self-reliance; its weakness is its tendency toward excessive introspection.

Part III. “Symbols, Transcendence and Global Interaction“

Chapter XIX, by David N. Power, “Symbolic Codes in an Age of Globalization,” posits that the factionalism and cultural disintegration experienced under globalization may be surmountable through the creative capacity of participatory symbolic action. Using a wide range of examples (e.g., the rewriting of historical narratives to include the voices of the marginalized, the resignification of public space), Power argues that “plurality within unity” is not only possible but necessary. To take part in an international enterprise, each people is pressed to know its own identity, to understand its own culture, to find creativity and resources within its own heritage. Only with this sense of self is it possible to allow oneself to be faced by, and enriched by the other.

Chapter XX, by M. John Farrelly, “Symbolically Mediated Revelation and Cultural Change in the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures,” examines (1) how Scripture gives witness to a symbolically-mediated Divine revelation, and (2) how the people to whom the New Testament was historically addressed were struggling in a time of transition somewhat like our own. The author demonstrates how the “primary religious language in Scripture” is not doctrinal but symbolic, and that the empirical authors of the Scriptures understood the “ultimate creative imagination” which is at work in their writing to be God’s own. The second part examines the cultural crises in the Greek and Jewish worlds of the first century A.D., how Scriptural imagination dealt with these crises, and how their problematic resembles our contemporary crises.

Chapter XXI, by Nerijus Milerius, “Religious Cinema: From the Visible to the Invisible,” illustrates the acute importance of the ‘invisible’ in

the construction and perception of the ‘visible’ as it applies to the making and viewing of film, moreover, and to all visual-perception and storytelling. In a discussion of cinematic montage and other visual theory (drawing from filmmakers Griffith and Eisenstein) and in examples from religious cinema Milerius suggests that the cinematic possibilities opened up by an inventive use of the ‘invisible’ does work to renew old (religious) themes, and may have the potential to re-awaken or restore the ‘scandal of the cross.’

Chapter XXII, by *Rosemary Winslow*, “Troping Trauma: Conceiving Experiences of Speechless Terror,” analyzes the mental patterns of victims of longterm trauma in which they create a world different from that of ordinary experience and hence of ordinary language. In so doing, the chapter opens as well to the preconceptual basis of that to which it is now limited, and by the ordered conceptual patterns of thought and language. Hence the aberrant opens the way to a deeper appreciation of human resources accessible to the symbolic capabilities of the human spirit.

The Epilogue, by Magdalena Dumitrana, addresses the dilemmas and fruits of philosophical inquiry into the nature of the symbol: How can the objective truth of the symbol be found if meaning and human beings are essentially subjective? How can the meaning of a symbol be accurately retrieved from another time and place? Moreover, what is the usefulness of such discoveries for humanity? The philosophical pursuit of symbolic meaning calls forth difficulty and paradox (subjective/objective, absolute-/relative), but is not *in itself* a philosophical impasse, Dumitrana suggests; on the contrary, to find one must seek. The way forward – toward glimpses of truth, as of ourselves – is paved by the triadic means of our humanity: faith-imagination-intuition.

PART I

THE NATURE OF SYMBOLS

CHAPTER I

THE EMERGING ROLE OF IMAGINATION

GEORGE F. McLEAN

INTRODUCTION

In turning to the study of the symbol and its role in the development and appreciation of cultures and identities in the new human experience called globalization we find ourselves at the juncture of objectivity and subjectivity. This juncture is both personal and historical. Personally it is a point at which global interchange forces us to look at ourselves as well as at other persons and peoples and to do so not merely as so many objects, but as possessed of the properly human powers of self-determination that constitute unique self-identities. Historically, it is a point at which we become newly aware of how this self-definition is not only an arbitrary choice, but the response to the ecological and economic context as well as to political and informational influences. Through these have been formed the cultures and civilizations in and by which we see and interpret, suffer and succeed. Here we would like first to apply Martin Heidegger's method for situating the juncture between objectivity and subjectivity at which we stand to understand this juncture more deeply we shall then study the imagination as a human capacity foundational to understanding the nature of the symbol as situated at the meeting of spirit and matter.

Heidegger points out that at each major crisis in human civilization people are forced to choose the terms in which they will respond. For ages after, these terms receive attention, while alternate factors are relatively ignored. Hence traditions form in philosophy, which are echoed in the manner of interpreting and responding to future crisis. This is what we know, it is in this that we are experienced; hence it is in such terms that we struggle and survive.

In the confusion of ancient Athens, which killed even its Socrates, Plato chose to look not inward with the sophists, but outward to separated ideas as objects above man by which they could guide the life of the *polis*.

Modernity began with a radicalization of this objective reason, turning it into a rationalism. All that was not clear and distinct was put under doubt, erased in order to achieve Locke's blank tablet or smashed as an idol according to Bacon. All became an epistemological object, even the self. Kant heightened the importance of the categories of the mind. As these needed to be universal and necessary, the uniqueness and hence the freedom of the person, were sacrificed in favor of scientific structures. Man could be autonomous, but only in obedience to the one and same categorical imperative. It was not long before all reality would be systematized by Hegel

and turned into totalitarian ideologies that recognized neither freedom nor identity.

Our present generation now faces the challenge of recuperating from this excess emphasis upon abstract objectivity. According to Heidegger's model, this means stepping back to recuperate the subjectivity that was left undeveloped by Plato. Promising recent avenues to this can be seen in the discovery of intentionality by such diverse traditions as those of Wittgenstein and Husserl. But just as objectivity without subjectivity led to a scientific depersonalization of human kind – to “the mass man” – similarly subjectivity without objectivity would lead to a solipsistic subjectivism. Where all is relative to the particular person or people, these are thereby isolated from one another. This loss of meaning may be the reason why the present state of philosophy has no other name than the relative terms, “post-modern.”

We find ourselves then in a dilemma. We need not less of reason but more than is offered by the necessitated concepts of science without freedom. We need the creativity of a mind and initiative of heart which adds to matter the wisdom of the spirit; yet this human spirit must be immersed in matter and time which it is able to shape and transform. Neither machine nor spirit, neither beast nor angel, but properly human, we create and live in terms of symbols that are more inclusive than concepts and more physical than ideas, yet more exalted than sensation. What are these, and what in the human makeup enables us to generate them?

In search of an answer to this problem I would like to turn to Aristotle. His *De Anima* is constituted of his studies regarding not only the non-living physical (*physis*), nor what is not essentially trans-physical (metaphysics), but that range of life from vegetative and sensitive which depends essentially on matter to the intellectual life which is not thus dependent. It is just at this meeting of the material and the non-material in what is simply neither but rather uniquely human, that we find Aristotle's first discussion of the imagination and later, on an enriched metaphysical basis, its role in personal and cultural identity. It is to these that I would turn in order to lay some groundwork for the treatment of symbol. This will be extended to a consideration of the role of the imagination in the first and third Critiques of Kant in order to illustrate further its role in the aesthetic order.

THE IMAGINATION IN THE GREEK PHILOSOPHY OF FORM

The Term

‘Imagination’ should be traced, of course, to its Latin equivalent *imaginatio*, whose root, *imago*, had meant a copy or likeness. In Virgil and Cicero this was used broadly for a statue, signet or spirit, but Cicero gave it

also the more technical and psychological meaning of “an image of a thing found in the mind, a conception, a thought, an idea.”¹

In this the Latin reflects the Greek term *eikon*, meaning image or copy. Hence, etymologically imagination corresponds to the Greek, *eikasia*, coming from *eiko*, “to be like.”² The Greek had also the term *phantasia* from *phaino*, “to appear or to be apparent.” This was derived, Aristotle notes, from *phaos*, or light, which enables one to see.³ Neither *phantasia* nor *eikasia* originally referred to anything on the part of the subject rather than on the part of the object. However, through Democritus’ clarification of the distinction between sensation and its stimulus, there arose a greater consciousness of the work of the subject in imagining. From the time of Aristotle this was reflected in the technical use of *phantasia*, rather than *eikasia*, in discussions of the process of knowledge. Hence, though ‘imagination’ can be traced etymologically to the more objective *eikasia*, its meaning corresponds more properly to *phantasia*, as expressing a process of the soul or psyche.

Plato

The imagination appears throughout the works of Plato according to the contexts of the various dialogues. Of the four levels of human knowledge, the Republic places *eikasia* where image is treated as the lowest level of knowledge. Its limitations suggest the prison-house in his allegory of the cave. In the *Phaedo*, imagination appears in the context of remembering that which had been known by the *nous* in a better and higher life.

Images here are taken in the objective sense of that which stimulates the mind; they can be either intellectual images concerned with universal meanings or sense images related to particulars. In the *Sophist*, Plato would seem to suggest that God creates not only the concrete objects, but their images.⁴ This raises the issue of art: “Shall we not say that we make a house by the art of building, and by the art of painting make another house, a sort of man-made dream produced by those who are awake?” And, if so, do we make our particular dreams by revelation (to which he refers in another context, *Timaeus* 71E), by reason or by some mixture of sensation and opinion?

In brief, though Plato introduced many elements relating to the imagination in various contexts, he did not take up a direct discussion of the imagination itself; this remained to be done by Aristotle. He treats the

¹ Harper’s *Latin Dictionary*; and Livingston Welch, *Imagination and Human Nature* (Cambridge: Severs, 1935), pp. 25-26.

² M. D. Bundy, *The Theory of the Imagination*, pp. 11-12.

³ *De Anima*, III, 3. Cicero would translate *phantasia* by the technical stoic term *visum*, meaning an individual impression or grasp by the mind rather than a power of the mind (Welch, p. 25).

⁴ Bundy, pp. 265-67; Welch, pp. 28-29.

nature of the imagination in his work on the Soul (*De Anima*), and its role in various aspects of human life in his works: *Rhetoric*, *On Memory and Reminiscence*, and *On Dreams*. His systematic approach in the *De Anima* locates this power in relation to the other human faculties and provides some controlled insight into its nature and distinctive capabilities. Here we shall treat first the soul as the foundation of the imagination, then its special independent and creative character, and finally its role in relation to thought, practice and art.

Aristotle

Substance. After surveying alternate opinions in Book I of the *De Anima*, Aristotle begins in Book II the positive work of constructing the science of the soul by treating it in terms of First Philosophy. In this light, the soul is the first act or substance of a natural body which potentially has life. By laying down this substantial basis, Aristotle distinguishes the soul from things which exist in, or, as functions, depend upon others. He thus provides for the basic autonomy and uniqueness of persons in themselves and opens the way for an understanding of that uniqueness in action which can be called creative.

A first and basic characteristic of the moral subject and, indeed, of any substance is that it has its identity in its own right rather than through another. Only thus could a human being be responsible for his or her actions. Without substances with their distinct identities, one could envisage only a structure of ideals and values inhabited, as it were, by agents without meaning or value. In this light, the task of moral education would be merely to enable one to judge correctly, according to progressively higher ideals. This, indeed, would seem to be the implicit context of Kohlberg's focus upon moral dilemmas. He omits not only the other dimensions of moral development, but this personal identity as well. Aristotle points instead to the world of persons realizing values in their actions. In their complex reality of body, affections and mind, persons act morally and are the subjects of moral education.

Secondly, as the basic building blocks in the constitution of a world, these individuals are not merely undetermined masses. As the basic points of reference in discourse and the bases for the intelligibility of the real world, these individuals must possess some essential determinateness and be of one or another kind or form. The individual, then, is not simply one unit indifferently contrasted to all others; he or she is a being of a definite – in this case, a human – kind, relating in a distinctively human manner to other beings, each with their own nature or kind. Only thus can one's interior senses, such as the imagination, as well as one's life in the universe, have meaning and be able to be valued.

Thirdly, being of a definite kind, the individual has its own proper characteristics and is able to realize a specific or typical set of activities. These activities derive from, or (from the Latin, *natus*) are “born of”

the specific nature of the thing. The determination of what activity is moral and of the role to be played in this by the imagination will need to include not only the good to be derived from the action, but respect for the agent and his or her nature.

This work of First Philosophy, in laying down the general substantial basis, grounds the autonomy and uniqueness of the person and, hence, of his or her actions. This is essential, but not sufficient, in order to understand the human person. The science of the soul must proceed to identify the distinctive nature of this substance which is the soul, its various levels and its relation to the body. For this, Aristotle employs an inductive approach, examining the actions of the person and deciphering through them the nature of the soul as living at the level of plant, animal and then human life.

This reasoning follows a number of steps, beginning where possible from the object attained by a particular type of life activity, for the level of the object defines the level of the activity. This, in turn, shows the level of the power from which the actions come. Finally, the level of these powers or faculties manifests the level of the soul to which they pertain. For example, from acts of speech one can learn that the agent has the power or faculty of speech and, in turn, that his or her soul is of a rational nature. (Note that it is not the faculty which acts, but the substance: it is not, e.g., the intellect that judges, but the person who judges by his or her intellect.)

On this basis, it is possible to distinguish in a general manner three levels of objects: e.g., food as the object of the power of nutrition, color as an object of the senses and natures as objects of the intellect, as well as a corresponding three levels of soul. We should be able to learn about the imagination by seeing how Aristotle situates it in relation to these three.

The Independent Character of the Imagination

Within the threefold distinction of levels of life, Aristotle locates the imagination on the second or sense level, rather than in the first or physical level of life. There is a peculiarity to the imagination, however, which we shall see constitutes both its strength and its weakness: namely, the imagination does not have a proper object; by itself it does not know any external thing. Instead, it works upon the object of sensation to generate an image: it is “that in virtue of which an image arises in us.”⁵ Hence, in order to delineate the nature of imagination, Aristotle proceeds not by way of its object, but rather by contrasting it to intelligence above and sensation below. He carries out this procedure deftly, opening thereby a broad field of human creativity which, in some broad ways, corresponds to Sartre’s notion of the hole in being required for freedom.⁶

⁵ *De Anima*, III, 3, 428a 1.

⁶ J.P. Sartre, *L’imaginaire* (Paris, 1940), p. 26; *The Psychology of Imagination*, B. Frechtman, trans. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1948).

First, he contrasts the imagination to the level of intelligence, which consists of science, prudence and opinion. Having the least firm grasp on truth, opinion is the lowest dimension of the intelligence and, hence, is most proximate to sensation. Thus, Aristotle's first step in delineating the realm of the imagination is to contrast it to opinion in two ways: (1) Whereas opinion is directed toward truth and, hence, does not leave us free, imagination "lies within our own power whenever we wish (e.g., we can call up a picture...by the use of mental images)."⁷ Imagination, then, is especially dependent upon the will and hence is more fully at the disposition of the person; (2) Our opinions are what we really incline to hold. Hence, if we opine something to be threatening, we become frightened, and the like. In imagining, however, we need not consider ourselves involved, but can "remain unaffected as persons who are looking at a painting of some dreadful or encouraging scene."⁸

In imagination, then, though we are on a lower level of consciousness than opinion, we retain a greater degree of independence or autonomy than in opinion, both as regards the object and as regards our affective reactions. Having described, as it were, the upper limits of imagination by contrasting it with opinion, Aristotle next proceeds to establish the lower limits of imagination by contrasting it to sensation in three ways:

(1) As with the contrast to opinion, once again imagination is marked by a special degree of autonomy. Whereas sensations such as sight are always subject to reality and remain in a potential state until they receive a form, imagination carries its own forms within it and, hence, is simultaneously both in act and in potency: it is always determined even though not always fully in act. This independence vis-à-vis the object appears also in terms of duration, for whereas sensation must cease when the object is no longer present or, e.g., one's eyes are closed, imagination can continue to function.

(2) If the task of knowledge is considered in realistic terms, however, such independence can also appear to render the imagination less perfect. Whereas sensation is always true, the autonomous character of the imagination means that it is less determined to the environment. In this sense, it is frequently or even "for the most part" false. Thus, imagination approaches imperfect or unclear sensations which enable us to say only "it seems that..."

(3) Conversely, however, it is in just such difficulties of sensation that the imagination, by testing out and comparing alternate possibilities and combinations, can aid sensation to achieve greater surety. Performing some of the steps delineated by Francis Bacon and developed subsequently with endlessly augmenting sophistication, it repairs and improves imperfect sensation.

⁷ *De Anima*, III, 3, 427b 17-22.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

From Aristotle's deft delineation of the imagination through its contrast to opinion and sensation, there emerges a curiously independent dimension of the person. From the point of view of a realistic epistemology, this independence can be read as a weakness, inasmuch as the imagination is not bound to the external object. However, it uses this weakness to remain not merely in a potential state, but in one which is always informed and ready – as it were, on low alert. Further, it can continue to work on things after they are no longer present to the senses. Finally, without being captivated emotionally by the situation, it can work aggressively and with some independence to make up for the limitations of the senses.

The Creative Character of the Imagination

This enables Aristotle to move to a proper definition of the imagination and above all to open the road to an appreciation of its creative character. This already had been foreshadowed in the special degree of objective and subjective freedom that distinguished it from opinion and sensation. He does this in a number of steps, each of which points in the direction of the autonomy introduced above.

While remaining on the level of sensation, each step liberates the imagination progressively from domination by the senses. Thereby is established an interiority of nature and of operation which approximates on the sense level the creative life of the spirit.

The first step in this liberation follows from what has been said above regarding imagination as a special type of knowledge. It is not a transitive or objective act with its own distinct object in a reality beyond itself. Instead, it concerns the product of sensation of which knowledge it is a further elaboration; its finality is, if anywhere, within itself. The knowledge in which imagination consists is a movement resulting from sensation:

When one thing has been set in motion another thing may be moved by it, and imagination is held to be a movement and to be impossible without sensation, it concerns only things experienced [object] and belongs only to those who have sensation [subject].⁹

Since imagination is dependent upon sensation, it cannot be the first movement, which is the sensation itself, but is a derivative movement: it is a movement of a movement. Its becoming or development is situated properly within the order of knowledge itself, with no fixed point outside.

Imagination then is the very flow of consciousness, a flux within higher or perfect animals with the power of sensation. The flow is composed of relations between contrary notions derived from the senses. The process of relating them implies "a subject beyond the contraries capable of

⁹ *Ibid.*, 428b 10-11.

bearing them”¹⁰ and appreciating their relations as such. The life of the imagination is, then, one of dialectical movement, and the faculty of imagination is the power or capacity had by the soul to execute this movement.

Secondly, inasmuch as imagination depends upon sensation and cannot surpass what has been received by the senses, properly it is knowledge on the sense level. Nevertheless, it differs from the work of the external senses or the other internal senses (common sense and memory) in that it works not only to receive or remember what has been received, but to elaborate and undergo many images, both true and false. It is this active character (*poiesis*), rather than receptive character, which distinguishes the imagination and provides the basis for its creative contribution. To understand this further, we need to consider to what this active power is applied.

Aristotle approaches this in terms of error: what is it in the senses which makes possible deviation from or progress beyond the external reality which he considers normative. He notes that error is excluded when the proper sensible (e.g., white) is present but becomes increasingly possible when imagination concerns the accidental sensible (this white) or the common sensible (the movement of this white). Here the problem lies not in the work of the imagination itself but in the complexity of the sensible, which is derived from sensation and initiates the movement of the imagination.

To see how and in what sense this opens the possibility of multiple relations, including some which are erroneous, one must consider what this movement concerns. Sensation receives from material things form without matter:¹¹ sensation concerns the forms of material things. Imagination goes beyond this: “Images are like sensuous contents except that they contain no matter.”¹² By not focusing upon matter, but being concerned only with pure sensible forms, the imagination is freed from the sources of its forms and their conditions. It is able instead to interrelate forms purely according to their internal content. One might call this error if one is focused upon knowledge of the concrete situation. Otherwise, it is liberation from the concrete and actual, an opening to the full range of the possible dialectical interrelations of available forms.

Thirdly, having thus freed the imagination from determination by or to any external object, one’s horizon can shift radically. What becomes of interest is not correspondence to an object, but the fruit which is produced by the work (*poiesis*) of the imagination. This is precisely the image or phantasm as a form or complex of forms. As M.D. Philippe keenly observes, in this context the issue is no longer one of subject and object, as in Aristotle’s analyses of levels of consciousness which were directed toward identifying the ontological level of the living substance or soul. Instead, the focus is now upon the productive exercise of the imagination itself. Being

¹⁰ M.D. Philippe, “Phantasia in the Philosophy of Aristotle,” *Thomist*, 35 (1971), 14-15.

¹¹ *De Anima*, 8, 431b 29.

¹² *Ibid.*, 432a 9.

without object, this has no final cause; consequently, it must be understood only in terms of the efficient cause. This constitutes in the human person a unique combination of freedom, at least to the degree that freedom can be understood in terms of indetermination and of action, at least on the sense level. This combination of freedom and productive action is rightly called creativity.

This is not to say that there will not be combinations of these two on the higher level of intellect and will; later philosophers may extend the term 'imagination' to that level. For the medieval Aristotelian school, however, with its strong sense of the reality of the physical universe, the incarnation of spirit and the unity and integrity of the person, it will remain important to identify the creative capacity of the material or sense level as it reaches toward the spiritish. This capacity will be crucial to the integration of the human person and to creative action in society.

Aristotle himself traces the basic lines of this role in other parts of his *De Anima*, as well as in his works on memory, dreams and rhetoric. We shall draw upon these while extending our horizon, also, to the medieval development of Aristotelianism on the basis of an enriched notion of the person and of being within the Christian philosophical horizon. Here we shall focus briefly on three roles of the imagination in relation to concept formation, to affectivity and to art, i.e., to the orders of theory, praxis and aesthetics.

THE IMAGINATION IN THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF EXISTENCE

As our interest is especially the role of the imagination in the creation of human identity and culture, it is important to move beyond Aristotle who first gave a scientific structure to Western philosophy and his philosophy of form which first gave scientific structure to Western philosophy, to medieval thought and its philosophy of existence, and thence to Kant, who perhaps more than any other structured the modern mind.

A basis here is the impact of Christianity upon Western philosophy. One of the nuclear elements of this impact was to deepen the sense of being, that is, of what it means 'to be.' Because the Greeks presupposed that matter had existed always, the horizon of their sensibilities extended as far as the forms according to which matter was of this, rather than that, type. Hence, for Aristotle the most manifest realities were things precisely as changing from one form to another; he analyzed these in his *Physics*. Hence, in the *Metaphysics* his search for the richest manifestation of being sought out the substance according to which a thing was constituted in its own right. This was primarily a search for being as autonomous (*autos*);¹³ 'to be' meant primarily to be itself, identity or unity. In this sense, one can gauge the

¹³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 4 1029b 13. A mark of substance is "What is said to be *propter se*."

importance of independence, which shaped his analysis of imagination as described above. But is independence as rich a notion as freedom?

If there were limitations to the project of Aristotle – if in the future the notion of being needed to be deepened in radically new ways in order for a new sense of freedom to be opened – this would require radical development of the fundamental horizon of the Western mind. This is precisely what took place under the impact of Christianity. By applying to the Greek notion of matter their Judeo-Christian heritage regarding the complete dominion of God over all things, the Christian Church Fathers were able to open human consciousness to the fact that matter, too, depended for its reality upon God. Thus, before Plotinus, who was the first philosopher to do so, the Fathers already had noted that matter, rather than being simply considered eternal, needed also to be explained.¹⁴

As a result, the horizons of human sensibility were vastly expanded and deepened. It was no longer merely the Greek question of how beings had this, rather than that, form, or even of the identity of a being in contrast to all others; it became the much more radical issue of being as existing, rather than not existing. Quite literally, “To be or not to be” had become the question.

For human beings with self-awareness and will, this meant consciously to assume and to affirm one’s existence, and, hence, to be and to act freely. What are the characteristics of this newly appreciated freedom? First, self-affirmation is no longer simply a choice of one or another type of object or action as a means to an end, but a radical self-affirmation of existence itself. Secondly, self-consciousness no longer is simply self-directed after the manner of Aristotle’s absolute “knowing on knowing”; instead, the highest consciousness knows all that it creates, and more limited instances of self-awareness transcend themselves in relations with others. Finally, this new human freedom is an affirmation of existence as sharing in Love Itself, the creative and ultimately attractive divine life – or in Indian terms, ‘Bliss’ (*ananda*).

This new sense of being and of freedom reflects the radical character of the Christian mysteries. Expressing far more than a transition from one life-style to another, they are based in Christ’s death and resurrection to new life. Hence, Christian baptism is a death to the slavery of selfishness and a rebirth to a new life of service and celebration with others. This is carried out by divine grace but is no less a radically free option for life on one’s own part; this is the new life of freedom. It means, of course, combating evil in whatever form: hatred, injustice and perhaps especially, the oppression of freedom; but it is not centered upon negations. Its heart is rather in giving birth in this world to the goodness of being and in bringing this to the level of human life that is marked by love and beauty.

¹⁴ G. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation: The Unity of Man in God* (Madras: The University of Madras, 1978), pp. 53-57.

As Aristotelian, this Christian philosophy of existence will be still an objective, rather than a phenomenological, investigation. Yet a search into this link of sense and intellect and of appetite and will based on *esse* rather than on form promises insight into how a physical symbol can bear the integrated human meaning that constitutes a culture and how this can live and evolve in the economic, political and informational conditions of our global times. This provides the value of theory, praxis and art.

Imagination and Thought: Theory

In order to carry out his realist project, Aristotle criticized Plato's notion of remembering as the source of the content of concepts and replaced this by the process of abstraction. This was a basic turn away from any form of innate ideational content in the mind or any ability of the intellect to educe or deduce its content therefrom. On the contrary, he would insist that there is nothing at all in the intellect which was not previously in the senses in the form of phantasms. But as noted above this is the field also of the imagination that can generate phantasms or forms without matter.

All content had to be drawn from the external world by way of the external and then of the internal senses: first, common sense which shapes the initial sense presentation of the object, and then memory and imagination. The abstractive intellectual process is not one of adding, but of omitting the individuating material factors in order that its nature might be available to be grasped by the intellect without material delimitations. Thus, for Aristotle the intellectual work of reason and contemplation presupposes phantasms (and hence, the work of imagination and other internal senses); whence are abstracted the intelligible forms which figure in judgments regarding natures.

Aristotle recognizes the role of imagination in the generation of language as well, for voice is not only a matter of producing sound, but "sound with a meaning...for which the soul must be accompanied by an act of the imagination."¹⁵

These general themes are elaborated further by Thomas Aquinas¹⁶ who is concerned not only with realism, but even more with the metaphysical unity of the human being. For this, it is important that human acts not be those of a disincarnate spirit, but always belong to the composite (Aristotle's *synolon*) of spirit and matter, soul and body. For Thomas this is ultimately the unity or identity of a unique act of existence. Hence, the internal senses do not provide merely a one time *noetic* conduit from the external world and senses to the intellect; rather, all intellectual acts of conceptualization take place by intimate and continued reference to the phantasm. The reception of really new content via the external senses is but

¹⁵ *De Anima*, 8, 420b 31-34.

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 75-86. See also his commentary on the *De Anima* (*The Soul*, J. Rowen, trans. [St. Louis: Herder, 1949]).

a small part of this intellectual activity. The work of reflection, by which we variously inspect, unfold and elaborate our ideas, is a vastly more extensive and continuing effort which is carried out in repeated reference to the phantasm. No human intellectual act takes place without an accompanying phantasm.

This has great importance for understanding the role of the imagination in knowledge. Firstly, the relation of abstract intellectual concepts back to the phantasms opens the way for their further reference to the external source of that phantasm in the concrete individual.¹⁷ Hence, we are not caught in the dilemma faced by Kant. On the one hand, he confronted a Leibnizian rationalism without concrete content, which today would translate into systems and structures which have no place for the uniqueness and freedom of the person. On the other hand, he faced a Humean positivism without meaning, which today converts into a clash of blind market forces, again leaving no place for authentic human concerns.

By intimately binding the distinctive work of the intellect to the phantasms in the internal senses, including the imagination, the intellect is kept open to recognizing the reality of the uniqueness of the person without being able to exhaust this. The person remains ever a mystery which must never be forgotten but always promoted.

Secondly, the imagination plays a crucial role. For, if the capacity of the human mind is limited in abstracting meaning from a phantasm, then it will be important that it have not merely one phantasm for any one act of sensation, but that its object be able to be presented in multiple manners, from many angles as it were, according to its multiple aspects and possible relations. For this, the active work of the imagination is required so that the meaning of a sense experience can continue to unfold.

Thirdly, if the mind were limited only to the number of things experienced, its ability to develop new meaning and open up new possibilities would be severely circumscribed. It is precisely here that the imagination plays its most creative role, by providing, in ever new patterns, phantasms and series of phantasms each of which opens a new possibility for insight, understanding and creative planning. This can be seen in reverse in the effect of central economic planning that is unable to take account of the multiple local circumstances or of new possibilities, or of a political party which, having been in power too long, is unable to keep pace with changing times. Both are examples of the importance of imagination and, hence, of the difference it makes in human life at all levels. If all human insight is limited and time-bound, then the power to vary our insights endlessly and to sketch out ever new responses to changing circumstances is central to human life.

¹⁷ R. Allers, "The Intellectual Cognition of Particulars," *Thomist*, 3 (1941), 95-163.

Imagination and Action: Praxis

This is not merely a matter of speculative insight, however; it is crucial in the practical order as well. Thus, Aristotle points to a close bond between desire and imagination. Wherever there is change imagination is needed in order to know what to desire and what to avoid. This extends through the range of activities and related desires from the lower to the higher. Thus, Aristotle speaks not only of sensible imagination, but of rational imagination when it works with the intellect. At times, he calls the latter, “deliberative imagination.”¹⁸

In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle considers the relation of the imagination to the emotions. Having defined pleasure as the sensation of a certain emotion, since imagination is a (feeble) type of sensation, it is tied to experiences of pleasure or its contraries. Hence, when in the act of remembering or expecting one produces an image or phantasm of what is remembered or expected, then pleasure and/or other emotions follow.¹⁹

This could be a matter of our own self-image. Aristotle notes how this can be affected, if through friendship, the love of another and the pleasure it induces “makes a man see himself as the possessor of goodness, a thing that every being that has a feeling for it desires to possess: for to be loved means to be valued for one’s own personal qualities.”²⁰ Conversely, imagination could provide the basis for pleasure in thoughts of revenge or the experience of anger and thus push one toward imprudent actions and loss of self-control.

For this reason, control of one’s imagination becomes important for the conduct of a moral life. This can be done by humans in contrast to animals precisely because humans can relate their imagination to the universal horizons of the intellect and will.²¹

This interplay of imaginative self-control and self-direction was, of course, a large part of the science the saints developed in the Christian period and reflected in the second part of the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas. In his dynamic existential sense of being, every apprehension is followed by an appetite or inclination on the sense and/or the intellectual level.

The control or direction of these appetites is not directly a matter of the imagination, for that does not judge good from bad or truth from error. For animals, the estimative sense discerns, in sense terms, the suitability or lack thereof of alternate courses of actions presented by the imagination.²² In the case of humans, it is the intellect which discerns what is true or false, while the will directs the actions which follow.²³ It is very important for

¹⁸ *De Anima*, III, 9-10.

¹⁹ *Rhetoric*, I, 11, 1370a 27-30.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1371a 19-22.

²¹ *Nic. Ethics*, H 8 1147b 4-5.

²² *Summa Theologica*, I, 81, 3 ad 2.

²³ *Ibid.*, 82, 3 ad 2.

Thomas and his tradition that this direction by man's higher or intellectual faculty be recognized and realized in practice.

Imagination and the Aesthetic: Art as Creating Identities, Personal and Cultural

In the more Platonian spiritual traditions, this has been depicted as a battle against the senses. In such works, the imagination, though not itself a choice of the physical, can figure badly. It can be seen especially as presenting attractive physical goods which then powerfully disorient the will from its focus upon higher goods. This concern was not unknown to Aristotle and is commented on by Thomas.²⁴

However, the special focus of moral development points rather in the opposite direction. As the human person has some control over his or her imagination, this can be oriented by the will. Indeed, Aristotle refers to imagination as coming from thought as well as from sense: "In fact, the organic parts dispose the passions harmoniously and sensitively, whereas imagination makes the apt disposition for desire. But the latter is engendered either by thought or by sensations."²⁵ Thus, the development of a pattern of habits and virtues becomes important for the orientation of our imagination: "The imaginations of virtuous men are better."²⁶ A well-oriented imagination can enable the intellect to appreciate the circumstances of others more concretely and work out new patterns of human action and interrelation.

To grasp the importance for moral life of the relation of habits and virtues to the imagination we should note that the work of conscience is not a merely theoretical judgment, but the development and exercise of self-possession through one's actions. In this, one's reference to moral truth constitutes one's sense of duty, for the action that is judged to be truly good is experienced also as that which I ought to do. As this is exercised or lived, patterns of action develop which are habitual only in the sense of being repeated. They are modes of activity with which we are familiar. In their exercise – along with the coordinate natural dynamisms they require – we are practiced, and with practice comes facility and spontaneity. These constitute the pattern of our life – its basic, continuing and pervasive shaping influence. For this reason, they have been considered classically to be the basic indicators of what our life as a whole will add up to or, as is often said, of what we will "amount to." Since Socrates, the technical term used for these specially developed capabilities is 'virtues.'

It is possible to trace abstractly a general table of virtues required for particular circumstances in order to help clarify the overall terrain of moral action. As with values, however, such a table would not articulate the parti-

²⁴ *De Anima*, III, lect. 15, 819.

²⁵ *The Motion of Animals*, 8, 702a 19.

²⁶ *Eud. Ethics*, B 1, 1219b 24.

culars of one's own experience, exhaust the inventiveness of one's imagination, or dictate the next steps in one's project toward personal realization with others in relation to the Good. This does not mean, however, that such decisions are arbitrary; conscience makes its moral judgments in terms of real goods and real structures of values and virtues. Nevertheless, through and within the breadth of these categories, it is the person who must decide. In so doing one molds progressively his or her unique store of virtues. No one can act without courage and wisdom, but each exercise of these is distinctive and typically one's own. Step by step, each shapes the flow of the imagination and the set of habits which I draw upon to apply the imagination in the exercise of my freedom, enabling it to become more mature and correlatively more unique. This often is expressed simply by the term: more 'personal.'

As a result, a person's values reflect not only his or her culture and heritage, but, within this, what one has done with one's set of values to guide the creative flow of the imagination. One shapes and refines one's values through one's personal and, hence, free search to realize the good with others in one's world. Hence, they reflect not only present circumstances which our forebears could not have experienced, but our own creative imagination and our related free response to the challenges to realize interpersonal, familial and social justice and love in our day.

In the final analysis, moral development, as a process of personal maturation, consists in bringing my pattern of personal and social virtues into harmony with the corresponding sets of values along the vertical pole of transcendence. In this manner, we achieve a coordinated pattern of personal capabilities for the realization of our unique response to the Good.

This interplay between imagination, intellect and will opens important roads for moral growth in which the aesthetic plays an important role.

THE IMAGINATION IN KANT'S PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM

This transformation – of the Greek notion of independence of choice between forms to the Christian sense of radical freedom in being – is rightly considered the dividing point in human history. As the divine Word is essentially communication and proclamation, it re-echoes in ever new ways throughout the ages. Therefore, one might expect its more ample expression in human thought, especially once the Renaissance had directed new attention to the creativity of the person.

For Descartes, as for Locke, the object of knowledge no longer would be Aristotle's substances as things in themselves, but ideas in the human mind. The self no longer would be manifest only indirectly in function of its knowing other things, but would be the focus of direct attention. And though for Descartes the epistemological subject was still an object of

objective knowledge, for Descartes,²⁷ human consciousness was now directed primarily to the inner workings of the person. When Kant extended this beyond issues regarding knowledge though focusing upon uncovering the will, the way was opened for dramatic new steps regarding the reality of human freedom. Indeed, proceeding in an architectonic manner somewhat reminiscent of Aristotle, based upon his insight into freedom, Kant enriched our understanding of the whole of being in which human freedom and the human imagination play central roles. Thus, our search for the role of imagination in freedom turns now to Kant's Critique.

The Critique of Pure Reason

It is unfortunate that the range of Kant's work has been so little appreciated. Until recently, the rationalist impact of Descartes directed almost exclusive attention to the first of Kant's Critiques, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which concerned the conditions of possibility of the physical sciences. Its rejection of metaphysics as a science was warmly greeted in empiricist, positivist and then materialist circles as a dispensation from any search beyond the phenomenal or inherently spatial and/or temporal.

Kant himself, however, insisted upon going further. If the terms of the sciences were inherently phenomenal, then his justification of the sciences was precisely to identify and to justify, through metaphysical and transcendental deductions respectively, the sets of categories which enable the phenomenal world to have intelligibility and scientific meaning. Such *a priori* categories belong properly to the subject inasmuch as it is not material.

We are here at the essential turning point for the modern mind where Kant takes a definitive step in identifying the subject as more than a way-farer in a world encountered as a given and to which one can but react. He shows the subject to be an active force engaged in the creation even of the empirical world in which one lives. The meaning or intelligible order of things is due not only to their creation according to a divine intellect, but also to the work of the human intellect and its categories. If, however, man is to have such a central role in the constitution of his world, then certain elements will be required, and this requirement itself will be their justification.

First, there must be an imagination which can bring together the flow of disparate sensations. This plays a reproductive role which consists in the empirical and psychological activity by which it reproduces within the mind according to the forms of space and time the amorphous data received from without. This merely reproductive role is by no means sufficient, however, for since the received data is amorphous, any mere reproduction would lack coherence and generate a chaotic world: "a blind play of representations less

²⁷ Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, trans. M. Hurari (London: Harvill, 1948), pp. 1-30.

even than a dream.”²⁸ Hence, the imagination must have also a productive dimension which enables the multiple empirical intuitions to achieve some unity. This is ruled by “the principle of the unity of apperception” (understanding or intellection), namely, “that all appearances without exception, must so enter the mind or be apprehended, that they conform to the unity of apperception.”²⁹ This is done according to such abstract categories and concepts of the intellect as cause, substance and the like which rule the work of the imagination at this level in accord with the principle of the unity of apperception.

Secondly, this process of association must have some foundation in order that the multiple sensations be related or even relatable one to another, and hence enter into the same unity of apperception. There must be some objective affinity of the multiple found in past experience – an “affinity of appearances” – in order for the reproductive or associative work of the imagination to be possible. However, as such this unity does not exist in past experiences. Rather, the unitive rule or principle of the reproductive activity of the imagination is its very productive or transcendental work as “a spontaneous faculty not dependent upon empirical laws but rather constitutive of them and hence constitutive of empirical objects.”³⁰ Though the unity is not in the disparate phenomena, nevertheless they can be brought together by the imagination to form a unity only in certain manners if they are to be informed by the categories of the intellect.

Kant illustrates this by the examples of perceiving a house and a boat receding downstream.³¹ The parts of the house can be intuited successively in any order (door-roof-stairs or stairs-door-roof), but my judgment must be of the house as having all of its parts simultaneously. The boat is intuited successively as moving downstream. However, though I must judge its actual motion in that order, I could imagine the contrary. Hence the imagination, in bringing together the many intuitions, goes beyond the simple order of appearances and unifies phenomenal objects in an order to which concepts can be applied. “Objectivity is a product of cognition, not of apprehension,”³² for though we can observe appearances in any sequence, they can be unified and hence thought only in certain orders, as ruled by the categories of the mind.

In sum, it is the task of the reproductive imagination to bring together the multiple elements of sense intuition in some unity or order capable of being informed by a concept or category of the intellect with a view to making a judgment. On the part of the subject, the imagination here is

²⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. K. Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), A 112; cf. A 121.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, A 121.

³⁰ Donald W. Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1974), pp. 87-90.

³¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 192-93.

³² Crawford, pp. 83-84.

active. Ultimately, however, its work is necessitated by the categories or concepts as integral to the work of sciences that are characterized by necessity and universality.

The Critique of Practical Reason and the Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals

Many materialist philosophies of a reductionist character, such as positivism and the materialistic dialectic, are happy to leave the matter there. The necessity of the sciences gives control over one's life, while their universality extends this control over others. Their hope is that once, by means of Kant's categories, the concrete Humean facts have been suffused with the clarity of the rationalist's simple natures, Descartes' goal of walking with confidence in the world may yet be achievable.

For Kant, however, this will not do. Clarity, which comes at the price of imposing necessity, may be acceptable and even desirable in digging ditches, building bridges and the back-breaking slavery of establishing heavy industry, but it is an appalling way to envisage human life. Hence, in his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* and his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant proceeds to identify that which is distinctive of the moral order. His analysis pushes forcefully beyond utilitarian goals, inner instincts and rational scientific relationships – precisely beyond the necessitated order which can be constructed in terms of his first Critique. None of these recognizes that which is distinctive of the human person, namely, one's freedom. To be moral, an act must be based upon the will of the person as autonomous, not heteronomous.

This becomes the touchstone of his philosophy; everything thenceforward will be adapted thereto, and what had been written before will be recontextualized in this new light. The remainder of his *Foundations* will be composed in terms of freedom; his entire *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment* will be written to provide a context that enables the previous two critiques to be read in a way that protects this freedom.

First, in the *Foundations* he rearticulates the whole notion of law or moral rule in terms of freedom. If all must be ruled or under law, and yet, in order to be free, the moral act must be autonomous, then my maxim must be something which I as a moral agent give to myself. This, in turn, has surprising implications; for if the moral order must be universal, then my own maxim must be fit to be a universal law for all persons.³³ On this basis freedom emerges in its true light. It is not whimsy; it is not despotic; it is not the clever self-serving eye of Plato's rogue.³⁴ Rather, as the highest reality in all creation, freedom is power that is wise and caring, open to all, and bent upon the realization of "the glorious ideal of a universal realm of ends-

³³ Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. R.W. Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), Part II, pp. 38-58 [421-441].

³⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 519.

in-themselves.” It is, in sum, free men living together in righteous harmony.³⁵

*Critique of the Aesthetic Judgment*³⁶

Despite its central importance, I will not remain on practical reason because the role of the imagination is not played there. It is rather in the *Critique of the Faculty of Judgment* that the central importance of the freedom, uncovered in the *Foundations*, becomes the basis for a new elaboration of imagination. Or, perhaps it should be said the other way round, namely, the elaboration of the imagination in the third *Critique* enables the freedom previously discovered to unfold its truly pervasive social and cosmic significance.

Kant is so intent not merely upon uncovering the fact of freedom, but upon reconceiving all in its light that he must now recontextualize all the work he has done thus far. For he faces squarely modern man’s most urgent question, namely, what will be the reality of his newly uncovered freedom when confronted with the necessity and universality of the realm of science as understood in the *Critique of Pure Reason*? Will the scientific interpretation of nature trap freedom within the inner realm of each person’s heart and reduce it at best to good intentions or to feelings towards others? When we attempt to act in this world or to reach out to others, must all our categories be universal, and hence insensitive to that which marks others as unique and personal; must they be necessary, and hence leave no room for freedom? If so, then public life can be only impersonal, necessitated and anonymous. Finally, must the human spirit be reduced to the sterile content of empirical facts or to the necessitated and, in its materialist mode, violent unfolding of the dialectic? If so, then philosophers cannot escape the suicidal choice between either comic irrelevancy as traffic directors in the jungle of unfettered competition or tragic complicity as jailers in the *gulag* of the mind. Freedom, indeed, would have been killed; it would pulse no more as the heart of humankind.

Though subsequent ideologies of liberal capitalism and totalitarian collectivism were willing to accept as total such laws of the market place or of the dialectic, Kant’s answer would be a resounding, “No!” Taking as his basis the reality of freedom – so passionately, if tragically, affirmed at the end of the 20th century by Gandhi, Martin Luther King and the events from the Berlin Wall to Tiananmen Square – Kant proceeded to develop his *Critique of Judgment*. He did so precisely in order to provide a context within which freedom and scientific necessity could coexist, indeed in which necessity could be the support and instrument of freedom.

³⁵ *Foundations*, III, p. 82 [463].

³⁶ Cf. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1982), Part I, pp. 1-2; pp. 39-73; and W. Crawford, especially Ch. 4.

In the face-off between freedom and necessity his refusal to compromise freedom both leads him to affirm the teleological character of nature as the broader context of scientific necessity and provides the justification for his affirmation. For if there is to be room for human freedom in a cosmos in which man can make use of necessary laws – if science is to contribute to the exercise of human freedom – then nature, too, must be directed toward a goal; it must manifest throughout an intent within which free human purpose can be integrated. In these terms, nature no longer is alien to freedom, but expresses divine freedom and is conciliative with human freedom. Though Kant's system will not enable him to affirm that this teleological character of reality is a metaphysical reality, nevertheless, we must proceed "as if" it is teleological precisely because of the undeniable reality of human freedom in this ordered universe. This is the second part of his *Critique of Judgment*, the "Critique of Teleological Judgment."³⁷

But if teleology in principle provides the needed space, how can freedom be exercised? What mediates it to the necessary and universal laws of science that the first *Critique* sought to ground? This is the task of Part One of the *Critique of Judgment*, its "Critique of the Aesthetic Judgment."³⁸ It is here that the imagination reemerges to play its key integrating role in human life. From the point of view of the human person, its task is to explain how one can live in freedom with nature. For this purpose, the first Critique had discovered only laws of universality and necessity: how a free person can relate to an order of nature and to structures of society in a way that is neither necessitated nor necessitating.

Above, we saw how the *Critique of Pure Reason* saw the work of the imagination in assembling the phenomena not simply as registering, but as producing the objective order. However, this productive work took place in relation to the abstract and universal categories of the intellect and was carried out under a law of unity which dictated that such phenomena as a house or receding boat must form a unity – which they could do only if assembled in a certain order. The objective order was a human product, but it was a universal and necessary one, for the related sciences were valid both for all things and for all people.

Here in the "Critique of the Aesthetic Judgment," the imagination has a similar task of constructing the object, but not in a manner necessitated by universal categories or concepts. Nonetheless, there are essential similarities. As in the first Critique the approach is not from *a priori* principles which are clear all by themselves and are used to bind the multiple phenomena into a unity. On the contrary, under the rule of unity, the imagination moves to order and reorder the multiple phenomena until they are ready to be informed by a unifying principle on the part of the intellect – the appro-

³⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1968), pp. 205-339.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-200.

priateness of which emerges from the reordering carried out by the productive imagination.

In the “Critique of the Aesthetic Judgment,” the imagination in working toward an integrating unity is not confined by the necessitating strictures of categories and concepts or their structures. Instead it ranges freely over the full sweep of reality in all its dimensions to see whether relatedness and purposefulness can emerge. Hence, it might stand before a work of nature or of art; it might focus upon light or form, sound or word, economic or interpersonal relations – or, indeed, upon any combination of these such as a natural environment, a society, or a culture, which may be encountered either as concrete realities or as expressed in symbols.

Throughout all of this, the ordering and reordering by the imagination can bring about numberless unities. Just as the range of materials is unlimited, so is the range of the unities which can be elaborated by the productive imagination. Unrestricted by any *a priori* categories, it can integrate necessary patterns or dialectics within its own free production and integrate scientific universals within its own unique concrete harmonies. This is the properly creative work of the human person in this world.

In the third Critique, the productive imagination continues a true unity by bringing the elements into an authentic harmony. As this cannot be identified through reference to a category because freedom then would be restricted within the laws of necessity of the first critique, it must be recognizable by something free. To extend the realm of human freedom to the whole of reality, this harmony must be able to be appreciated not purely intellectually in terms of relation to a concept, but aesthetically by the pleasure or displeasure of the free response it generates. It is our contemplation or reflection upon this which shows whether a proper and authentic ordering has or has not been achieved.

Thus, the aesthetic judgment is concerned not with a concept,³⁹ but with the pleasure or displeasure, the elation at the beautiful and sublime or the disgust at the ugly and revolting, which flows from our contemplation or reflection. One could miss the integrating character of this pleasure or displeasure and the related judgment of taste⁴⁰ by looking at it reductively as a merely interior and purely private matter, taking place at a level of consciousness unrelated to anything but an esoteric, indeed stratospheric, band of reality. That would ignore the structure of Kant’s work, which he

³⁹ See Kant’s development and solution to the autonomy of taste, *Critique of Judgment*, nn. 57-58, pp. 182-192, where Kant treats the need for a concept; Crawford, pp. 63-66.

⁴⁰ See the paper of Wilhelm S. Wurzer “On the Art of Moral Imagination” in G. McLean, ed., *Moral Imagination and Character Development* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992) for an elaboration of the essential notions of the beautiful, the sublime and taste in Kant’s aesthetic theory.

laid out at length in his first “Introduction” to his third Critique.⁴¹ There he conceived his Critiques of the aesthetic and teleological judgments not as merely juxtaposed to the first two Critiques of pure and practical reason, but as integrating both in a richer whole.

Hence, in the aesthetic imagination one works with and includes both the necessary relations of nature and the free interrelations of persons. This may be exemplified through one’s reaction to the exploitative housing of migrant workers. To respond in disgust is to go far beyond the cool, technical judgments of “unsafe” or “unsanitary” made by the engineer or health specialist at the level of the first critique. It may be true that, as far as he went, Churchill was correct in saying that “Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of those laws and in the possibility thus afforded of making them work systematically toward definite ends.”⁴² But it would be obscene to speak of the squalor of the migrant housing as having been dictated by market forces or of the events of Tiananmen Square as confirming one’s theory. Kant’s concern in his third Critique is much deeper and provides a context within which “definite ends” can be framed. For this, it reaches beyond anything that could be stated in terms of Lenin’s definition of matter as “that which, acting on our organs, produces sensation,” beyond Marx’s periodization of history, and beyond all that can be stated in the terms of the first Critique.

Indeed, it goes beyond even the objective judgments made by economic analysts, legal advisors or social critics at the level of the second Critique. Though abundantly true, it would be grossly inadequate to say only that the civil rights of the migrants or the requirements of justice were being violated.

In the third Critique the work of the productive imagination variously “turns over,” models and inspects all these factors from the scientific and moral levels on which the migrant labor camp has just been considered. But it goes further to situate them as multiple modes of destructive personal violence with regard to the full dignity of the concrete persons involved, including not only their physical well-being, but their human dignity; not only elements which are common to all, but those which are unique to particular persons in the family; as well as social commitments which constitute their search for meaning and fulfillment.

Finally, the productive imagination working at the aesthetic level does not merely tally all of these once and for all as might an accountant, but considers endless points of view and patterns of relationships which do or could obtain between these factors. It reflects, in other words, upon the level of harmony or disharmony, of beauty or ugliness of the whole. On the part of the object then, the aesthetic judgment is characterized by all-inclusiveness.

⁴¹ Immanuel Kant, *First Introduction to the Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. Haden (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965).

⁴² F. Engels, *Anti-Düring*, I, 11.

On the part of the subject, this judgment is profoundly personal, for it is based upon one's deepest, richest and most passionate response as an integrated person – body and spirit. This does not make one's judgment solitary or arbitrary, however, for it corresponds to real harmony or disharmony. Hence, developing new degrees of aesthetic sensitivity enables one to take into account ever greater dimensions of reality and creativity and to image responses which are more rich in purpose, more adapted to present circumstances and more creative in promise for the future.

This is manifest in a good leader such as a Churchill or Roosevelt. Their power to mobilize a people lay especially in their rare ability to assess the overall situation, to express it in a manner which rang true to the great variety of persons, and thereby to evoke appropriate and varied responses from each according to his or her capabilities. As personable, free and creative, such work of the aesthetic judgment is not less, but more inclusive in its content, applications and the responses it evokes from others.

Such experiences of aesthetic taste, passed on as part of a tradition, become components of a culture. Some thinkers such as William James and Jürgen Habermas,⁴³ fearing that attending to these free creations of a cultural tradition might distract from the concrete needs of the people, have urged a turn to the social sciences and their employment in pragmatic responses or in social analysis and critique. Kant's third Critique points in another direction. Though it integrates, it does not focus upon universal and necessary scientific social relations or even directly upon the beauty or ugliness of concrete relations. Its focus is rather upon our contemplation of the integrating images of these which we imaginatively create as manifesting the many facets of beauty and ugliness – actual and potential.

Note that here the focus is not directly upon the beauty or ugliness as in things themselves, but upon our contemplation of our freely created integrating images of these things. This contemplation, in turn, is appreciated in terms of the free and integrating response of pleasure or dis-

⁴³ William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Washington Square, 1963), Ch. I, pp. 3-40. For notes on the critical hermeneutics of J. Habermas see G. McLean, "Cultural Heritage, Social Critique and Future Construction" in *Culture, Human Rights and Peace in Central America*, R. Molina, T. Readdy and G.F. McLean, eds. (Washington: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy and The University Press of America, 1988), Ch. I. Critical distance as an essential element requires analysis by the social sciences of the historical social structures as a basis for liberation from internal determination by, and from dependence upon, unjust interests. The concrete psycho- and socio-pathology deriving from such dependencies and the corresponding steps toward liberation therefrom are the subject of the chapters by J. Loiacono and H. Ferrand de Piazza in *The Social Context and Values: Perspectives of the Americas*, G. McLean and O. Pegoraro, eds. (Washington: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy and The University Press of America, 1988), Chs. III and IV.

pleasure, enjoyment or revulsion it generates most deeply within our whole person.

In this way one's freedom at the height of its sensibility serves as a lens presenting the dense block of reality in varied and heightened ways: it is both a spectroscopy and a kaleidoscope of being. Even more, freely, purposively and creatively, our imagination weaves through reality, focusing now upon certain dimensions, now reversing its flow, now making new connections and interrelations. In the process, reality manifests not only its forms and their potential interrelations, but its power to evoke our free response of love and admiration or of hate and disgust. In this manner, our freedom becomes at once the creative source, the manifestation, the evaluation and the disposition of all that we imaginatively can propose.

What emerges finally is that all is purposive, that all has been created out of love and for our personal evaluation and response. As free, our task is to assess and choose among the many possibilities, and through our imagination creatively to project them into the flow of actual being. In this manner, we enter into that teleology called Providence by which all are drawn to Resurrection and new Life.

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CHAPTER II

SYMBOLS IN DAILY LIFE

MAGDALENA DUMITRANA

OUR WORLD

Modern man is in fact a curious mixture of characteristics acquired over the long ages of his mental development. This mixed-up being is the man and his symbols that we have to deal with...Skepticism and scientific conviction exist in him side by side with old-fashioned prejudices, outdated habits of thought and feeling, obstinate misinterpretations and blind ignorance. (C. Jung, p.86)

We live in a world of symbols. Every moment, every piece of space on which we step, every thought, every word and every gesture is motivated by means of a symbol significant for the individual existent or for what is considered to be the common good.

Man looks for the fulfillment of his basic needs because this activity is for him the norm for a comfortable fleshly human existence as a symbol of well-being. He searches and fights for a better place in his own society whether princes or beggars, thieves or gendarmes, as a fulfillment of his role in the community and a symbol of his power, of any kind. One protects oneself against the others or even against oneself, diving into a world of ideas/theories, building the self as a *homo philosophicus/theologicus* as the symbol of the highest level of the mundane survival. Quite often, these symbols mask undesirable realities that, in turn, are also symbols of some personal helplessness.

Unlike the symbols of logic, mathematics or even of linguistics, which, far and away, are objective, unitary, systematic and therefore predictable in their linear function, symbols of the people and world are in close proximity, pervading emotional channels. It is the realm of representations, of the imaginary and metaphor, diffused in psychology, arts and literature, history and geography, religion and theology. It is a world that is vulnerable to political aggression and a favorite ground of manipulative ideologies. Actually only symbolic "reality" counts in setting up one's directions and as the criteria of one's existential assessment, either individual or collective.

The individual's approach to, or distance from, the genuine collective symbols (local or universal), accepted even unconsciously in a previous time, produce either alignment or alienation from the community of which he is a part.

In the same way, forgetfulness, distortion or denial of one's symbols can lead to the disintegration of a collectivity, whereas re-development of these symbols may reconstruct a given community, and implicitly its members.

This does not necessarily mean that man drowns in a pool of symbols by which he allows himself to be led by forces he does not bother to decipher. But it does not suppose either a permanent or conscious living of the symbols. The key is the attitude of the individual who awakens to life from time to time in different periods of the history. The significance of the awakening is related to the understanding of the symbols as well as the mastery of their realities.

Therefore, it is not by chance that the contemporary epoch, with the extension of its self-concern, has a strong interest in symbols.

THE SYMBOL: ENIGMATIC AND MYSTERIOUS

Born from the universal internal Being, the symbol as a human representation remains permanently in a cloud, half known, half guessed, however far the advance of research. This may protect it in large measure from aggressive human knowledge and secure its function over large periods of time, even if hidden most of the time.

The Aether, the alchemical oven of the unconscious, preserves the philosophical eggs of symbols, releasing them at times when the history and human soul are ready to perceive them and to produce new forms for old patterns. The objectivity of the symbols existing within the collective unconscious makes them unalterable in time, even if they are forgotten or destroyed in the consciousness of civilizations.

However, people live in their own subjectivity and from this point of view the symbol is born and is mortal, depending on its field of expression, namely, the mortal world.

Taking subjectivity as a reference point, one can consider together with Jung the non-conflictual dichotomy of natural and cultural symbols.

Natural symbols derive from the unconscious contents of the psyche, which determines multiple variations of the essential archetypal images. Many of them can be traced back to their roots in primitive societies. Cultural symbols refer to fundamental values ("eternal truths") expressed in religions. Through a number of transformations they have become collective images, unanimously accepted by civilized societies (Jung, p. 83)

Both categories, and for the modern man especially cultural symbols, produce strong emotional responses. Individuals react to them affectively, passionately and uncritically. Hence, symbols that are valued by some individuals or groups may appear absurd or irrelevant to other individuals or groups which registered them under other categories of signs. On the other hand, symbols work fully in individuals or collectivities faithful to them. In either situation, "it is folly to dismiss them" from the position of an outsider, "because, in rational terms, they seem to be absurd or irrelevant" (*Ibid.*).

In general, man today lives cultural symbols on three levels, more or less represented in the intellect of the individual.

- *the socio-cultural level* – where the general values of the community and inter-communities, cultural and intercultural, are observed.

- *the national level* – circumscribing a specific area of cultural values, related firstly to those that are ethnic (language and the national history), but also to the political history as it is presented in the given political/geographical space and that can be real or manufactured. This is the field of the sentiment of patriotism and national pride; for describing the concept of national treason; and for defining the “enemy”.

- *the individual level* – expressing the way in which every individual lives his own historical and contextual symbols. The basic values here, are situated at the crossing of the socio-cultural with the national, but selected through two main filters: socio-national and personal.

Since at least the first filter or first barrier (and for most people, the second, too) is shaped from the outside, it is natural that with few exceptions, the symbols experienced in daily life are under ideological influence. This fact, found in any epoch/society, is today more visible than ever, as there are many declarations. This space has to be moved from a political government to sometimes the borders of the national and the political. Thus historic factors are removed from the history of this or that nation because they are against some ideological and political “trends” or this or that feeling. For example nationalism, even in its “positive” aspect of patriotism, must be surgically removed, as unnecessary to this or that political or financial power. This sentiment is undermined by the exaggeration or even compulsory character of the intercultural and multicultural ideologies and the undiscerning promotion of singularities, categorized as “minorities”. In this way, aggression replaces the old and an almost natural symbol is violated by others which are constructed only for attaining immediate objectives. Some of these could be “natural” in kind, but their role was realized in another time, space and mentality; perhaps in the history of others.

People come to feel themselves as aliens in their own native place, and the reaction is as expected – the same undiscerned violence, honest in its motivation, but manipulated in its objectives and development. This kind of violence usually is channeled toward a fourth form of the experience of the symbols, namely,

- *the fanaticism of signs*. This might explain the renewal of the interest in the ancient history or early middle age, or the establishment of organizations devoted to pre-Christian cults.

Born from the need of defence against an aggression targeting not only the physical and psychological person, but especially the spiritual one, fanaticism uses the man who, feeling himself confused, dives into Self-searching. Without proper guidance, in a chaotic world one adheres to the signs that were once symbols of equilibrium, security and power, attempting to re-establish their initial significance as life-norms. Like any other ex-

ternal path, no matter the honesty of the intentions, this, too, can end only in an ideological *cul-de-sac*.

As a primitive form of the *faith*, fanaticism produces the cheapest “work force” in a war in which the individual is not ready to fight and which actually he does not recognize as his own.

Here Jung’s words are appropriate:

I know what the Buddhists would say: Things would go right if people would only follow the “noble eightfold path” of the Dharma and had the true insight into the Self. The Christian tells us that if only people had faith in God, we should have a better world. The rationalist insists that if people were intelligent and reasonable, all our problems would be manageable. The trouble is that none of them manages to solve these problems himself.

Christians often ask why God does not speak to them, as He is believed to have done in former days. When I hear such questions, it always makes me think of the rabbi who was asked how it could be that God often showed himself to people in the olden days while nowadays nobody ever sees him. The rabbi replied: Nowadays there is no longer anybody who can bow low enough”. (Jung, P.92)

Fanaticism is propitious for the slavery of vanity. Nevertheless, the symbol constitutes today one of the few available paths toward the outside that could bring a change to equilibrium and sense.

THE SYMBOL AS AN INTEGRATIVE CONCEPT

In spite of our proud domination of nature, we are still her victims, for we have not learned to control our own nature. Slowly, but it appears inevitably, we are courting disaster. (Jung, p. 91)

Though the symbol is understood as functionally significant and useful mainly to the socio-political in all its aspects (including arts), it is impossible to discuss it outside the subjectivity which utilizes it as a transmitter or manipulator, or as a receptor of the one manipulated.

This subjectivity, the profound levels of which escape even self-consciousness, is the one which finally returns value and being to symbols. Moreover, according to the extent in which the subjectivity becomes conscious of the existence/role/function of the symbol, it is able also to contribute to self-consciousness and self-building.

Otherwise, the loss of the symbol produces in the human alienation from oneself or from the other. This loss, as a negation or void, allows a

deeper perception of the role of the symbol in one's life and community. Carl Jung points to this:

In earlier ages, as instinctive concepts welled up in the mind of man, his conscious mind could no doubt integrate them into a coherent psychic pattern.

But the "civilized" man is no longer able to do this. His "advanced" consciousness has deprived itself of the means by which the auxiliary contributions of the instincts and the unconscious can be assimilated.

These organs of assimilation and integration were numinous symbols, held holy by common consent.

Today, for instance, we talk of "matter". We describe its physical properties. We conduct laboratory experiments to demonstrate some of its aspects. But the word "matter" remains a dry, inhuman, and purely intellectual concept, without any psychic significance for us. How different was the former image of the matter – the Great Mother – that could encompass and express the profound emotional meaning of Mother Earth. In the same way, what was the spirit is now identified with intellect and thus ceases to be the Father of All. It has degenerated to the limited ego-thoughts of man; the immense emotional energy expressed in the image of "our Father" vanishes into the sand of an intellectual desert. (Jung, p.84)

Expressing the need for the individual's coherence and unity to live the symbols as natural attempts to reconcile and reunite opposites within the psyche (p. 90), Jung comes to another sensitive point: the social importance of the symbols, their signification in a collective construction unified self and for the self. First of all, a society is a union of several psychological individualities. Its identity depends on the identity of those subjectivities, that is, on the way they relate, whether coherently or not to each other, on the basis of common criteria or symbols. The second characteristic is the way this union relates to the environmental context, to the vicinity to the cosmos. The spiritual profile of this society as a whole is not only the existence of a religion without faith, but more than that, an Existence lacking faith in itself.

Placing themselves outside the identities built around their own natural and cultural symbols, credible and enrooted in archetypes, societies are subjects to misshaping or mis-identity. Their self-consciousness seems to be annihilated and therefore able to assume alien and aliening personalities experienced as such. From here, it is easy to determine a collectivity possessing an alien profile and acting against its own historical, cultural and territorial existence.

As Adam has created an identity for animals by giving them names, in a negative way it is possible to remove the genuine identity of a group or individual by removing its name and the existential symbols which make it a living being.

In this (apparently) chaotic movement, the social individuals are more and more challenged by sick social matrices:

They (symbols) are important constituents of our mental make-up and vital forces in the building up of human society; and they cannot be eradicated without serious loss. Where they are repressed or neglected, their specific energy disappears into the unconscious with unaccountable consequences. The psychic energy that appears to have been lost in this way in fact serves to revive and intensify whatever is uppermost in the unconscious – tendencies perhaps that have had no chance to express themselves – or at least have not been allowed an unhindered existence in our consciousness. Such tendencies form an ever-present and potentially destructive “shadow” to our conscious mind. Even tendencies that might in some circumstances be able to exert a beneficial influence are transformed into demons when they are repressed. Things whose enormity nobody could have imagined in the idyllic harmlessness of the first decade of our century have happened and have turned our world upside down. Ever since, the world has remained in a state of schizophrenia. (Jung, pp.83-84)

DEPRESSIVE REASONING

Modern man does not understand how much his “rationalism” (which has destroyed his capacity to respond to numinous symbols and ideas) has put him at the mercy of the psychic “underworld”...He has lost his spiritual values to a positively dangerous degree. His moral and spiritual tradition has disintegrated, and he is now paying the price for this break-up in world-wide disorientation and dissociation.

Anthropologists have often described what happens to a primitive society when its spiritual values are exposed to the impact of modern civilization. Its people lose the meaning of their lives, their social organization disintegrates and they themselves morally decay. We are now in the same condition. But we have never really understood what we have lost...We have stripped all things of their mystery...nothing is holy any longer. (Jung, p. 84)

Jung's picture is accepted and developed independently by a non-Jungian, Romanian Christian philosopher, Mircea Vulcănescu, who attempts to explain the causes that led to modern man's hopeless disintegration by illustrating the way symbols erode throughout socio-political history. The modern world, he says, is born from the deception of a great hope. Western Christianity was deluded by the literal interpretation of the Text, awaiting in vain the end of the World, around the year 1000. The Crusades, the historical fruit of this expectation, dissipated in terrestrial rivalries. Christ did not come on the clouds of the sky to repay the warriors who sacrificed themselves on the Holy Tomb; rather, Constantine's city fell to the pagans' siege.

But the postponed expectations needed to be satisfied: this was done by the outburst of the lust that previously had been piously controlled. Reason and emotion run after an existence that can be seen and touched. Following the same route, human activity has focused on the struggle for what is useful. The need for a "world beyond" now takes on concrete forms. The 18th century is the scholastic period of the modern times while the French revolution is its ripe product. From there, the waves reach the present romanticism and technology.

Consequently, two main features characterize the contemporary epoch: one is theoretical and the other practical. The theoretical breaks God's world by adhering to the naturalist explanation of the universe which it removes from God's hand; the practical is the effort to deify man and his work.

The result is a psychological loss. Until now, man retained the sense of being part of an organic unitary world, dominated and organized by his relations to God; from now on, man loses this sense of the integral character of existence. This confusion results in longing for experiences and adaptation to a fragmentary life style. Thus man loses the sense of the transcendent and, instead of a fight for immortality, he organizes a technical effort for accomplishing a mundane happiness. (M. Vulcănescu, pp. 55-58)

This sense of fragmentariness, which both Jung and Vulcănescu consider to be perhaps the most dangerous phenomenon, is now fully present. Living in separate parts, not bothering about a harmonious unity is, as Erich Fromm finds out, a good description of normal life today, both personal as well as social. An efficient way to paralyze the ability of critical thinking, coherent and unitary, is the destruction of any type of structured image of the world. In the media, for example, information on the bombing of a city and the death of hundreds of people is shamelessly followed or interrupted by an advertisement for soap or by the presentation of the unimportant thoughts or habits of some two-penny starlet. All these facts are enunciated with the same gravity, as if they were of equal significance.

In the name of liberty, Fromm says, life has entirely lost its structure; existence is made of many and separate pieces. The individual is left alone with these slices, as a child with his puzzle. The difference is that the child knows what he wants to do and realizes it, while the adult is confused and

frightened, as the pieces have no meaning for him. The fragmentary life, together with the moral loneliness, derived from the absence of a link to values, symbols and models, leads to the loss of the integrity of the individual Ego and forces man to assume that any other identity is offered from outside, only to keep his belongingness, to be accepted inside and not to be left to his most frightened predators, his helplessnesses and fears. (E. Fromm, pp. 24-27; 211-212)

The disorder of the contemporary world is not only a local picture. There are no longer any completely independent civilizations. Even the closest communities are penetrable as their members are in a continuous movement toward different other communities, finding there places to live. This alienation appears naturally, firstly due to the physical distance, then by assimilation by the new generations of the values of the host nations. As the native cultural symbols dim, are forgotten or modified, they make room for relativity and insecurity.

THE AGGIORNAMENTO OF THE SYMBOLS

That symbols are in permanent motion is more visible today than before. The movements of societies determine the modification of the forms or contents of a symbol, even if it remains connected to the archetypal source.

We cannot consider the modern life, says Mircea Vulcănescu, only as a sequence of time. More than that, it is a spiritual and historical structure, that is, a way to live, to understand and to value life, characteristic of each epoch. (Vulcănescu, p. 72)

These elements confer a certain relativity to the value and signification of the symbols. The movement of the symbols is related to the different historical periods of a civilization, as well as to the intersection of a given culture with others, built on the basis of other mental and emotional structures.

This movement includes history as well:

There is no such thing as a perfectly autonomous civilization, with no relationship with other civilizations that preceded it. Greek mythology lost its actuality after two thousand years when an attempt was made to explain a fundamental behavior of the modern European by using the myth of Oedipus. But history goes further; at the level of culture, of spirituality in general, European values will lose their privileged situation of universally accepted norms. If it does not want to become provincial, Occidental culture will be obliged to establish a dialogue with the other non-European cultures. (M. Eliade, pp. 51-52)

These statements made in the mid-1950s are now confirmed. Other continents call for their rights, and the center of the world established in Europe no longer seems central.

Obviously, each culture brings to the encounter its own history and symbols. These values proclaim their life in a totally foreign space. This victory has its own risks, for very few plants really live or become themselves if transplanted to unfamiliar soil.

The lines are not yet shaped, but it is evident that, beyond political interests which lead the crowds to very specific goals, events are developing that are not truly understood and controlled. The so-called multiculturalism and interculturalism imposed by international organizations as an “*aggiornamento*” or updating of the values of the modern world, could have relatively unpredictable effects, in opposition to the asserted democratic objective. The displacement of the cultures and their symbols at the world level is a gigantic process; it disturbs the order of the collective unconscious, not simply because of this movement, but due to the conflicting way the symbols meet at the conscious level.

In this shadowy epoch, described by the majority of the authors as a *Kali-yuga* lived by individuals in the slavery of the body and senses, in the domination of lust, anger and violence, there is still need to answer some questions: Is the modern world that evil; is modern man that decayed; is there, indeed, no hope for the spiritual person?

These questions may appear infantile, but their answer can evoke an awakening and an attempt to restore human dignity.

One of the main obstacles which is easy to overcome once detected is the very simple truth that people are accustomed to concentrate upon the particular aspects of the symbols, seen as separated and lived in a diluted and personal manner, which ignores their universal character. Opposition to cultural symbols, as well as their mutual conflicts, derives from this ignorant particularization.

The dissolution of the general is facilitated by the fact that symbols are always expressed or able to be expressed in words. From this derives the power of the Symbol-Word, but also the fragility of symbols-words. An explanation is found in Schleiermacher: The linguistic field of the author is that of his epoch, culture, instruction and preoccupation. (*Ibid.*, p. 50) There are here only so many sieves through which only the symbol shaped as dimes can pass. Schleiermacher is rich in psycholinguistic exemplifications of the words/representations/objects. For instance, he says, there are words that, though spiritual, suggest, at the same time, the corporeal. Or, because we determine space only in reference to time and the reverse, form and movement can be reduced to each other and in this way a “creeping plant” is not a metaphor. The derived signification represents another object than the original signification – for example the Latin ‘*hostis*’ – foreigner has become ‘enemy’. (Schleiermacher, p. 53)

Following the direction of Schleiermacher’s thinking we see the following issue:

Paradoxically, in the very “fragile” grammatical categories man’s representations benefit (in European languages) by two essential morphological categories, the noun and the verb. Upon them, the German philosopher utters several observations, so true, that they seem to belong to the common sense:...in general, the noun is the place in which dominates the opposition, while the verb is the place in which dominate the gradual passage. Because the noun closes in itself everything present to us as definite forms of the existence [...] Precisely because the verbs design activities, they are oriented to the gradual passings, and therefore to differences that are not oppositions. (*Ibid.*, p. 92)

Going further, he notes:

The linguistic aspect presupposes in its turn, the psychological one. The linguistic communication is unitary and this unity is determined by the context: The linguistic task can be separated up to a point, when some aspects are discussed only lexically or only grammatically. But as soon as a whole is reached, a contextual lecture isolating the linguistic side from the psychological one is impossible. (*Ibid.*, p. 109)

In a hermeneutical operation, the reliable understanding is based on two interrelated methods: the comparative method of the elements contained and the divination or psychological method. Their cooperation determines hermeneutic success. The divinatory method is aimed to embrace the individual in an unmediated way; the user transposes oneself into the other. The reason for this receptive-empathic ability comes from the fact that every individual contains in oneself a minimum of all the other individuals; therefore, the divination is actually stimulated by the comparison of the individual with himself. The interpenetration of the general with the particular can be realized only by this method. This is, in fact, the ultimate goal of the psychological interpretation of the text, as the most adequate interpretation. (*Ibid.*, pp. 114; 112)

These two methods encapsulate the two attitudes towards symbol mentioned by Jung and Eliade. The comparative method is that of the modern world, “rational,” detached, fragmented. The divinatory technique relates to the earliest times, when reasoning was carried out by the symbol, not differing from representation or direct unitary perception.

On this basis, one could conclude that what was lost in one domain is found in another. Thus, losing or forgetting a natural symbol or attitude, has very little to do with the existence of the symbol or archetype itself. It is rather an issue of the human consciousness which, in different times, was

determined by different external conditions to expand or narrow, awaken or hibernate.

But the various historical periods do not coincide in all nations and civilizations. Even if there is a strong tendency today toward an equalization of the environment and conscience, movement of the symbols can be seen from inside to outside. In each time there is at least one conscience who is alert and keeps the fire alive. This fact appears especially in contemporary times. An idea rising in one extremity of the world where it is rejected, can prove itself in another extremity, where a living consciousness is at work.

Jung is right in his volitive optimism, saying:

As any change must begin somewhere, it is the single individual who will experience it and carry it through. The change must indeed begin with an individual; it might be any one of us. (*Ibid.*, p. 91)

The movement is further clarified by Schleiermacher's ideas concerning the hermeneutics of reading, namely through the agency of the principle that we understand an author better than he understood himself, because many things that were unconscious for him become conscious for us, in the act of the reading. (*Ibid.*, p.52)

Here the term *aggiornamento* or updating is relevant. Perhaps there is not that much re-awareness of the meaning of a previous generation's symbols which remain in the shadow of history. Rather, there develops a re-explanation of the senses and a re-experience of the symbols that become intelligible for modern man.

The process is continuous, now being visible in the former socialist countries that are subjected (still) to two simultaneous phenomena: one is a developing search for an identity that was apparently lost, the other is constituted by a quite strong reaction of the individual against the compulsory character of the new ideological structures of globalization, though this reaction is not always coincident with the attitudes of the political communities.

Within this kneading, symbols constitute a reference point, and the modality in which these will be interpreted and embodied remains to be seen. Doubtless, however, the main force for equilibrium and success (in "our" sense, not "theirs") is represented not by the people in power but by the "anonymous" individual, the non-member of any group of interests, who has managed to keep unaltered his inner freedom.

On the other side, such psychological and spiritual processes as self-education, retrieving contact with the natural symbols and archaic archetypes (not necessarily in their primitive signification) are already facts. Anonymous peregrine models accomplish heroic functions in common daily life. "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." (Isaiah 53:2)

This heroic anonymity has the task of liberating the energy of the transcendent symbols and with the help of this force to transcend these symbols, as well. Archetypes as intelligible representations constitute the mediation within the unity of man with God. The Path to the Being and its vision, even if in a glimpse, is the major chance of *Kali-yuga*. The retrieval of the symbols as a tool for retrieving one's identity can be a way to transcend the mundane meanings of spiritual representations.

The chaos of the today's world, contemplated in terms of symbols, is only the initial place from which creation finds its cosmic development:

Verily at the first Chaos came to be, but next wide-bosomed Earth, the ever-sure foundations at all, the deathless ones who hold the peaks of snowy Olympus, and dim Tartarus in the depth of the wide-pathed Earth, and Eros fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them. (Hesiod, p.28)

Obviously, as in a genuine actualization, the names of the new born will be different; but the principle is similar and the effect of its action is certainly realizable. The main reason for this is the possession of an infallible characteristic which is not in the power of man.

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CHAPTER III

ACTIVE TOLERANCE: ETHICS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF PAUL RICOEUR

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Even the word ‘tolerant’ is too weak to express the systematically pluralistic nature of the Quaker spirit, the credit each person is deliberately given regarding the capacity to find his or her truth, share of spirit or spark of meaning: tolerance is elevated here to the level of genuine religious conviction. (1974: 42)

Paul Ricoeur is interested in faith-based living and the beliefs by which we live, whether those of Quakers, other Protestants, Catholics, Jews or Muslims, or those which take a more secular, humanistic form. His work helps greatly with daily difficulties, such as how to be tolerant in order to live together, and how to develop new ways of approaching complex, practical problems such as interfaith cooperation. I wish to show how my work in multi-faith settings is influenced by Paul Ricoeur’s hermeneutical philosophy, helping me to tackle the dualist thinking and misunderstandings that can impede or prohibit harmonious relationships among people of different faiths. I hope to demonstrate that Ricoeur’s work has implications for the way we deal with ethical ambiguities and dilemmas that arise in interfaith contexts (Madison, 1994:333-8).

He understands the incompatibility between philosophy and faith and believes that it is therefore vitally important that we think both intellectually and emotionally about our solutions to ethical problems. We can never achieve the peaceful nonduality towards which, for example, great Buddhist thinkers strive, yet we can attain a more optimistic sense of self that can be aware of the power of dualist thinking to evoke racism. If we face such polarities about the self and others, we are in a better position to develop a forced, yet felt tolerance. My research on recent citizenship initiatives in England shows that many teachers believe that they do not have the right to teach with an ethically explicit component (2003b: 359). I wish to argue that philosophy can transform the way we currently teach and learn in higher education, with a specific focus on racism.

There is a vitality to the work of Ricoeur (1913-2005) that cuts through the at times defensive vocabulary of modern and postmodern positions. His work considers the relationship between applied and professional ethics and moral philosophy. Ricoeur’s philosophy challenges the postulated difference between applied and philosophical structures and develops narrative thought for exploring ways of thinking and acting ethically. Over

more than sixty years he has written about history, literature, psychoanalysis, philosophy, political ethics and linguistics, with an increasing focus on ethical action. His work is about the fallibility of humans, uneasy with ourselves because we can never attain the state of completeness and serenity that we can imagine, yet hopeful that we can live an ethically good life.

This paper falls into five sections: it will examine first the conflicts of interpretation that beset us when we become aware that other people's belief systems are different from our own. In the second section it will look briefly at the issues having to do with identity insofar as they relate to tolerance, and contrast Ricoeur's work and Hunyadi's work with a profoundly different view from that of a particularly interesting form of Buddhism (the third way of Nāgārjuna). Thirdly, it will then use Ricoeur's work to articulate the challenge of mutual respect that we often strive for as a possible solution to these conflicts of interpretation, using the work of Taylor on the politics of recognition. It will then contextualise Ricoeur's beliefs briefly alongside some other great Continental philosophers, including Heidegger, Derrida and, to a much lesser extent, Gadamer. Finally, it will look at how Ricoeur attempts to develop a framework within which we can be active in solving practical daily problems of respect for and with those whom we perceive to be different from us. Each section will contain exemplar material from work I have done with British Muslims and with 'secular' Britons.

THE CONFLICT OF INTERPRETATIONS AS AN ETHICAL PROBLEM

In this section I will look at Ricoeur's personal experience of different beliefs, at his philosophical ethics, at the process of dialectics and a definition of hermeneutics (2001). By this means I hope to clarify Ricoeur's view of applied ethics and moral philosophy. The discussions in his book *Conflict of Interpretations* have been so influential that the title has entered the canon of theological writings, as an accepted and respected phrase (Muldoon, 2002:18). The concept encapsulates both the strengths and the weaknesses of the hermeneutic approach: Ricoeur believes that there is a surplus of meanings in our lives, providing richness and potential for developing new ways of being ethical (Van Leeuwen, 1981). We need to be able to harness this richness of meaning, in order to maximise the possibilities that other people's interpretations are permissible. Here conflict will arise from two sources (at least). One source of conflict is the dualist nature of our thought, perpetrated by our language and perpetuated by it. We dream of immortality through influence, yet are trapped in finitude; we polarise issues to do with good and evil, and feel betrayed by our fallibility. Another source of conflict is the sceptical suspicion with which we regard ourselves and others, thus crippling any efforts we may sometimes make to be at peace with ourselves and others and the world in which we live.

In addition, Ricoeur has lived through the conflict of interpretations personally; he grew up as an orphan of the French state, and also as a Protestant in predominantly Catholic France. He describes how Protestants were regarded as belonging to a minority and lived without any close ties with the Catholic majority in Rennes. He comments that this was ‘a situation perhaps comparable to that of Jews in a Christian milieu’ (Ricoeur, 1998:8), an example of the way in which he uses his own experiences to imagine what it would be like to be another person. This strand is embedded in much of his work from *Fallible Man* onwards (1960, trans. 2002), and came to philosophical fruition in his 1992 book, *Oneself as Another*.

Ricoeur sees the relationship between Protestants and Catholics in a Catholic country as indicative of the struggles that take place when faith systems regard themselves as incompatible, and discusses this in his autobiographical *Critique and Conviction* (1998). This resonates with my own work. I have developed a commitment to working with people of other faiths, because of my belief in the pluralist nature of our world, both locally and globally (2003b). Islamophobia and prejudice in all parties towards each other have beset my work. Now, through Ricoeur, I can use philosophical arguments to endorse my profoundly humanist faith in our need to understand ourselves through others. For humanistic reasons, I endorse the view that education should be able to provide a secular and therefore neutral setting, in which children of different faiths can learn together and develop mutual respect for each other. I will draw on my work with British Muslims, as a case study to show that we can and must approach the conflict of interpretations that we experience with a fuller, more critical awareness, in order to be true to our values.

Ricoeur sees ethics as the aim of a good life, embedded in practice, based on Aristotle’s praxis in which the act embodies a value. He distinguishes between ethics and morality, unlike Norman, for example, who uses the words ethics and morals interchangeably¹. Ricoeur defines morality as the norms that articulate our standards and that are both universal and also constraining. For him, there are three principles that guide the relationship between morality and ethics; ethics has primacy over morality, ethics must pass the test of assessment by morality, and, thirdly, it will be necessary to apply a form of ethics, practical wisdom (*phronesis*), in special situations. For Ricoeur there is potentially a conflict of interpretations at the heart of every ethical decision we make, because we are caught in the tension

¹ Norman argues that many modern philosophers, such as GE Moore and Bertrand Russell, differentiate between substantive ethics and meta-ethics, in which the latter involves interrogating the logical meanings of moral language that constitute the former. R.M. Hare is the most influential recent advocate of this meta-ethical approach. For Ricoeur, substantive and meta-ethics are inseparable, because it is through narrative language that we establish our ethical selves, even though we must accept fallibility and frequent failure.

created between our moral principles and the practical requirements of individual situations.

My concern here is to find philosophy useful to the daily ethical problems in higher education that I set about solving, and I encounter problems with regard to the last of Ricoeur's three principles. He asserts that ethics has to pass the stringent demands of morals and yet also be sensitive to the constraints of specific situations. If this is so, it may therefore be necessary to act in a way that is at odds with the Kantian categorical imperative. For example, if I believe it is wrong to lie, then I must never lie, even when circumstances may seem to provide exceptions. Associated with this problem is the issue about the ineffably complex nature of truth when seen from different religions. Thus I experienced a significant degree of dissonance when I was approached in 1997 at a conference by a group of Muslims, in traditional garb and exotic in appearance. They asked me to help them set up a teacher education course for British Muslims, working in Muslim schools and state schools in England. If I helped them I would be going against my humanistic vision of education, a vision that seems not dissimilar to the 'laïcité' in France. If I did not help them I would be denying myself the opportunity to work in an inclusive manner with British Muslims, an often excluded group. *Phronesis* was called for, i.e. the ability to make a decision that is ethical yet also contextualised. How is this different from trigger happy relativism?... Given the levels of Islamophobia in Britain, even in 1997, well before '9/11', I was faced with making a decision that would be influenced by media pressure and public fear.²

Ricoeur confronts these contradictions that characterise the human condition, embodying them in polarities like mind-body dualism, the existence of good and evil, values and facts, the finite and the infinite, the real and the ideal, free will and necessity, despair and hope. He makes explicit the tension between such polarities and, at the most intense point of dispute, attempts a reconciliation that is dialectical in character. By dialectical I mean that my existence is shaped by these polarities and also that I must seek to resolve them by incorporating previous contradictions from each extreme into new ways of thinking. This should guide me in incorporating features that are common to both extremes, thereby making something new, viable and ethically robust; a third position. Ricoeur expresses his concern about whether it is possible to develop a third position that is workable, 'capable of holding the road' (1998:76). He is wary of the dialectics of Hegel, as that way of thinking leads to an almost complacent view of the possibilities for personal integrity. Ricoeur's thinking bears more similarities to the deconstructive work of Derrida than is immediately

² In *Critique and Conviction* (1998:110) Ricoeur confesses that he has been wrong in the past and that he was wrong, for example, about Nazism. The tragic irony is the potential of democracies to let such abuses happen, because of perceived freedom of choice.

apparent, and, indeed, these two great thinkers seem to have misunderstood each other often.

Both Derrida and Ricoeur are much exercised by the binaries that appear to characterise human thought, with different conclusions drawn by each. For human thought there is a great dilemma caused by our apparent insistence on thinking in these dualistic ways, and I believe that this is fundamental to one crucial aspect of racism and its relationship with concepts of evil; if we see ourselves as good, then evil is elsewhere, and can easily become attributed to those who are different from us. Even when we castigate ourselves for our failings, it still seems possible, indeed desirable to see evil as embedded in others to a much greater extent than it is in us. For Ricoeur that is precisely the issue that requires challenge; without accepting original sin in its full-blooded Old Testament form, he believes that we all have the potential to do evil. This can become a strength, as it means that we should all be able to understand this potential, see evil as ours, and therefore attempt to avoid doing wrong. By pre-empting our latent potential for wrongdoing we, thereby understand also that it cannot be neatly pushed off onto someone else, as happens with vilification of a minority group. In modern British civil life this has happened repeatedly to Jews and most recently and strikingly, abetted by media polarisation, to Muslims. Islamophobia shows this mechanism clearly in play as the fear of terrorism perpetrated by Muslims increases in direct relationship to the 'Coalition' forces increase in killings in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. In other words, the more human tragedy in Iraq, the greater our need to perceive ourselves as persecuted by the terrorist threat. This is not, I suggest, because we fear reprisals on a scale that would match the 'Coalition forces' killings, but because we need to justify these killings to ourselves. This creates and intensifies the binary pair: Muslim/non Muslim in which one side is evil, the other good. Crass as this may seem, it nevertheless affects our thinking and is intensified by distorted media coverage. For a second century Buddhist thinker like Nāgārjuna, who developed his own 'third way', the only way to resolve these pernicious dualities and to be at peace is to dissolve them by abandoning language (Norris, 2004). Ricoeur agrees that these dualities are inherent to language, but would not go as far as Nāgārjuna, for whom language is trivial, mundane and disruptive of real being.

Ricoeur believes that we can use language to debate the complexity of personal and collective being, while attempting to achieve a third position. He sees a plurivocity of meaning potentially available to us. We are surrounded by the written and the spoken word, often allowing it to define our actions by opinionated, ill-informed media coverage. He hopes that we can take control of text as a manifestation of ourselves that is of inestimable importance and that must, he believes, be used heuristically. There is a magnificent surplus of meaning in text and in life, that Ricoeur finds infinitely valuable and to be understood by humans in the most moral way that is available to us. Ricoeur has faith in the human spirit to seek and find the

good in text and in life, and also sees life as a kind of text. This optimism may seem misplaced in the context of the current pitch of Islamophobic press coverage. It is only mildly offset by good reporting from well-informed journalists who are not exclusively Euro-centric and who understand the history of such conflicts.

For Ricoeur, hermeneutics is the search for understanding that takes a whole lifetime and is based on four separate yet related beliefs. First, truth is multiple yet pluralist (not relativist) because we know the difference between good and evil, and that there is more than one good. Secondly, truth is bound up in symbols within language, narrative and action and can only be understood indirectly. Thirdly, we understand ourselves through seeing ourselves reflected in others and through trying to understand others. Finally, we understand ourselves and others through narrative, and both narrative and our actions are ethically structured. In order to contextualise Ricoeur within the tradition of Continental philosophy, I will define his form of hermeneutics as a risk-taking exercise, a life-long journey that sensitizes us to the overwhelming surplus of meaning in our daily lives. Hermeneutics can help us to resolve the conflict of interpretations that faces us if we are aware of even a few of these different meanings. As Crusius puts it, hermeneutics helps to concentrate on the search for 'good reasons' (1991:75). I hope to show that hermeneutics is a political force, with a practical ethics, and can also give credence to the transformative power of hope in order to do that we will have to acknowledge the difficulties that exist in the personal identity of the individual to be hopeful.

IDENTITY AND TOLERANCE

Personal identity is a core issue, and one that I wish to explore with the help of Nāgārjuna, Ricoeur, Derrida, Norris and Hunyadi. For each of them, identity plays a different role in the struggle to understand our relationship with the other. Philosophy grapples manfully with the idea of identity, and here I will look only at a few attempts. For Nāgārjuna, the deconstruction of personhood must be attempted in order to strip away personal egocentrism, to help the spirit rise above physical desire and needs, and most of all to repudiate language. For Derrida the self cannot be deconstructed, as it subsists in language, and we can never go beyond language. For Norris the self is implicitly integral to all his writings as a rational, critical yet humanistic component of all thought and reflection, a voice that strives constantly to understand better how we can use philosophy to do good in the world. Now explicitly bound up with 'the other', Ricoeur's model of the self is one who seeks to understand the difference and the narrative link between selfhood (keeping promises, being aware of others, taking account of change) and sameness (character, consistency). If the other is as capable of keeping promises as I am, then a further expectation that I must have of myself is that I may have to allow the other person the right to be wrong, as I see it (Ricoeur, 1991:295-312). This view

differs from the scepticism about integrity of self that Hume explored, and has been developed by Nietzsche, Levinas and others to reach a pitch of dissonance and discrepancy between self and others. Norris is suspicious of the 'modish thematics of 'otherness' and 'radical difference'' (1994: 51) in the work of Levinas that he believes Derrida to be deconstructing mercilessly. This is Derrida, in his early, brilliant essay "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*. In his later works Derrida is more supportive of Levinas. Yet there is also constructive twentieth century work on self and other, most notably that of Ricoeur in the seminal work, *Oneself as Another*, a text that can help a great deal with tolerance in positing the centrality of self, as well as of the other.

In his denial of the centrality of self, Hunyadi attempts to defuse the drama of conflict on the European stage. He defines tolerance as existing when two phenomena co-exist; a subject of conflict and the will to 'latentise' it, render it latent, not active. (2003:7). If there is a subject of conflict there must be the danger that the conflict will become explicit, no longer latent. In fact, in order to discuss Hunyadi's view, the language we use to understand this phenomenon may need to be altered, as there is a subject-object issue to be debated. Identity forms part of this potential for conflict, as there must be a self (the subject) and another (the object) in order to have such potential. Indeed, upon entering the hotel vestibule and encountering the Muslim group who were later to ask for my help, I remember thinking that they couldn't possibly be attending the conference I was going to. Thus, for me, 'tolerant' white liberal me, I was the subject defining the otherness of them as object. Here we see the difference emerging between Hunyadi and Ricoeur. For Ricoeur the self must try to see oneself reflected in the other, and at least some of one's identity is defined by one's 'reflection' in the other person or people. This is the core of humanity, the fact that we exist at least partially in each other, not each alone.

In addition to the difference about self and other, a key to the difference between Hunyadi and Ricoeur is their position on practice; for Hunyadi, tolerance is a practice that may reflect any combination of many different values. For Ricoeur it is impossible to separate the two; if a practice is ethical it must have value that may vary from situation to situation and 'practical wisdom' may come into play, yet these values must have the same basic characteristics of care for the self, for the other and within just institutions. Of course, Hunyadi believes that there are many different values that can govern practice, so in that sense he seems similar to Ricoeur. Yet the crucial difference remains one that hinges upon our understanding of the relationship between 'tolerance' and 'difference'.

Where does personal identity figure in all this? For Hunyadi, personal identity does not figure at all. He sees our own identity as untouched by the attempts of others to assert through the symbols of their clothing that their identity is different from ours...the Sikh who wears his turban instead of his crash helmet, the schoolgirl who wishes to wear the Muslim head-

scarf. Such issues may, Hunyadi writes, give the impression that these scenarios, much played upon by the media, imply a 'dramatic' identity aspect, in which not only the identity of foreigners but also our own identity is at stake. He sees this as false and, of course, he is right at some rational level; I should not feel my identity challenged by the very fact of a Muslim identity being different from my own. Yet clearly we do, or there would not be latent and actual conflict. How can this be? It is precisely my identity that is challenged by the other who argues for theirs that is at variance with mine. We can say that the identity of another must by definition be different from mine, or else we would be clones of each other. Even teenagers with their infinitely subtle clothing variations, maintain a complex sameness in difference. By this means they develop and maintain a group identity, differentiated by differences that seem to their elders to be insignificant. It is, of course, when differences become too different (and who decides that?) that the trouble starts. Hunyadi believes that the intolerant person may pose the same problem as the Muslim girl who feels unable to do physical education because of cultural modesty. He asserts that the specific problem of the practice of tolerance is not the intolerance of the intolerant, but the management of difference in general, to the extent that such difference is a potential source of conflict' (*ibid.*, p.8).

The examples he gives are predominantly symbols of clothing from Sikh, Muslim and Jewish case studies. By his description of such dilemmas as 'divergent practices', it is clear that Hunyadi means us to know that the individuals are diverging from some dominant standard. This seems to be asserting a polarisation between the dominant culture, ('we' who are confident in our identity so that we do not feel touched by difference) and 'they' (who feel threatened by our dominant identity and thereby need to assert their own). Here are, at least, two problems with this, one being that most 'Establishments' see the need to preserve their power, nor are they as confident and self-aware as they need to be. The other problem being that our identity can easily be challenged by those who have different reasons from us for being the way that they are, and this can lead to extreme positions.

By asserting that our identity is untouched by these potential areas of conflict, Hunyadi denies that we are personally touched by others whom we see as different from us. Not only does this make it difficult to see any way of becoming personally involved in being tolerant, as it sounds then like a cool, Kantian civic duty that will pre-empt conflict, but also it forecloses any possibility that different cultures might look self-critically at their own beliefs and practices, to see why they may be causing offence to others. Why does Hunyadi not give examples drawn from 'Western' culture, such as the symbolism and the fact of the miniskirt? Both subject and object (and they interchange, of course, depending on who you are) believe that their reasons for being different are better than the other's reasons. It is the possibility of seeing differences and homogeneity in these reasons that holds the key, I believe, to tolerance.

If, as for Derrida and Ricoeur, all philosophy, like language, is basically metaphorical, then the metaphorical possibilities of the self, the other and the self as another, could be rich and liberating. Yet Nāgārjuna, back in the second century CE, sees this as precisely the problem, because the dualities that we create and perpetuate, and which are often at the root of racist thinking (Self as other, other as alien) exist only to prop up each other up. Derrida demonstrates the ineluctable influence of difference on our thinking, yet Loy believes that Derrida does not see the necessity of transforming one term as a result of transforming the other. Each pole deconstructs the other, and this must flip back to the original source of *différance*. Thus, the current conflict between the non-Muslim world and the Muslim, understood as another world, could lead to the destruction of the former, as well as the latter. (1988: 2).

This argument could be framed so that it becomes a descent into relativism and what Norris believes to be an ironic reversal: by seeing the other as unconditionally different we risk rendering that other a 'mute non-signifying matter of philosophic discourse' (1994:49). In looking at Derrida's critique of Levinas' absolute other, Norris endorses Derrida's view that the 'modish thematics of 'otherness' and radical 'difference' can amount to no more than a species of well-intentioned but ultimately incoherent and self-deceiving rhetoric' (1994:51).

Norris delineates the fundamental weakness in the 'alterity' argument as presenting a practical weakness as well as a profound irrationality, namely, that if the other is so very different from us, then we will not be able to enter the same 'realm of being and experience' as they. Any ethics must have a degree of shared understanding, a view that Norris sees in Derrida, Habermas, Davidson and Putnam, and that he doubts in Levinas, preferring to give greater credence to Derrida's earlier rather than later essay on Levinas. Norris warns us that Kant's failure to resolve the relationship between knowledge and will – or practical reasoning and understanding – may simply be replicated by future philosophers.

Yet for Norris that is no reason to accept the postmodern tendency to equate ethics with radical alterity, as this may block any attempt to develop intersubjective understanding between those who see themselves as different from each other. Norris should not be accused here of ejecting the infant erroneously in the aqueous whoosh, because he criticises the excesses of alterity arguments, not their use to develop some kind of inter-subjectivity.

Yet how can we avoid the political correctness of certain extreme forms of multi-culturalism, while at the same time offering some good alternatives that will be conducive to local and global peace? For Taylor, the difficulties reside in the contradiction between, on the one hand, the Enlightenment model of humanity that is bestowed in an abstract sense, on all of us, and, on the other hand, the injunction by modern legislation to acknowledge the unique particularity of the other. This politics of recognition, as he calls it, can create intolerable hierarchies within which different

groups vie with each other to assert their particular right to enfranchisement and tolerance. Nor does this then necessarily become what Walzer calls an enthusiastic, respectful embracing, with curiosity and affection, of the other, because such inclusivity can be obstructed by assertion of the right to be recognised.

There are various educational exercises that allow racism to be personally experienced, such as the lesson in which the pupils are divided arbitrarily into blue eyes and brown eyes, and one half is treated with respect, the other vilified, depending on a private decision made by the teacher, a decision to which the pupils/students only become privy once they feel its effects having an impact on them personally. This is effective, yet not attractive to all educators, because it is artificial. In working collaboratively on a project with others, where desired outcomes are broad enough to be agreed upon, the abstract right of each to an equal voice can be made real in our joint working habits. We were all, Christian, Muslim, Jew and atheist alike, united in our desire to provide higher education for young Muslim women, to provide access to the national curriculum and also make it possible to be true to one's beliefs and take a balanced view of those of others, as long as the views of others do not violate fundamental human rights. Our Muslim colleagues find suicide bombing anathema to Islam, and the Muslim schools we work with take care not to affiliate themselves with groups they regard as extremist. We, who are not Muslim, experienced racism through the others, by developing pedagogies that supported our trainee teachers in difficult conversations that arose in school staff-rooms, and confrontational debates with pupils, all of which can be resolved peacefully.

ARTICULATING THE CHALLENGE OF MUTUAL RESPECT

In this section I will look at Ricoeur's views on the relevance of philosophy for understanding respect, and the related issue about allowing another person to be 'wrong'. Derrida's *différance* is also helpful here, a way of thinking that, like Ricoeur's hermeneutics, helps us to understand that we defer understanding, do not understand others and can yet find commonality in difference.

In order to clarify the nature of the challenge that faced me when deciding how to resolve my conflict of interpretations over Islam and Muslim education, I wish to explore briefly a real world situation that Ricoeur analyses in order to show what mutual respect should be, by describing its apparent absence. This real world issue is the secular debate in France. He was interviewed quite extensively about '*laïcité*' and French Islam in 1995 (published in translation 1998), prophetically as we now know from current French struggles over banning the scarf in school (King, 2004). The position of the French state constitutes, for Ricoeur, what he calls 'institutional agnosticism', because the state neither recognises nor supports any religion. Yet schools are caught, as he sees it, between their

identity as organs of the state (public service, abstention) and as being within civil society (education). Such 'secularism by abstention' seems to Ricoeur to be deeply unsatisfactory, and yet, with his characteristic ability to see a more complex picture, he also cites the existence in France of a lively debate in polemical secularism, that is based on mutual recognition of the right of expression.

To help me decide how to understand the risk of working with this group of Muslims, I used a combination of Ricoeur's philosophical writings about dialectical struggles, his more spiritual writings and his autobiographical accounts of modern French life. This was to help me make up my mind as to how I should go against my secular ideals of education or my wish to integrate another faith and another culture into the British education system, even if only at the margins. It seemed to me that the ethico-practical solution would be to act on possibilities rather than to stand upon my ideals in the hope that good practice could emerge. I therefore decided to collaborate with people about whom I knew little, who doubtless disapproved of my secularity and whose lifestyle and faith were very different from mine. This was an act of attestation; here I stand, I can do no other.

I wanted to explore further my philosophical heritage in order to be able to understand the real power of thought to overcome prejudice. In an attempt to contextualise my actions within my philosophical work, I needed to see how Ricoeur resolved his conciliatory work within the context of other philosophers. If philosophy both reflects and forms the thought of those who live through it, then I can learn a great deal from philosophy. As a member of Western European culture I knew that I was a largely unaware, inheritor of what Ricoeur calls the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', the phenomenon by which great thinkers like Freud, Marx and Nietzsche challenge the motives of humans and see us as concealing our true reasons for action. I believed that this required some attention, as I sensed that I was involved in a partnership project in which the deep faith of my Muslim interlocutors might be ill-matched in me by the culture I represent, with its sceptical, postmodern doubts about human motivation.

If I believe that the other person is as capable of keeping promises as I am, then a further expectation that I must have of myself is that I may have to allow the other person the right to be wrong, in my eyes, and right in theirs. They, as well as we, make promises to be consistent, to do certain things in certain ways, to constantly re-affirm personal identity by acts that are recognised in the group. This may help all parties to work hard at the tolerance that gives the other person the right to be wrong. (Ricoeur 1991: 295-312). Suspending our disbelief about how wrong others can be is not enough. There is a need to have faith in our ability to accommodate the differences of others, within limits that we discuss with them and accept as reasonable to them, if not to us. This involves facing up to the suspicion that we feel about those whom we see as different and whom we do not understand. Even more painful is the possibility that we may be seeing a part of ourselves reflected in that other person, and we do not know how to

understand it. This is not visible to Hunyadi. Yet can we not question why it is considered feminine for Western women to bare their bodies, or why Northern Europe is not replacing its 'white' population, with the birth rate falling?

Through the *Conflict of Interpretations* and other texts, Ricoeur argues that we can learn a great deal from the critique of ethics and religion that has been undertaken by the 'school of suspicion'. He believes that, after Nietzsche, it is impossible for us to return to the idea of a moral god, a god who is the 'origin of an ethics of prohibition and condemnation'. (1974: 447). He is grateful for this brutal revelation, as he believes that we can only have true faith once we have understood atheism. If faith is to survive, it must be informed and critical (1974: xvii). This represents a basis for belief different from that of strident fundamentalists, be they Christian, Hindu, Jewish or Islamic groups, a way of believing that Ricoeur sees as no longer an option for 'postmodern' thinkers. Thus, as Ricoeur sees it, we are burdened with this knowledge of our own inability to return (if that were ever possible) to simple submission to commandments from a divine will.

The juxtaposition of reading philosophy and my work on the Muslim project has helped me to address the difficulties we have in helping student teachers, Muslim or not, to look at the ethical dilemmas and ambiguities in their future careers. I joined a working group of secondary school subject specialists comprising Muslims, Christians, Jews, feminists and atheists who were bound together by the desire to provide teacher education for Muslim women who might otherwise not be allowed by their families to undertake the training (2003a). We developed an initial teacher education curriculum that would ensure student teachers' ability to deliver the National Curriculum, while also remaining true to their Islamic ideals. Thus, for example, in science they would have to teach evolutionary theories, but could allow supplementary discussions about creationist theory. This preparation highlighted the 'value vacuum' that exists within much of the National Curriculum, which gives the impression that the facts speak for themselves and gives little guidance to teachers about conflicts of interpretation. Teachers may find it difficult to mediate between different faith systems in a context of diversity and pluralism, especially if they are not clear about their personal position. One way to become aware of my personal position was to explore the heritage of Western philosophy that subliminally influences my life in many ways.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE CHALLENGE RICOEUR SETS HIMSELF WITH REGARD TO HEIDEGGER AND ARISTOTLE

In this section I will look at Ricoeur's analysis of the development of nihilistic thought, of Heidegger and of Aristotelian praxis and *phronesis*. This will show the background to modern Western thought that I now bring into my teaching in higher education. Moreover, Eastern philosophy casts

Western thought in a different light, and is illuminating as a philosophical source of the self and the other.

The philosopher is a responsible thinker, Ricoeur believes, and must remain suspended between atheism and faith, and attempt to mediate between religion and faith by means of atheism (1974: 448). Ricoeur sees philosophy before Descartes as reflecting a world in which the human was part of a holistic picture, with meaning bound up in the understanding and acceptance of forces greater than those of humans. Gradually, from Descartes' metaphysics onwards, the person becomes the object of his own representation, so that I can stand apart from my life and analyse it. I am thus both subject and object of my own existence. Ricoeur sees Kant, then Fichte and finally Nietzsche, transforming man as subject into man as will (1974: 463). For Ricoeur this can lead easily into nihilism, because the individual's will becomes unbridled in personal wilfulness about deciding what is of value and what is not of value. He sees great potential for good in the power that we have to be in control of our actions in order to benefit the greater good.

A brief comparison between Heidegger and Ricoeur is advisable, because the ontology of being was central to Heidegger's work and this is undoubtedly true for Ricoeur also, though in a very different way. Ontology, for Heidegger, entails the examination of our primordial experience of the world. However, Ricoeur believes that Heidegger takes a problematic route towards the attempted self-understanding, the brevity of which is its weakness. Heidegger's 'ontology of understanding' takes a short cut by not debating method and by attempting to give a direct, unmediated sense of Being. For Ricoeur, the ontology of being is a life-long journey in which meaning is obscured by symbol, and accessible only (and but partially at that) through narrative thought and action. Unlike Heidegger, Ricoeur argues that a dialectical relationship must evolve between explanatory (more factual, systematic) problem solving and problem solving through understanding that is more interpretative and personal. His assertion that 'To explain more is to understand better' (1984: x) must be seen in the context of his conviction that we will never attain full understanding, partly because of the ineffable complexity of life and partly because of personal limitations.

Another difference between Ricoeur and Heidegger stems from Heidegger's desire to 'destroy' Western metaphysics in favour of investigating what sort of being '*dasein*' is, and whether this is a being able to be aware of one's own self. Ricoeur, like Heidegger, also takes issue with the foundationalist nature of metaphysical thought, as the existential part of his thinking returns always to the power we possess to make our own decisions about the greater truths of life. Yet for Ricoeur it is impossible to reject the history of the world, because it has made us who we are. Rather we must seek to understand our past in order the better to understand past mistakes and attempt to improve. In this respect he understands Gadamer's deep respect for history; although Ricoeur believes that one can be more active

than Gadamer may have felt is possible, in trying to make a difference. Ricoeur does take seriously Heidegger's question about the nature of Being. He understands Heidegger's concept of Care, *Sorge*, as related to his own belief that action is the fundamental basis for existence in the world, because action includes not only doing and making but also receiving and enduring, which we understand by creating narrative (Ricoeur 1992:163, Dosse, 2001:652, Dauernhauer 2002:4). Yet how do we square this with the fact that integral to *Sorge* is our capacity to confront our impending death?

The gravity of this situation can be partially redressed if we look at Ricoeur's development of Aristotle's praxis, the active life in which we seek (yet never really reach) a good life characterised by actions that are ethical. We see in the Seventh Study of Oneself as Another how ethics must pass through the rigours of moral rulings, yet respond to specific details in a situation (1992). Leaving Aristotle's sense of tragedy as the highest form of praxis attainable, and attempting to look more realistically at human fallibility, Ricoeur develops a sense of modern life as built around the centrality of praxis, with four interrelated and hierarchised levels of functioning. At the first level, we have our jobs. At the second level, we have our life plans. At the third level, we interpret our identity by the skills, the arts that we are engaged in. At the fourth level, we seek (yet never really reach) the good life, in which we work towards good actions that are ethical.

Phronesis, practical wisdom, is crucially important here. *Phronesis* is moral judgement that is made within a situation and must therefore singularise its search for good solutions, using sensible intuition yet not reductionist platitudes in order to meet the ethical problems of that particular situation. It is therefore necessary to attempt to allow maximum interpretative openness to the beliefs of the individuals involved, and the potency of our actions, our praxis, must never be under-estimated (1992:269). *Phronesis* attempts to distort the general moral rule only as much as is absolutely necessary for the specific situation. It adheres to respect for persons, attempts to reconcile opposed claims and seeks to avoid arbitrariness. Upon meeting a devout male Muslim, I only extend my hand in greeting if he extends his, thereby avoiding the embarrassment he may feel if I offer my hand without knowing whether he wishes to greet me in this way. If a Muslim woman wishes to avoid violating the traditional rule, by which she should not travel more than forty miles without a male relative to protect her, we can arrange local meetings. There will be other colleagues, equally devout, who are happy to make the journey, and all parties must then be sensitive to ensuring that no one loses out, as far as possible.

Each of these examples stimulates my thinking about the sanctity of womanhood that should pervade every culture: seeing the self as another enables me to think critically about the image and the reality of womanhood in my own culture, as a result of feeling exasperated by customs of another culture. By such means I can try to reduce the fallibility that separates me from the way I am and the way I want to be, as Ricoeur argues in *Fallible Man*. It could be argued that this approach is missing from Kant's ethical

theory, and was certainly not of interest to Heidegger. Ricoeur understands the risks in this endeavour, as shown in his autobiography in Hahn (1995), and states that:

I cannot say as a philosopher where the voice of conscience comes from – that ultimate expression of otherness that haunts selfhood! (1987:53).

RICOEUR'S THINKING AND THE CHALLENGE OF DEVELOPING MUTUAL RESPECT

In this section I will look at our need to engage directly with suspicion, doubt and hope in order to reassert our ability to make a difference that is good, and show how this work can influence higher education. If, as for Ricoeur, saying and doing, signifying and making are interrelated, then it is possible to set up a lasting and deep partnership between theory and practice, between philosophy and action. The truth we strive for is a truth we have to make, out of the many truths that we know, in a provisional, recursive and ethico-practical way. Philosophy can be our companion, helping us to make sense of the way we live and the way we think we should live. Philosophical hermeneutics can help us to attempt to connect with the other, other cultures, existence itself and the world we live in. Ricoeur's hermeneutics give us the beginning of an ontology that believes in the potential of human nature to do good. Far from the homogeneity that Schutz believes we strive for (1971:33), our world is characterised by heterogeneity. We may see this as a tension, although the two are not necessarily incompatible. There is a lack of consensus in our civic lives, about what is right and good. We see our Muslim friends striving to establish their *modus vivendi*, and, yet, the secular world that perplexes them with its Lockean separation of private faith and public conduct should also be reviewing its behaviour (Scott-Baumann, 2003a).

Each of us has the power to create our own narrative, in which each of us rediscovers the relationship that we should have to our actions. Ricoeur's analysis of personal narrative identity yields four conclusions that are fundamental to his philosophy. They are, as summarised by Dauernhauer (2002:10):

1. Because my personal identity is a narrative identity, I can make sense of myself only in and through my involvement with others.
2. In my dealings with others, I do not simply enact a role or function that has been assigned to me. I can change myself through my own efforts and can reasonably encourage others to change as well.
3. Nonetheless, because I have a bodily existence and hence have inherited both biological and psychological constraints, I cannot change everything about myself. And because others are similarly constrained, I cannot sensibly call for comprehensive changes in them.

4. Though I can be evaluated in a number of ways, e.g., physical dexterity, verbal fluency, technical skill, the ethical evaluation in the light of my responsiveness to others is, on the whole, the most important evaluation.

Ricoeur thus suggests that we confront the paradox of praxis (1992). The 'right praxis' is simultaneously its own end and yet also has a higher aim. This paradox involves, therefore, the attempt to be true to oneself, support others and live well within just institutions. Ricoeur is in no doubt about the complexity of action as a human phenomenon. If to designate oneself as an agent is to acknowledge one's capacity to 'do', then immediately there is an ethical component, because Ricoeur hopes that we accord respect to capable agents. I see a similar problem in our dislocated daily lives, with apparent inability to believe that one can take responsibility for one's own actions:

Agency is not a fact that may be observed; it is a power that an agent is confident of being able to exercise. To use a colloquial expression, it's 'up to me', to you, to do. In this sense, agency is not an object for verification, but for attestation. I am confident that 'I can', and I believe that, like me, you 'can', too (Ricoeur in Johnson (ed) 1993:113).

I believe Ricoeur gives me a robust way of using language to understand and talk about the momentary yet sometimes shockingly powerful nature of action (1981:204). When working with those who, at least partly, define themselves by the ways in which they differ from each other, as Christians working with British Muslims, it is possible to refuse to be either that self or that other who denies similarity. Instead I can try to be constant to the stability of my own identity (*idem*) and yet also able to recognise myself in another and create new ideas and actions (*ipse*) (Ricoeur, 1993). This is eminently practical when working as one among groups of people who define themselves as fundamentally different from each other.

In helping us to work towards this ontology of action, the following constructs are offered to us by Ricoeur as problematic yet active means of creating a good future with others: doubt, suspicion, the provisionality of truth, dualistic thinking about good and evil, determinism and freewill, us and them, life and death etc, surplus of meaning and hope to imagine a better future. Through analysis of doubt he presents our need to see ourselves in others without the irony that separates us from our own self and which can keep us from understanding others, and also without the meta-physical passion that tempts us to fit life into a persuasive yet distorting belief system. His work provides an opportunity to face our ironic tendencies, without necessarily endorsing Rorty's view of liberal irony as a major social good. These ideas support my narrative self in better understanding the conflict of interpretations at the core of my interfaith projects.

Since 1997 I have been working with a group of administrators, academics and teachers, with schools and members of the teaching profession to negotiate reasonable concessions for Muslims and to reduce Muslim fear about secularity (Scott-Baumann, 2003(a) and (c)). Ricoeur's 'declared impossibility of any final intellectual mastery of the issue' (Clark, 1990:19) represents the ultimate intellectual strength, using language to explore ethically the provisionality of truths, while also insisting on both insuperable problems and ethical principles. This project with British Muslims, combined with my reading of Ricoeur, has taught me a great deal about how to face suspicion and assert hope. The praxis of working together towards a shared goal, albeit from different viewpoints about secularism, means that a disparate team of mutually suspicious individuals gain a better understanding of each other. Personal differences are temporarily laid to one side in order to achieve a commonly held goal. For ethical purposes, an active pedagogy is vital, especially in intercultural work.

Here are some implications of this project, and my reading of Ricoeur. They have made a major impact on my work that takes place in a university climate that is currently focussed on structure, procedure and outcome, rather than upon content and a holistic view of education as an ethical endeavour. As an academic and a leader for various intercultural projects, I have learnt to be more open about my own beliefs. We need to 'try to understand', to 'not judge'. One way to achieve this is by being aware of the dualistic ways in which we think about ourselves that lead to discomfort about who we are. We may never attain the non-dualism that Loy sees in Nāgārjuna's work, and maybe we need to accept that dualistic thinking is problematic (I can never be one with myself or with the world around me) because we are always self-conscious. Yet such dualism is also useful, in that we see the need to use dualism to give us the confidence to own and control the evil we create and therefore a) see it as our responsibility, not something that resides over there with those people who are foreign to us and b) do something about it. I also use philosophy in teaching research methods, to help students enact and explore the belief systems that they espouse, instead of letting 'methods' as such be the dominant belief system. In my intercultural projects (2003b and Inbaraj, 2003,) I try to help teachers in schools and higher education to bring their belief systems into their teaching, while remaining sensitive to the fact that some opinions are more inclusive than others.

I can develop a sense of the other by working collaboratively, by facing my own fallibility and faulty standards, and by seeking to identify shared similarities in the particularity of tensions of custom, clothing and conduct, such as the sanctity of the person. If I interrogate my own values, I can be capable of disagreeing with reasons, yet finding consonant values also. Practical wisdom, phronesis, is incarnate, faulty as the process is, in the interfaith projects to which I have referred here. Phronesis seeks to work within praxis, enacted conscience in adhering to respect for persons, attempting to reconcile opposed claims and seeking to avoid arbitrariness,

although this does not discount or render obsolete the sense certain tragic limitations to the achievement of such liberal social hopes. Indeed, Hunyadi's critique of over-dramatisation about difference-based conflicts rings true in one sense; the media can convince us that tragedy is the only outcome of interfaith contact. Ricoeur's sense of praxis goes beyond Aristotle's understanding of tragedy as embodiment of the essence of human praxis, for each of us can stop denying our capacity for intolerance, and go beyond pity and fear towards hope, affinity and even ethical practice.

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CHAPTER IV

NAME, SIGNATURE AND IMAGE AS SYMBOLS OF PERSONAL IDENTITY IN THE EPOCHS OF ORAL, WRITTEN AND IMAGE CULTURE

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Cultural identity is molded by national culture. But in general, human personality can be described in terms of a cultural identity, which is much more complex than national cultural identity. According to anthropologists, human cultural history has developed from the pre-literary times of oral culture, through the literary time of written culture, to the post-literary world of “image” culture today. Each of these grand periods of cultural evolution places special importance on a particular aspect of self-identification.

If we think for a moment about the content of our present ID cards, we see that the important personal information in them consists of our name, our signature, some text-information, and our photographic image. No matter how common and routine their presence may seem, these are more than just formal means for the confirmation of identity. We have gotten so used to the convention of having a personal name or recognizing ourselves in signs or numbers – as well as pointing at a picture and saying “that is me” – that we have forgotten how name, written sign, and image have a history of their own. Such means of identification have developed in the course of human cultural history. Initially, forms of identification come from different cultural contexts and in this way they represent not only particular signs of our identity, but distinctive symbols of cultural periods constituting the main carriers of identity and produced by the predominant character of communication. Today, we find interest in the individual importance of each of these cultural phenomena. An identity can be described in terms of name, sign(ature), and image. On the other hand, we are witnessing the scope of their combined power: image-making, which is the major currency of today’s media world. Image-making includes three main elements, each calling for identity: the first is the name; the second is the sign; and the third is the visual appearance. In the use of these identifying elements, image-making strives to intensify and to benefit from their symbolic power. My goal here is to outline the main features of image as a product of image-making and a symbol of the contemporary epoch, which is successfully combining the symbolic power of appearance, name and sign.

ON THE MEANING AND SYMBOLISM OF NAME

Oral culture is a culture of sound. Even in the most primitive human societies, people recognize themselves by the sound of their names. Going

beyond the practice of naming would probably mean crossing the border of humanity and human culture as well. Everything that has a name is considered more important than the nameless. Even now it is popular to describe someone as a “person of name” in order to say he/she is a renowned person. The importance of a person’s name is manifested clearly in anthropologists’ descriptions of taboos concerning naming traditions. In some cases, for example, personal names are kept secret because of the belief that knowing the real name of something/someone means controlling it. Fear exists that the knowledge of a personal name could be used in dangerous magic.

In some societies, there are strict rules of addressing one’s own husband, wife and respective relatives-in-law without mentioning their given names.¹ In China, for example, it was forbidden to write and pronounce the names of the Chinese emperor and his ancestors.² There were also taboos with regard to deceased relatives, whose names for some periods were not to be uttered. A wide range of punitive measures followed breaking the mentioned taboos – from imposing a fine to a sentence of death. All these taboos – clear traces of which exist in our highly advanced rational civilization – give credence to the strong belief in the power possessed by the name. Even now, it is often regarded as offensive and rude to call someone by their given name in certain situations. For example, a stranger addressing a person by name can easily be considered disrespectful, if not threatening.

The belief that some deities’ names should not be uttered (in order to keep them away) remains strong even in current times. The sound of a name calls for identity and many sounds were forbidden as sounds of evil. It is superstitiously believed that the sound of a name expresses an essence to such an extent that it calls for the existence it signifies. The Commandment against taking the name of God in vain is another example of the careful reverence involved in using names appropriately.

Actually, many taboos concerning naming practices are based on the division between the “real,” sacred, and intimate name versus the popular, or “unreal,” one. The real name reveals the innate nature of something; the substitutive name serves to protect its sanctity. There are names that are considered unsuitable for someone or something, just because they do not correspond to the anticipated nature or purpose of the thing to be named. For example, it is not appropriate to give a boy a female name. This simple demarcation directly reflects the conviction that the name is considered of essential importance for an adequate description of personal identity; violating this rule can cause disorientation and problems. That a man’s inner

¹ Sir James George Frazer (1854–1941), *The Golden Bough*, 1922. § 2. “Names of Relations Tabooed,” <http://www.bartleby.com/196/56.html>

² Naming taboo, *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naming_taboo; <http://www.answers.com/topic/naming-taboo>.

nature is believed to be found in his name is obvious in the fact that man is still explained in terms of his/her name in some popular mantic practices.

In our very rational environment, many taboos considered 'out-grown' continue to work in different, modern skins. To know someone by name suggests a personal attitude. By the same token, a deceptive impression of familiarity can be achieved through the repetition of a name many times. This is part of the suggestive mechanism of advertising campaigns. Repeating products', companies', or people's names in advertisements is usually done in a manner that either aims to stress the meaning of that name explicitly and to make the name a byword of the qualities associated with it, or to imply a secret nature of that name, and the name is intended to become a byword of the essence with which it is associated. The name spoken by voice, and heavily repeated, strongly suggests a kind of general approval. There exists a common belief that only what is locked in silence might be dangerous, which advertisers work to their benefit. The brand that is not well-known appears suspicious. Likewise, the book that is not reviewed in a popular publication does not seem so interesting. As such, the aim of the advertising campaign is to repeat as many times as possible the name of the company's product.

The popular name wins above the unknown one because it is better situated in a familiar set of associations. Its context successfully combats fear and suspicion, fills the name with life and helps the name acquire the profound meaning of a symbol, that is to say, to become a value, to make its meaning encompass much more than it appears to imply. Consequently, to protect a name has equal importance to the protection of any other generally acknowledged symbol, the national flag for example. In the context of understanding the name as a symbol, it is not strange that keeping one's name from dishonor is regarded as equally important to the protection of the honor of persons who bear that name. The symbolic power of the name explains the superstitious belief that it is able to convey blessings or curses from generation to generation, or it is believed to generate luck, misfortune, or destiny. The name is considered an innate characteristic of a man and his family. In China it was taboo to marry someone with the same family name, irrespective of the fact that no blood relation existed. The name is a sign of origin, of nobility or disgrace, of power or weakness; it is regarded as a mark of character and is accepted to have a life of its own.

The importance of the name in societies of oral tradition is directly connected to the very importance of hearing and enunciating as the major means of communication. The name evokes identification by its very sound. In this respect, the etymology of the Chinese hieroglyph for "name" is quite indicative. The hieroglyph is composed of two symbols: the symbol of "darkness" and the symbol of "mouth" and implies that the name is equal to the voice by which "they" recognize you in the darkness. The uttered sound of your name is an intimate revelation of your personality. The name is generally perceived as a carrier of a message, which people recognize by its

very hearing. It is thus much easier to change a name than it is to change the negative message in the sound with which a name is associated.

It is common practice today to choose the name for a child on the basis of euphony. The name is usually given once and forever and parents perceive its importance in aesthetic terms of how “modern” and “beautiful” sounding it is. On the one hand, this reflects the growing emphasis on the aesthetic role of the name and, conversely, its diminished symbolic importance. For example, the custom in Bulgaria of naming a child after one of the grandparents changes under the influence of the principle of euphony. This alteration, for the sake of euphony, affects the awareness of symbolic continuity between generations and is the reason some of the elders object to it. It appears that after the time of orality, the name has gradually turned into a formal sign of identity and has lost some of the meaningful functions of a symbol. On the other hand, it is a very popular practice for musicians or actors at the beginning of their career to choose brightly sounding names and associate their professional identities associated with the message of these names. This is a reference to the symbolic power of name, and the purpose is to make a name full of life and to empower it as a symbol. This is the essence of image-making: to turn a name from a formal sign into a symbol and to create a whole world full of life invoked by this symbol.

By reviving the symbolic power of a name, image-making resorts to the symbolic power of the word in the world of oral communication. Strictly and undisputedly abiding by customs is a main feature of the oral tradition. The spoken language is the major carrier of oral culture. Since all the information that is exchanged is situational, and concerns experience that is “here and now” under a given circumstance, it is rarely doubted. As the information is directly related to some ritual, holiday, celebration of growth, or to some other social event, knowledge has very obvious relations to practice and fulfills clearly-set purposes. As far as it serves these purposes in a satisfactory way, it is not liable to be questioned. The knowledge translated by oral tradition is a question of belief, trust, suggestion or influence, not of analytical proof. The words of the priest, the knowing man, has the power to invoke the spirit of the dead, to call forth wealth or misfortune, to give a blessing or cast a curse; they draw an unquestionable line between what is acceptable and what is not, that is to say, between truth and lies.

In contrast, in the time of predominantly written culture, oral words tend to lose their power. Their power never disappears completely, but oral agreements for example are no longer entirely functional. On the contrary, written contracts are considered the only established agreements. So the power of a “good” name, which allows the use of the name as an equivalent substitution for any written agreement, is associated with humanity, trust, truthfulness, morality, and rooted in the awareness of the supreme importance of the unwritten rules of decent life. But whether the struggle to create and explore the resources of the “good name” really helps to better distinguish between true and false, or good and bad, in the world of written

and image-culture is another matter entirely. Without question many efforts will be made to keep the suggestive power of the name so that it will continue to influence the human mind symbolically. However, in the period 1500-1700 AD, with the shift from oral tradition to written culture by means of different technological inventions, the human mind went through an internal transformation from naivety to skepticism. In the time of written culture, a new symbol of personal identity relating to a new mode of communication appeared: the personal signature.

ON THE SYMBOLISM OF SIGNATURE

Written culture is a culture of signs. Sign is stronger than sound because it has a longer life in time and space. But sign is also weaker than sound since it needs much more time to create people capable of using it. A written culture requires people who are trained to understand and recreate it. In addition, it takes a long time before written culture is able to achieve the status of a “natural environment” for people. It has proved impossible to overcome the division between literate and illiterate people; at the beginning of the 21st century, there are still many in the world who are not educated and cannot read or write.

The conventional distinction between oral culture and written culture is overly general. The co-existence of written and oral cultures confirms that it is more valuable to examine the cumulative effects in cultural development, rather than to distinguish clear periods. Although the first writings (cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphics) date from 5000 years back, the complexity of the scripts made general literacy difficult. The scripts were understood only by a limited circle of people – scribes, officials, doctors, priests.³ The first simple alphabet, North Semitic, appeared in the Middle East in 2000 BC. By 1200 BC it had 22 working letters and is the progenitor of alphabets known today – including Greek, Cyrillic, Arabian, Roman, and Hebrew.⁴ In the next millennia, the slow and difficult process of reproducing writings and books served to deny them to the illiterate multitude. The real upswing of written culture came much later with the invention of the printing press and the increasing percentage of educated people. The availability of books and newspapers grew and gradually created the world of “information.”

During the time of oral culture, man lived through culture. One actively participated in cultural life as a matter of social, everyday practice. In contrast, during the time of written culture, one informs oneself about one’s own and other cultures. In the time of oral culture, acquaintance with cultural tradition is connected to associations with people; it is strongly

³ R. Allott, Chapter 8, *Becoming Loquens*, 2000, pp. 167-199, <http://www.percepp.demon.co.uk/alphabet.htm>.

⁴ “The Development of the Western Alphabet,” <http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A2451890>.

based on the rules of custom and social life together. In contrast, in the time of written culture, acquaintance with cultural tradition pushes the “knowing person” to isolation in the library or office, and some of the brightest minds of this tradition reject the absolute power of moral rules and social customs. As such, individualism is born and people prefer to be *informed about* culture rather than *obeying* all the rules of cultural life. Written knowledge turns “culture” into a concept, a description of ideas, and collections of information about different cultural traditions. Researchers and explorers are acquainted with these traditions without necessarily being involved in them.

Written language proves its power as a technology for the transmission of information. Mastering the technology of written language, changes one’s way of thinking and the world of thought. The importance of *grammatik*, categories, logic and concepts grows. In comparison with oral culture, written culture is much more distant from the here-and-now situation; it is no longer a question of “seeing and believing,” but of logic and thinking. Not every source is trusted without doubting; even trusted, esteemed sources must reckon with the demands of cause-and-effect explanation, an objective approach, and rational clarity. Words are read at a distance from the place and time of which they were initially written. It can happen that for a long time people communicate only by letters, not even knowing each other personally.

In the time of developed written culture, the person who has written a book (the main product and carrier of written culture) is usually absent at the time and place of its reading. Ideas are subject to discussion and the names of authors become pawns in the language of ideas. An author’s name is recognized as a composition of letters, rarely as a real presence; it is a catalogued sign, not a full-blooded life. In the development of analytical skills, written communication substitutes for direct experience in and empathy is substituted by a more rational and abstract approach to the world.

The technique of writing transfers identity from reality to the page and, through formal and conventional means, it proves a useful instrument for the representation of identity under certain conditions. People learn to orient themselves by names written on the front of buildings, along roads, or by the nameplates on doors. Name functions as a sign for better orientation and its essence becomes visual. Its existence is set free from transitoriness. Insofar as the name continues to exist when its aural perception has ended, the name functions technically as a conduit for eternity. Written culture creates a person’s graphological identity, which is easy to preserve and to literally carry in space. Verification of identity adopts specific dimensions, becomes formalized, and mediated by written text; identity is not verified unless there is a sign to prove it. All this is a natural part of the process of substituting a culture of immediate communication in a small community by a culture of people distant in time and space linked by writing.

During the first steps of education, one learns to write his name and to recognize himself in it. Even the value of people is assessed in terms of their ability to read and write their names. The signature is a sign of identity that provides a new source of symbolism. Many people, upon meeting a celebrity, are eager to ask for his or her autograph. The one who has obtained the signature of a famous author or a victorious tennis player feels special. The giving and taking of autographs becomes a ritual of communication. The benevolent attention given by the celebrity to the fan who is bestowed an autograph takes the fan out of anonymity and directs to him a small beam of somebody else's glory. Receiving autographs is often met with a great deal of emotion because an autograph is a kind of property and thus constitutes ownership of a piece of another person's identity. It is a symbolic appropriation of some features of this identity, too. When the signature creates a sign – not only for a person, but also for a company or brand – it becomes a symbol of style, quality or quantity, a marker of status and social environment. People who use products that bear a signature (e.g., the “Adidas” logo; the signature of a designer on an expensive suit) often do this in order to show their personal commitment to the style of life and status symbolized by the logo. In this case, the appropriation of the symbolic power of the signature – of established and popular brands, or renowned persons – helps in building a personal image. In the contemporary epoch, it is not only true that people eat images, sleep on images, and dress in images,⁵ but also that by means of these images people create their own image. They identify with the brand of shoes and suits they wear, and identify themselves through the symbols of identity in their consumable environment.

The personal signature is a symbol of personal presence. During a political campaign, for example, candidates attempt to rally support by posting their image in public places. The candidate's image is often accompanied by his or her personal signature. The signature helps suggest a high level of approval regarding the candidate's personality. On the other hand, the personal signature suggests personal attitude in a time when distance between people is a problem and a source of alienation and anonymity. In the time of written culture, a benevolent attitude of a (relatively) famous person paying attention to a man is an event and thus a value. The autograph presents a symbolic connection between people. The book, signed by its author, does not change in content, but the owner of the book believes that the relation or attitude of the very book to him is more special.

The “signature” should be understood as handwriting, logo, permanent message (“*Always Coca-Cola*”). The signature is the written name or text, used to make the object identifiable. A broad understanding of the signature as a style of writing recalls authenticity and makes obvious the presence of identity under any conditions.

⁵ Christine Rosen, “Image-Culture”, <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/archive/10/rosen.htm>.

Success in making an image personal can be measured by the extent to which one's signature (or logo) appears as a meaningful symbol of identity. It is on that which somebody else will wish to sleep, dress in, or demonstrate in public, and to make a part of his/her own personal sense of identity. In this sense, image-making needs original symbols of identity in order to demonstrate style and strive for authenticity. Moreover, in order to create myths and to inspire life in them, image-making combines the suggestive mechanism of the oral and the technology of written communication. It needs the intensified, symbolic power of the name in order to rouse the suggestive mechanism of oral communication and the intensified, symbolic power of signature (logo and message) in order to overcome the distance of anonymity, to create a feeling of commitment and to present its message. A third element, which image-making needs in myth-building, is the symbolic, intensified power of image.

THE SYMBOLIC POWER OF IMAGE

Images are the main content of our brain-activity. The image has strong impact on emotions and actions and has unrivalled power to create associations. Recently I suggested to a friend that she try the new fragrance of "Adidas." She objected by saying, "Oh no, I don't like sport-odors." The dominant power of image clearly stands out in this situation. The sense of smell that would normally or usually dictate whether one likes or dislikes a perfume is pushed into the background by the dominance of the sense of sight (which in this situation calls forth an association with sports) and the sense of sight is allowed to judge qualities, which by nature it cannot judge in essence.

Images have always had a strong influence upon the human mind – much stronger than that of word and text. Our thinking is based on images. Otherwise we would never be able to find our car in the parking lot, to recognize an old friend, nor understand a novel. Each thought consists of images, including such abstract concepts as love, peace and bravery. Anecdotes are funny because we understand them by means of images.⁶ Moreover, we visualize the texts we read. And for those texts with content that cannot be easily mediated by the language of images, we call "difficult" and "abstract."

How does image gain such symbolic power? Text and words are conventions of language and signs. They can be sacred and powerful, but their magic is not as strong as the unconventional magic of image. Ordinarily images are perceived directly, without words and explanations, and they exert enormous and direct influence on emotions and one's state of mind (hypnosis). Images can change spontaneously the direction of thought and "bind," as well as "blind," thought to/by oneself. There is a direct

⁶ Arlene Harder, "The Power of Images and Symbols," <http://www.learningplaceonline.com/change/imagery/power.htm>.

relation between an abundance of images and distraction of attention. This is valid even for such software as *Power Point*, which is designed to help the concentration of intelligence.⁷ The use of images works to focus viewers' attention on visual details, especially the moving ones, such that attention to non-visual data is easily diverted.

The word "image" has come into the Bulgarian language (with transcription [*imidg*]) as part of the international vocabulary and is used in the "deliberately chosen vision of oneself and the related behavior/appearance consistent with this vision." "Image-making" means that a person constructs and follows a desired image of him or herself and tries to behave in a way that harmonizes with this image. It is often said that there are two major ways for a man to know who he is: by looking at his image in the mirror or by knowing what others think of him. There is strong dependence of identity on image. When I do not like my image in the mirror, I try to improve my appearance. When I do not like my image in the eyes of people for whom I care, I try to improve my behavior. In the first case, we speak about the literary image, and in the second, of a metaphorical image. The image in the mirror reflects our appearance; however, our image in the public eye reflects our reputation. In both cases, we strive to achieve the ideal parameters of the desired image of oneself that includes a vision of how we would like to look and be in other people's eyes. This desired image consists of our thoughts and wishes, how to develop our abilities, what we would like to achieve in our studies or work, how to build our relationships, and what kind of person we want to be.

The presence of "image" is mainly associated with business and commercial art; however, the concept of "image" is actually widespread in all spheres of human life. Although image has always been a basic means for identification, its symbolic function in contemporary culture has been heightened due to the enormous quantity of cultural products, which stress the importance of image-making. The power of the image is boosted by the specificity of the contemporary market environment. Moreover, "image" reflects changes in the values, ideals and convictions of new generations, those which are formed under the influence of popular culture, and furthermore, are based upon a particular market mechanism – "survival of the fittest."

The making of an image is especially well illustrated in the world of politics, media, cinema, and popular music. The images in these realms set an example for people who aim to achieve a high level of approval, liking, and more than survival – success. The power of the image unfolds due to the united power of its main sources of identification – oral, written, and image-identification. A number of works on the topic of making an image that pay special attention to the relationship between the name of the person or product and public approval, to the importance of outward appearance,

⁷ Christine Rosen, "Image-Culture", <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/archive/10/rosen.htm>.

and to the importance of spreading the written signs of identity especially in the case of brands.

The symbolic power of image is supported by one main quality of the concept of “image.” When in the 19th century, the camera was invented and the first photographs were made, there was no doubt that the image truly represented the real object. The rise of image-culture was not only due to the devices enabling the rapid multiplication and spread of photo-images, but also due to the fame of the photo camera in manipulating the pictures.⁸ Retouched portraits created the new religion of image-improvements. The image-world makes possible a longed for beautification of appearance as well as the enhancement of reputation. Regardless of the great multiplication of images today and their easy manipulation by means of computer programs, the image stays powerful since people still tend to base their judgments on what they see. And because people are quite happy to see their improved images, they forgive the deception of others.

Therefore, even when deceitful, the image is a sustainable carrier of the idea of reality and full-blooded life. People learn to feel, live, and gain experience by means of images; usually these feelings, lives, and experiences are hardly distinguishable from the “real” ones. Actually the very concept of reality is more vague than ever exactly because the simulations get more and more realistic – belonging to the world of the professional synthesis of cultural products.

As the culture of consumerism is not exactly a culture, but a commodity exchange of cultural products, it seems that deprivation of real cultural life threatens contemporary man. People learn to read about different cultures, to discuss foreign ways of life, and to be isolated in one’s home in order to enjoy life on the TV-screen. They learn to watch movies about how other people live. This is their cultural world; they do not participate in it actively as before. The world of culture is predominantly separated in a world of images. Moreover, the realm of active cultural life is substituted by an active consumerism of images. People who know the stories of history, who obey traditional customs, and who dance and sing according to custom are isolated cases. Instead, most people use professional cultural products. People do not sing; they listen to professionals sing. People do not learn to play an instrument since there is enough music produced for them. People even miss opportunities for making their lives more intense, emotional and eventful, because they have adjusted to a life of staying at home watching how other people (pretend to) have real, interesting, active and emotional lives. Actors, producers, and others involved in the cinema-business, as well as singers and musicians, are among the distinguished makers of the contemporary experience of culture. Because the personal cultural experience of the ordinary person has become impoverished, such persons give that which is most needed – virtual cultural experience.

⁸ S. Sontag, *On photography*, 1978.

Under these circumstances, it becomes clear why the image of the “star” obtains such a high rating. Famous actors or singers are called “stars,” but not the great doctors or peace-fighters. It seems quite unjust to celebrate so loudly the achievements of virtual reality and simulation, while the real efforts to save and improve the conditions of human life are driven into the background. The answer to this puzzling phenomenon is rather simple: in the same way that people like the retouched photo, they like retouched identities. Exemplars of the retouched identity include actors, photo-models, and the musicians featured on MTV and VH1. The popularity of a “star” is due to the illusion and virtual reality attached to the person in a time when the life of every person is increasingly deprived of authentic cultural experience. People like the illusion of having rich, richer, and richest cultural experience and the virtual experience of activity, knowledge, morality, beliefs, and life. That is to say, they like to live the illusion of a retouched identity and, at present, people achieve this experience thanks to the efforts and talent of professional actors and singers.

Image-culture supports the high-rated art of retouching identity, and the product of image-making attracts attention in the same way as the retouched photo. Success in image-making is success in the creation of original “models” and (successful) models are proud of their exclusive status as pieces of art, however scandalous and inappropriate their example may sometimes appear. Image, as a symbol of the image-culture epoch, implies the idea of success, the “model,” the “improvement” of the human personality, and the creation of a distinguished identity – pushing natural qualities and artificial quantities to the limits of possibility.

Under the conditions of a market economy, traditional cultures get weaker while popular culture grows stronger. This shift weakens the power of life-saving answers to the question “Who am I?” With the growing influence of transnational virtual reality, the division between man and the realism of traditional culture is widening. Young people run from traditional cultural backgrounds to virtual reality, in order to find cheap (and rich) choices of virtual retouches to their personal identities that give them the feeling of higher personal status. Unfortunately, the steady consumerism of images makes them feeble and disoriented, even when fed by super-cultural markets.

The new type of consumer culture creates myths, which means that we no longer buy the goods themselves, but their symbolic meaning. We do so because we want to participate in these myths in order to create cultural worlds, or even to have one at all. Most of the advertisements for goods are based explicitly on this principle. They create stories or animated/fictive characters who lead the spectator into the temptation of symbolically joining their world.

In the age of “Photoshop,” it is difficult to confine the concept of image to the literary meaning of a representation of an object. The normal function of the image is to be a carrier of all kinds of information. Photos describe people, situations, events, nature, relationships, and so on. Docu-

ments for identification are not considered valid without the photo-image of the bearer. The symbolic power of the image is born when the image becomes a source of values and ideals. The image already means much more than just a photo. It is a symbol of human identity in a time when behind the identity people prefer to see myths. These myths are created by retouching programs used to combine the powers and to improve the name, the message, the sign, and the visual impression. We see how names are turned into brands, how brands multiply their signs of identity, how signs strengthen their positions by attracting persons who “lend” their images to the image of the brand in order to create for it the outward appearance of a certain quality of life. We live in a reality full of images that symbolize quality of life. The striving to achieve this quality of life has become a striving for personal image.

To be deprived of your name has been a punishment in all epochs of culture. In a time of developed written culture, the inability to write your own name elicits shame; to have your name or personal data missing from the social registers can easily make you a “nobody” in society. In the time of a rich image-culture, one needs an image or a bundle of images in order to distinguish oneself as a person. One needs to collect the means for identification and to intensify their power in order to get out of the world of image-consumers and into the world of models, to be acknowledged to be of worth – worth wearing, watching, emulating, and so on. The hierarchy of values says that while the ultimate value in the image-world is this kind of capacity for perfection and completion, a person will be estimated by the market demand. Image will be its main capital, and by the time another powerful symbol of identity appears, a new dimension of describing human personality will supplant previous ones.

This exposition has attempted to show a relation between the elements of identity and the general cultural context of their appearance. This relation could be described yet more clearly in terms of values and man’s place in the world, for what will be most important henceforth is the direction of cultural development. Several related questions remain: What will happen during the next level of technological advancement? What should people then expect from their cultural environment? How will this environment affect the concept of human identity? And, how will the next level of identity, like the registration of one’s personal genetic code, affect understandings of the value and dignity of man?

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CHAPTER V

PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

MAMUKA DOLIDZE

WHAT IS UNCONSCIOUSNESS?

In the philosophical interpretation of Freud's teaching, there is an opinion asserting an analogy between Freud and Kant [2, pp.358-368]. According to Kant, the world, existing independently of consciousness is "an object-in-itself," which cannot be identified with the reality given to consciousness. Similarly, according to Freud, the unconscious sphere is also an independent world, which is unconnected to the internal reality of consciousness. Unconsciousness is not something that was or might become conscious. The essential difference between consciousness and unconsciousness, as well as between Kant's object-in-itself and the reality given to a human being, is insuperable. Unconsciousness, as the "object-in-itself," is principally unknowable. Within the frame of this analogy to Kant, we cannot suggest what unconsciousness is. The only thing we can say is that Freud, as well as Kant, assumed the existence of unconsciousness, insofar as each sought to discover the traces of its influence in the world of consciousness.

Existential phenomenology has tried to overcome the agnosticism of Kant by synthesizing the object-in-itself and the reality given to consciousness. Such a synthesis resulted in reality as a phenomenon whose main feature is the ability to be given to consciousness – its "openness" toward perception and cognition. In this world, as a phenomenon open toward consciousness, nothing is covered that cannot be revealed and attained by the senses and reason; but, the "openness" itself – the ability to be given for perception – is the self-existing feature, which is unavailable to cognition. Thus, the phenomenon can be known and conceived from any point of view, but the existential root of its ability to be known is not knowable. The reason it becomes attainable and visible, how its self-existence is established in its "openness," and why it is independent from the consciousness toward which it is open are hidden under a veil of secrecy. Therefore, on the one hand, the phenomenon is entirely open to consciousness and can be drawn into the sphere of perception and comprehension. But, on the other hand, as the object-in-itself, as existence within "absolute openness," it remains permanently beyond consciousness and is conceptually unattainable.

Let me emphasize that, according to Kant, judgment about the self-existing, unknowable object is always antinomous. Arguments can be made

from both sides of the issue. This is true regarding our case, as well, insofar as interpretation of the phenomenon is itself contradictory. On the one hand, the phenomenon is entirely comprehensible, but on the other hand it is absolutely unknowable. The ability to be knowable and unknowable does not reflect two opposite sides of the phenomenon, but constitutes its unity; the more the phenomenon becomes conscious, the more it slides away from consciousness; the more it enters the frames of perception, the more sensibly it emerges, and beyond which it is encircled by eternal darkness. The very reason for the phenomenon's elusiveness is its openness, that is, its ability to be known. The phenomenon, as an object-in-itself, is free from any kind of determination. But insofar as it has a conscious essence – which at the same time implies full determination by cause or motivation – we can assume that freedom and necessity exist mutually within a single entire phenomenon. It would take us too long to discuss these antinomous descriptions of the phenomenon, so let us return to our analogy.

Suppose that unconsciousness, as something that lies beyond consciousness, is an independent and self-existing essence. If we consider it as a phenomenon, we must conclude that the self-existence of unconsciousness implies its “openness” toward consciousness. Unconsciousness cannot exist independently without consciousness, unless it realizes its openness toward its existential feature – cognition. In this process of self-realization, it is revealed as an object of perception and of entire comprehension. But if by this self-exploration it actually hides itself and establishes its incognizable essence, then the entire process remains imperceptible, as well. The unconscious part retains independence and self-existence through losing self-existence and independence from consciousness. This is why the process of passing into consciousness is potentially endless, for this process does not annihilate unconsciousness, but rather establishes it more strongly. Thus, if we assume that a phenomenon open to consciousness is an independent self-existing process creating an endless stream of recovering the covered and passing it to perception-thinking, we can consider unconsciousness to be a horizon toward which the stream of consciousness is eternally striving.

It should be noted that although this merging is inaccessible, nevertheless it belongs to consciousness, because the existence of this phenomenon-in-frames is possible only through the endless process of its perception and interpretation. That is, consciousness contains unconsciousness as the inexhaustible source of its conscious movement. It is constituted of wholeness, openness, uniqueness and freedom. What might be such a self-existing phenomenon, which establishes its originality and independence from consciousness by entering into the latter? This is consciousness itself taken into its phenomenal integrity as a totally free and unique essence. In the process of the self-cognition of any spiritual event, consciousness comes into collision with its own self – its unity, freedom, and unique “me”; this free uniqueness is unconsciousness, which always exists through its realization in consciousness, and thanks to this eternal life, remains mainly independent from consciousness.

Now we can answer the question: “What is unconsciousness?” Unconsciousness is the same as consciousness, but taken into its existential unity as a free and unique phenomenon, an endless source for the processes taking place in consciousness.

THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX

Does such a definition correspond with Freud’s notion that the Oedipus complex is an expression of unconsciousness? It does, but only if we consider the problem from a phenomenological point of view.

According to the phenomenological method we must consider the Oedipus complex not as existing in reality, but as isolated within its ideal essence. Then to “exclude” the complex from the determination of real existence helps to interpret the meaning of the true essence of this complex. Such an indifferent position toward reality means that the Oedipus complex is not considered in its causative origin; it means as well that it is not evaluated from a moral point of view because both of these moments – the physical-effective and the ethical – are external factors of the given complex; they cannot be derived internally from its essence, but determine it externally.

Thus, phenomenology requires consideration of the Oedipus complex in its pure essence, as existing within itself, without ethical evaluation or perception of its psychophysical origin. But what else should we consider? If we do not observe it as a real event, which could be explained through causal relations or judged morally, then the Oedipus complex is an idealistic phenomenon, which includes the basis and the idea of its own existence. Consequently, on the level of ideas, the complex must be considered as a sign system – as a reflection of an inner meaning, which gives existence to the complex itself.

Sexual aspirations toward one’s mother may suggest a self-essence of being – in other words, a human being striving to become a source of his own self. This aspiration comes into conflict with the father, who is the actual source. The human being, as an ideal creature, or spiritual phenomenon, strives to avoid his causative determinants and thus to achieve existence not externally, but internally, on the basis of his own self.

In this light, the Oedipus complex is nothing but a conditional-symbolic personification of phenomenological judgment, in which the real event is “excluded” from the necessary relations of reality and is changed into an ideal phenomenon, carrying in itself its own source. But the problem is that the Oedipus complex does exist in reality. It is not only a physical striving or fatal conflict, but also an ideal content, which obviously cannot be limited by the frames of the real event. So, the question emerges – can any event existing in reality exceed this reality by obtaining a conditional-symbolic layer, thus becoming a hieroglyph, which due to its symbolic nature goes beyond real existence? The Oedipus complex is very much a real-unreal phenomenon. We cannot perceive or evaluate it directly, but

only indirectly. Two mutually-exclusive layers coexist within its frames: one is the layer of reality, when the Oedipus striving in becoming one's fate is opposed to the norms of life and bound with an objective determination; the other is the conditional-symbolic layer, with the complex being the sign of the unreal aspiration of the human being. This gets free from determination by the external world and becomes the source of its own self. Thus, the real complex is phenomenologically reduced and changed into a pure phenomenon within itself.

The above supports Freud's assumption that the Oedipus complex is the symbol of the unconsciousness. We define unconsciousness as a binatural, antinomous entity – something independent from consciousness and, at the same time, open toward it. It is this "openness" that brings its double nature into the frame of a single essence; the openness itself is the absolute, unattainable essence, which simultaneously, is perceptible and cognizable. The Oedipus complex meets these requirements. The orientation toward mother means indirectly an unreal aspiration to envelope or be its own source or, in other words, an ideal existence in itself. But insofar as this striving is real, we can conclude that the potential for self-existence is simultaneously open for knowing reality because by entering reality and becoming determined, it establishes itself as an unreal, undetermined phenomenon.

The Oedipus complex is "attached" to the reality of a human being as a totally different essence, in the same way as unconsciousness enters consciousness, while remaining a different, independent nature. Due to such dualism, the Oedipus complex – as the symbol of unconsciousness – conquers those spheres of reality where neglecting determination is seen as a "sign of freedom." One such sphere is dreams, where reality is distorted and meanings are given as free associations. A similar situation occurs during "bracketing" – when consciousness banishes to the unconscious the determinants of a physical event. The Oedipus complex lies at the bottom of such spontaneous physical events.

Thus, the Oedipus complex is the symbol of unconsciousness, as far as one internally includes and expresses the antinomy and entity attached to the other. There is both difference and similarity between the existence of unconsciousness and its symbol. The difference occurs because an unattainable essence of unconsciousness is played up through the complex, thus becoming only its conditional sign. The similarity occurs insofar as the unconsciousness, as a phenomenon, does not exist without such a conditional transformation in consciousness. The very act of transformation and symbolization implies its phenomenal existence. The conclusion then is that the Oedipus complex differs from unconsciousness and, due to this difference, becomes a phenomenon similar to it.

Both difference and similarity between unconsciousness and its complex mean that the Oedipus complex is not the only symbol of unconsciousness; there might exist other symbols of unconsciousness, or other complexes as well. They supplement the Oedipus complex, which at some

degree implies them in its unconsciousness as their pure opportunity. But these very complicated (even paradoxical) relations can be admitted only if we consider each complex (including the Oedipus complex) as a pure phenomenon, in other words, as being “excluded” from reality and free from external determinants. Through such a phenomenological approach we are able to free the complex from all that determines it from the side of reality. Thus, the Oedipus complex is unconsciousness in its pure symbolic being without the sexual motive, which otherwise narrows, externally determines, and even destroys it.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FALL

The next step in this phenomenological discussion is to open the horizon of possibilities. As we have seen, the Oedipus complex as a symbol of unconsciousness is related to other conditional complexes. That is why, through phenomenological analysis, we can discover other opportunities in the hieroglyph of unconsciousness.

The Oedipus complex includes some internal opposition – the eminent aspiration of a human being to embrace his own source and become like God is, in real life, transformed into a sexual striving that belittles him. Why does the movement toward perfection become distorted in the context of the Oedipus complex? There is only one reason: to show how the worlds of the real and the unreal are incompatible, that is, to expose the vanity of the mundane world in contrast to the kingdom of Heaven. The fate of Oedipus implies conflict between soul and body, which is why the eminence of the soul toward the absolute source may turn into carnal passion and aggression, belittling the human being. So, the way to perfection begins with a feeling of imperfection and is revealed during the endless fight with this feeling. The heaviest sense of sin troubles Oedipus and makes him wander from town to town. This sense does not end at the horizon of his own country, it is directed rather toward everybody and everything, toward the ideal world.

The experience of the Fall as a stimulus of perfection is a new variation which is implied in the Oedipus complex as one of the opportunities. If the major motive of Oedipus is fate (which, according to Freud’s interpretation, is simultaneously the cause and the result of unconsciousness), the motive of the Fall is freedom. The New Testament discovers how to defeat fate. This new horizon of opportunity can be discovered through the experience of regret. Regret is stretched endlessly backward to the past as regret, as perfection lost. It joins the present as recognition, and the experience of the Fall is directed toward the future as belief and hope in God’s support on the way to perfection. Let us discuss the three forms – regret, confession, and belief – separately:

(1) *Regret*. Regret, being stretched backward in the immemorial past mourns the loss of paradise. But this nostalgia is not directly enforced – it is transformed into another feeling. If regret were directly connected to its

roots, there would exist some fatal necessity incorporated into the infinity of the past. Regret thus would not be the result of a creative effort of the soul. But confession is a free action during all three phases. The aim of confession is metamorphosis – to free regret from the fatal determinism of the Fall and change it into other relations. Thus, the experience of the Fall is transformed and attached to the real life of the human being, but the subject begins to idealize its object because the past cannot be framed by reality. This is the way to idealize the past.

Marcel Proust's nostalgia toward his past is boundless, despite the impossible reconstruction of his childhood in his memory. As the Georgian philosopher, Merab Mamardashvili notes, the writer does not memorize his childhood, but rather creates a new reality, equivalent to the past. No doubt, each memory, as an artistic phenomenon, is the work of creation; it does not reflect the past, but as a self-existing phenomenon, comes as a consequence of it. However, Marcel Proust destroys even this connection between his memories and the past – the relation exists and, at the same time, does not exist. It exists according to the narration, but in terms of the style of narration – in particular, the endless, detailed description and infinite reflection upon the relations – we might suspect the existence of some other spiritual phenomenon. Does our mind construct an event that has never taken place? We give particular meaning and feel attraction to the past only from the viewpoint of the present, through the process of searching back, and if this search is endless, the world of the past can also be endlessly broadened.

It is this process that takes place in Marcel Proust's works. The writer considers the process of searching the past as endless because the link between memory and creation disappears. The search never ends because the past is like a river – it passes only once. It is impossible to reproduce it in words, but the writer strives toward it. In the search for times past, the writer changes memories into fantasy and transforms the memory determined by the past into a free creative process of constructing a new past.

This is the same process of the transformation of the soul as takes place during confession, when regret resulting from the Fall is freed from determination and is carried to another particular experience. The past, having been excluded from the stream of time, is freed from its own reality and is revealed as a sign, as an idea about some other past. But what is this other past? It is the paradise lost as a result of the Fall. The unconscious memory of it constitutes a feeling of regret for perfection and happiness immemorial. The incarnation of Christ destroyed the need for regret to be determined by the fact of the Fall. The idea of regret remains, but the feeling has changed into an undetermined, self-existing phenomenon. This freedom required its transformation or symbolization into some other experience.

(2) *Confession*. The same kind of transformation takes place in the second stage of confession. The lost paradise is conditionally transformed into an idealization of a particular past. The same is true regarding the experience of the first fall, which is the subject of symbolization through the

admission of the particular sins of a human being. This ritual of symbolization destroys any kind of determination.

In the process of confession the human being does not try to justify himself; he does not consider himself to be a victim of circumstances – as if fate has thrown him into sin. On the contrary, the person in confession becomes privately responsible for everything that burdens his soul and takes place because of his fate. Only the person who is free from fate can become subject to the supreme divine court to receive amnesty for his sins and enter the third and most important phase of confession: the freedom of belief.

(3) *Belief*. The phenomenon of belief, as the original, super-conscious part of the soul, exists in total freedom. It can be determined neither by external force, nor by internal necessity. Belief differs from the other unconscious phenomena of the soul, when an anonymous determinant acts, although secretly. Such a determinant cannot be admitted regarding belief. Although in its pure essence, it is the belief in an absolute substance; yet the freedom of the relation between God and a human being does not allow us to suggest any determined connection between belief and its object.

I do not believe because I am afraid of God, or because I hope in a mystery; rather, I have hope and fear because I already believe in God. The people did not believe in Christ because of his miracles. On the contrary, Christ did miracles because they believed. Although the basis for belief is the internal necessity of consciousness, its very first seed, its energetic root, exists beyond any necessity – unconditionally and insubordinate to any kind of determinism. As we see, in all three phases of confession – regret, the confession, and belief – it is essential to overcome determinism and establish freedom in order to symbolically transform original sin and obtain belief in the absolute.

THE PHENOMENON OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS

Thus, two possible variations of unconsciousness – experience of the Fall and the Oedipus complex – manifest themselves in the second stage of phenomenological discussion. Let us pass over the third stage and identify what remains the same in the two different variations of the phenomenon. What might be a constant in both the Oedipus complex and the experience of the Fall; what common point unites these two in one general essence? The phenomenological approach requires a definition of this generality through the difference between its elements – in other words, by perception of the idea of unity through the special essence of each variation.

So, what is the difference between the Oedipus complex and the experience of the Fall? Both variations imply aspiration towards perfection and comprehension of their own sources, but the ways to achieve this purpose are different in principle. In the case of Oedipus, this aspiration is transformed into a fatal, sexually aggressive striving, which shows that mundane reality does not correspond with the ideal world. In the second case, the experience of the Fall raises regret and a free striving toward

divine perfection. Confession, and thereby gaining communion with the perfect substance, constitutes a free choice by a human being in his real life. Thus, the act of confession implies an idea of the comparability of the real and unreal, soul and body, and an idea of freedom that is no longer transformed into fate.

The phenomenon of Christ unites these two opposites by maintaining the mentioned differences. The Redeemer neither avoids nor obeys his fate; it is his free choice, as the correspondence of his life with the prophecies of the Old Testament. Personal responsibility for fate means that one is ready to bear the burden of the malice of fate as one's own sins. Christ fully accepted his fate and through this act, fate lost its necessity. Everything that was fatal became a free choice of the way of truth. Consequently, even death changed its meaning – from being the end of life, it became the process of transformation into a new life. In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ defeated the human fear of death and made his choice according to the supreme will. Thus, he accepted the crucifixion beforehand and overcame the frames of his fate, making it free from internal necessity, from the fear of death. This crucial step established unconsciousness and destroyed determinism, both externally and internally, by total freedom.

We will not comment on the well-known fact that Christ expiated Adam's sin and made human beings free from the Fall. But his sacrifice also means that he annihilated the Oedipus complex, as well. The phenomenon of Christ involves the idea of the Oedipus Complex in its pure stage – as aspiration toward its own source. Christ, indivisible from the Father, simultaneously carries the source of his own self, which is an idea given to him without motivation from the very beginning. Being the pure idea of originality, Christ annihilated the Oedipus Complex, freed human beings from the grasp of fate, and located his sinful nature in the perspective of divine perfection. This is why adherence to the rituals of the Christian Church (e.g., Prayer, Confession, Eucharist) is the remedy against unconscious mental disorder.

Thus, we have finished the third stage of phenomenological discussion and discovered the invariant between the two different variations of the complex. Inasmuch as these complexes are symbols of unconsciousness, this invariant can be attached to unconsciousness as its entire phenomenon. But what is the phenomenon of unconsciousness? What is consciousness in its phenomenal reality? For the believer, it is the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This indivisible entity that exists in Christian consciousness corresponds to the phenomenological concept of unconsciousness. The entity of the Father and the Son is expressed in the indivisible entity both of self-existing essence and of phenomenon (openness toward the world). The feature of openness is carried by the Holy Spirit – it is through his blessing that self-existing essence is opened toward the world created by him. This is how we learn unconsciousness in phenomenological interpretation – the essence existing beyond consciousness, independent from it, and which is, on the other hand, consciousness taken in its absolute entity.

This is an absolute substance, self-existing, endlessly opening toward life as a phenomenon. The very model of the above-mentioned way of interpreting unconsciousness is the absolute model of Christianity – the Holy Trinity.

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CHAPTER VI

A PERSONAL APPROACH TO SYMBOLIC REALITY

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Symbols exist in and through persons. Symbols are the intermediary between the world internal and the world external, between inner and external reality of the human being as a person. As Florensky wrote, symbols are the organs of our contact with reality. Symbols are openings that have pierced through our subjectivity. Symbol is an integral and indivisible quality which the person can bear within him/herself. The unique and unrepeatable person can contain within him/her the universal, as positive quality and attainment.

According to Florensky, “Being has an inner aspect, which it turns towards itself, in its non-confusion with everything that is not itself; and an outer aspect, directed toward another being. There are the two aspects: they are not affixed to each other, but are in original unity. They are one and the same being, even if oriented in different directions. One aspect serves the self-affirmation of being; the other serves its revelation, its manifestation, its showing forth, or whatever name one might give to the life that connects one being with another.

In the terminology of the ancients, these two aspects of being are called essence or substance, ‘*ousia*’, and activity or energy, ‘*energeia*’”. When the medieval thinkers say that every being has its energy, and that only non-being has none, this ontological axiom is fully approved by common sense. It means, after all, that everything that genuinely exists has life within itself and manifests that life – testifies to its own existence – by a manifestation of its life, and in so doing, it testifies not to others only, but to itself as well. This manifestation of life is, indeed, the energy of being.

Symbol is a trace of sacred being in ordinary life. As Umberto Eco mentioned in “Symbol”, “Any symbol is an enigma”. Florensky defined symbol as “Being, when it’s more than itself” – this is the basic definition of a symbol. The symbol is something that reveals, through itself, that which is not itself, that which is more than itself – and yet something that essentially announces itself through this symbol. We shall unfold this formal definition: a symbol is that essence which fuses or mingles its energy with the energy of a more valuable essence. The symbol thereby carries within itself this more valuable essence.

It is easily said that “this more valuable essence” is God. But in our time, when struggle for freedom passed the boundary of Nietzsche’s “God has died”, it resulted in the declaration that values of human life are no longer postulated on the basis of Absolute values. Disintegration of in-

stances of the supreme values, ideas, and ideals entailed a mixture, namely the flattening of noumenality and phenomenality. Even more, we can see, through the majority of philosophical works, that Society replaces God in the contemporary understanding of world reality. The only opportunity to reveal the sacred dimension of human being is to “return to the person”, as Paul Ricoeur suggested.

The person is an ontological category. Person creates cosmos out of chaos. Person is possessed of cosmic beginning. According to Berdyaev, the affirmation of the supreme value of personality is not at all concern for personal salvation, but rather the expression of the person's supreme creative calling in the life of the world. It is possible because the “personality as an existential centre, presupposes capacity to feel suffering and joy. Nothing in the object world, nation or state or society, or social institution, or church, possesses this capacity” (Berdyaev). Person speaks not only as man belonging to the natural and social order, but also to a different dimension of being, to the spiritual world. Person is a form of being, higher than anything natural or social. Society is a small part of person as merely its social condition; the world too is merely part of person. Person is the existential centre, not society and not nature. Person realizes itself in social and cosmic life, but it can do this only because, it is independent from nature and from the principle of society. According to Berdyaev, the beginning of a new epoch presupposes a change in human mentality, the liberation of man's consciousness from the power of “objectness”.

Berdyaev vindicated the inequality and disparity of persons in their creativity. According to him, the temptation of an absolute equality leads to the extermination of all qualities and values, of all upsurges and ascents; it is the spirit of non-being. Being was conceived in inequality, in a heightening of qualities, in individual distinctions. Star is distinguished from star by their glory. The tendency in contemporary society to worship quantity over quality has subordinated human life to the caprice of the human passions, the interests and strivings for well-being and pleasure so that only utilitarian values are triumphant. Everything is made subject to the good of individual people and to a mechanical quantity of people. The inward spiritual core of the human person is denied. Good and evil are acknowledged as relative and are evaluated as dependant upon societal usefulness. Consciousness of obligations is replaced by endless demands and pretensions. According to this world-view and world-sense, the person sets forth his demands and pretensions, independent of his qualities and services. Irresponsible pretentiousness paralyses the awareness of obligations. It is a moral ulcer destroying our societal life. Berdyaev alerted us to the fact that the effect of “extinguishing of all qualitative distinctions” and of all that is uplifting would be a return to the primordial non-being, wherewith is a complete equality as total confusion. The uprising of the primordial chaotic non-being occurs periodically within history; whole societal movements reflect its light.

The appeal to symbolic reality allows us to overcome personal boundaries. In Bakhtin's words, a person as an "organic unity" is capable of "transcending itself, that is, exceeding its own boundaries". "Transcending of self" is the activity of "creation". This personal activity translates belief into reality, which closely resembles what we have called "the sacrifice of self". To be open, a person needs to come into time. This dimension from the beginning till end gives inner tension to human beings between birth and death. This perspective shapes the possibility of identification with the question, "Who is coming?" The person tries to answer, "It is I". The person exists as embodied which defines the spatio-temporal life of the person. This dimension of person determines his/her unique existence as shaped by fact of death.

The unity of the living person is fixed by one's forthcoming death. Mikhail Bulgakov wrote in *The Master and Margarita*: "Yes, man is mortal, but that would be only half the trouble. The worst of it is that he's sometimes unexpectedly mortal – there's the trick!" This unexpectedness allows the person to be vigilant and thereby to transcend the spatio-temporal boundaries of "here and now" and uncover activity itself. When the feeling of death becomes dull, consciousness loses the alarm clock awaking the person to presence as wakefulness. Such a soul has already finished his/her metamorphosis in "there-life", and the *Dasein* is replaced by an empty shell. The sense of death pierces the personal existence and personality as an existential centre and presupposes the capacity to feel suffering and joy. The sweetness of life arises from the influence of the poison of death and gives rise to desire. All of eternity can never motivate desire or even simple inclination. Such motivation belongs only to mortal beings. Beauty exists principally in the forms of deficit and scarcity because of its relation to time rather than to eternity. Socrates noted that the possibility of estimating a person's life as happy or unfortunate comes only after death, for it is life as pierced by the call of death that values on value.

The inequality of mortal persons is manifest at all levels of existence: in deep feelings of life and death, in intensity of life, in admissibility of another, in symbolically equipped reality and especially in access to the centers of vitality itself, which requires being needed and loved. Even after death being could develop differently in various persons. If it opens a new chance, for example, of ascension to the true scales of personhood is not available to the body in its lifetime.

According to Florensky, spatio-temporal actuality both is and is becoming, it is identical to itself both because it is a certain spatio-temporal actuality and because it is becoming a certain spatio-temporal actuality through its relatedness to others. Thus, the law of identity is always both grounded and violated: A is A and A is becoming A through not-A, i.e. through a denial of itself. He wrote, "Each time it is necessary to become convinced not only of the truthfulness of the thesis **P** but also to clarify whether it is not half of some antinomy **P'**" for the purpose of avoiding

heresy (“*hairesis* [the Greek term] means choice, tendency, a disposition to something”), i.e. “a rational one-sidedness that claims to be everything”.

Florensky’s understanding of spatio-temporal being reflects his understanding of being itself. He explained the meaning of his “concrete metaphysics” in his work *At the Watersheds of Thought (U vodorazdelov mysli)* According to Florensky, we could say that being in full possession of itself is always present to itself as essence. In existence, being reveals itself as non-concealment, but in the act of revealing being keeps its non-concealment, and therefore being, as essence, resides safely and is intact. Essence and existence are intact. Here we can distinguish the inner Logos that divides the totality of existence. This is possible if being itself is an all-embracing unity or being in a superlative degree.

Such understanding of being makes manifest two dimensions of personal being: 1) a vertical dimension to an all-embracing unity and a superlative degree of perfection; 2) a horizontal dimension of existents in ordinary life. The person's supreme creative calling in the life of the world presupposes a relation between these two dimensions of personal being. This is better understood through Florensky’s explanation of the connection between two beings. He wrote:

The connection between beings – their mutual relation and revelation – is itself something real. Without breaking away from the centers that it connects, neither can it be reduced to them. This connection is synergy, the co-activity of beings. It necessarily reveals, through itself, both of the beings that it connects. It is not numerically identical to either being, since it is something new in relation to each one of them; but it is each one of them, since it is that which reveals the respective beings. After all, outside of and apart from its energy – and what’s more, an energy that has been assimilated – this being will remain not-discovered, not-revealed, not-known. And yet a certain energy of being can be assimilated only by the energy of the being that is doing the assimilating. If there is no medium for assimilating the stream of energy, i.e., if there is no stream of energy in response, then this means that the being on the receiving end has not shown itself as receiving, has not shown itself as actively receptive. Then, as far as the original stream of energy is concerned, this unresponsive being is – nothing: it might just as well not exist. Then the current of energy will go right through and pass this being by, without touching it, without noticing it, and without being perceived or noticed in return.

Florensky tried to make this clearer by resorting to the theory of resonance. There we cannot separate the oscillations of the resonance from the oscillations that give rise to the resonance. Florensky pointed out that

the resonance is no longer the activity of one circuit or the other, but the circuits' co-activity. He elaborated the concept of synergy.. What is oscillating in the resonator is not only the resonator's energy, nor the energy of the vibrator alone, but the synergy of both. And the presence of this synergy enables the two circuits, even if spatially separated, to become one. Florensky wrote:

Thus, resonance is synergy, the carrier of the beings that generate the resonance. It is more than itself: it is resonance and at the same time the cause of the resonance – that which causes the resonance to be. And, to that extent, it is the being that we regard as more valued and more important, inasmuch as it is more correct to give first place to the being that is revealed by its energy, and second place to the energy that does the revealing, but which derives its value and existence from the being which is its source. And so we've just hit upon the concept of a symbol.

Each individual faces chaos in his own soul until he places himself in the context of his personal history. According to Florensky, "The life task of anyone is to perceive the structure and form of his family, its task, the law of its growth, its points of balance, the correlation of its different branches and their particular tasks, and, on the background of all this, to perceive one's own place in one's family and one's own task, which is not one's individual task, which one poses to oneself, but one's task as the member of a family, as the organ of a greater whole." Knowledge of one's identity, as we would call it now, becomes possible only through diachronic self-analysis: "It is necessary to find one's own place in history, to register oneself historically, to find one's own coordinates in history, one's genealogical latitude and longitude." (Florensky)

Each embodied person has this genealogical latitude and longitude because of birth. This inheritance is mine, but not me. This is something which I have in of myself, but it is still other than me. In the 20th century this Otherness of me is named the unconscious. According to Freud, the unconscious is a cauldron of seething desires, a bottomless pit of perverse and incestuous cravings. Unconscious demands push the person to act in reality. The acting is blind without knowledge, but knowledge is lifeless without the 'bottomless' unconscious, especially when we try to answer the question "Who am I?" and look into the deepness of our souls. As Carl Jung mentioned, if a person would like to understand him/herself, it's by "revivalist gatherings and ecstatic sects, through love and hate, through the experience of passion in every form in his own body, he would reap richer stores of knowledge than text-books a foot thick could give him". According to Jung, the unconscious influences all of our experiences and behaviors, most especially the emotional ones, but we only know about it indirectly, by looking at those influences. Jung suggested that we possess a

collective unconscious. It is the reservoir of our experiences as a species, a kind of knowledge we are all born with. The contents of the collective unconscious are called archetypes. Jung also called them dominants, imagos, mythological or primordial images, etc., but the name “archetypes” seems to have won out. An archetype is an unlearned tendency to experience things in a certain way. It acts as an “organizing principle” on the things we see or do.

Umberto Eco describes Jung’s collective unconscious as symbolic reality.

The contents of the collective unconscious are the archetypes, archaic types, universal images, representations collectives: lunar, solar, vegetal, and meteorological representation; they are more comprehensible in myths, and more evident in dreams and visions. Jung is explicit in saying that these symbols are neither mere signs (he uses the Greek technical word ‘*semeia*’) nor allegories. They are genuine symbols precisely because they are ambiguous, full of half-glimpsed meanings and in the last resort inexhaustible. They are paradoxical because they are contradictory....If the archetypes are indescribable and infinitely interpretable, their experience cannot be but amorphous, undetermined, and unarticulated. Symbols are empty and full of meaning at the same time.

Symbols hold two dimensions of human beings: vertical and horizontal. By means of the modern baggage of knowledge we could call symbols archived files, but we should unarchive to identify ourselves. This can be done only by our own energy. According to Florensky, “I myself perceive this revelation to me and within me. As we’ve said, this revelation of essence is fused and mingled with the energy of my perception, laying the foundation for the entire further process of cognition. This process in no way exceeds the original capacity of the fusion of energies, or synergy “The organ which establishes at will the connection between cognizer and cognized is the word, – and especially the name, or some equivalent that can be used as a name: the metonym” (translated by Penny Burt).

While Linguistics distinguishes between various forms of languages, the goal of all these activities is to express a meaning. Within the parameters of this single goal, activities which seem to differ quite radically are nonetheless united by a single common term: language. Florensky suggested, “The rational organism, as an integral whole, internally cohesive in many ways, responds to the energy of cognized reality with its whole being, not simply through some one of its functions....There is really only one language – the language of the whole organism’s active self-manifestation; and only a single species of word – articulated by the whole body”. He mentioned that there may be some activity which turns out to be the shortest, and therefore the easiest, route to the discharge of inner energy, but the

language of the articulate word is a universal instrument; it is– the grand piano among the instruments of the spirit – the most many-sided and the most capable of serving the most various needs.

Words help to unarchive files of symbols in our unconsciousness. This process preforms all the hues and directions of spiritual movements which might arise, so that each appearance of the spirit – the newest, most unexpected and most individual – all finds itself in such a word as “home” prepared habitation. Florensky wrote:

It is the word alone, produced by the vocal organ that makes the cognitive process possible; the word alone that makes objective what was still subjective and had not seemed even to ourselves to be the cognized truth before the word came along. On the other hand, the word pronounced sums up our inward longing for reality and places before us the cognitive urge (*‘Sehnsucht’*) as a goal that has been achieved and a value that has been secured for consciousness” (translated by Penny Burt).

To underline this point Florensky introduced the term isotrope from geometry. Geometry shows that whatever the distance between two points in space, one can always construct a path along which this distance is equal to zero. The line of this path is the so-called isotrope. By establishing an isotropic connection between the points, we can make any two points directly contiguous to each other. Thus we can compare the word-utterance to this contact between cognizer and cognized along the isotrope: although remaining spatially separate, they prove to be mutually superimposed. The word, as the ontological isotrope, according to Florensky is a bridge between the I and the non-I.

Words help us as a certain operative system to unarchive files of collective memory. As Florensky wrote in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*:

The whole theory of knowledge is, in the final analysis, a theory of memory. Memory is the activity of assimilation in thought (i.e., creative reconstruction from representations) of that which is revealed by mystical experience in Eternity, or, in other words, the creation in Time of symbols of Eternity.... One can touch once again the once-already-experienced time-transcending mystical reality that lay at the base of a single representation that has passed and that is to lie at the basis of another representation, which is coming and which is kindred to the first in the unity of mystical content.

A person uses old symbols, but fills them up with new senses. Florensky sees the process of cognition as creating on the lower planes

models and schemes, and on the higher planes – symbols. According to Florensky, the symbol is the essence that carries the energy, grafted to its own, of another essence. And this other, second essence is revealed through the energy of the first – i.e., the symbol's – essence.

But we should remember that symbolic reality holds the vertical dimension of human life. This line has two orientations: 'up' and 'down'. The horizontal line of our ordinary life has direction from birth to death with machine coordinates. It specifies our life. Time is formed by concrete processes as a result of consecutive changes of its qualitatively new conditions. We can call this new concrete process a detached process, according to computer language. If there is no qualitative change, there is no time, for time is a qualitative unity. Time opens the process of identification. The identification of qualitative unity in a time stream is possible in the presence of productive action. For this purpose, the person should estimate aims of actions, means and tools for its achievement depending both on the individual human factor, and on the cultural context as a whole.

Explaining processes of "to be" and "to become" is better done in terms of time in ancient Egyptian esoteric thought. There time itself was seen as having two distinct, yet vital characteristics. These were expressed by two terms: '*neheh*' and '*djet*'. Instead of the three linear divisions of past, present and future, Egyptian language divided time into two 'aspects' which can best be understood by our concepts of 'change' and 'completion' or 'perfection'. The concept of '*neheh*' is perhaps the closest to the modern perception of time. This is the time of an activity in progress or incomplete time. It is often said of '*neheh*'-time that it 'comes': it is time as an incessantly pulsating stream of days, months, seasons, and years. For the Egyptians 'change', as '*neheh*'-time, was seen as an 'aspect' or "representation", as the 'becoming one'. The conception of '*djet*'-time is considered an 'aspect' or 'representation'. However, instead of the "becoming one" '*djet*'-time stresses the 'completed one' or "totality" in the sense of an ultimate and unalterable state of perfection. '*Djet*'-time is that which 'remains,' 'lasts,' and "endures"; this is the time in which we distinguish the completed. '*Djet*'-time belongs to processes of the world beyond and to passive conditions, and '*neheh*'-time pertains to processes of real world and activity. In the Russian language there is no future time; it sets a life "in the present as continued in infinity". Thus, the attempt to set action in the future or to set activity from the present into the future collides with unsolved problems at the level of Russian grammar. There is no unequivocal form either for the first, or for the second in the language itself. The Russian language does not provide *simpliciter* for proper activity as a change of an external world or as a change of one's own attitude to the world.

Taking into account the aforesaid, we could say that symbols contain convoluted time of the concrete activity. The length of a time interval in a symbol is derivative from a certain property and quality. By means of these the identification is attained, – hence the self-sufficiency of the activity which is necessary for the identification of the given detached process.

Human activity is impossible without emotions and feelings. In accordance with this, symbols fill up with the potentiality of activity expressed in emotional, strong-willed concentration. They are able to reproduce plurality through singularity. On the one hand, symbols create the differentiation of the world of actions and forms the cognitive space of the world. Cognitive space correlates with space of actions. The more differentiation, the more symbols and the richer the cognitive space. Symbols are powerful because of the potentiality of certain activity. Because of this they are fraught with danger. The same can be said about rituals as sacred human activity. The goal of this expression is not the energies themselves – physical, occult, etc. – as registered from the outside, but rather the meaning which they introduce into the world. On the other hand, we don't know what we are doing by unarchiving archived files. Opened activities could destroy not only the one who discovered it, but the whole system of the world. The plurality of symbols as an indication of differentiated actions set the richness and variety of processes and activities in the world. Through the process of recombination a new symbol could be established, connected with previous symbols, but possessing unique inherent characteristics which distinguish it qualitatively from the previous symbols some operations join several symbols on the basis of plurality and diversity.

Symbolic reality contains chaos and cosmos as sacred by itself. The feeling of chaos creates three states which individuals find intolerable – the analytic, the emotional, and the morally impotent. This gives rise to 'set' religions. There are different etymological interpretations of this term: 1) as re-reading (from Latin 're' (again) + 'legio' (read); 2) treating carefully (from Latin 'relegere'); 3) re-connection (from Latin 're' (again) + 'ligare' (to connect, as in English ligament). According to Geerts, religion is "...a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, persuasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [sic] by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic". They are fused into what Geertz calls the "really real," which is created by "...the imbuing of a certain complex of symbols – of the metaphysics they formulate and the style of life which they recommend – with a persuasive authority which, from an analytic point of view is the essence of religious perspective". That is, these symbol systems make the ethos intellectually reasonable by showing it to represent a way of life adapted to the worldview, and to make the worldview emotionally convincing by being presented as an image well-suited to accommodate such a way of life.

Operation systems which 'unarchive' symbols are languages. According to Umberto Eco we could call it *semiotic drift*, that is, the idea that by entering language we enter an unavoidable hermeneutic circle where nothing can limit the endless game of signification. But in the act of knowing we distinguish between the content of the act and its form – between what we know and how we know it. Florensky examined both

orientations of thought which are already inherent in the spirit of the languages by analyzing the Aryan and Semitic language families. He wrote:

Through their etymology, the Semites have demonstrated that what they value in cognition is primarily reality, and in names – the objects, whereas the Aryans prize the rationality of the cognized, and in names – the concepts. On the one hand, ‘nomen’ – ‘omen’, the name is a token; on the other, ‘nomen’ – ‘notio’, the name is a concept. This is the antithesis between $\sqrt{\text{shem}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{gna}}$, philosophically crowned by the names of Spinoza and Kant. If we delved into this antithesis, we would hit upon the theoretico-cognitive and then the ontological juxtaposition of the feminine receptive principle and the masculine normative one (Kabbalah).

According to Florensky, what is known metaphysically enters into the knower, who, in turn, comes out of himself and moves toward the known while it endows with oneself. The first act is perception that is intrinsically mystical, whatever you may call it; while the second is the act of naming. By the first we embrace the known, and by the second we manifest ourselves in the world – in laboring towards the known. Word is orientated bilaterally first. The word transforms a life, and by a word a life acquires spirit. To weigh why words are magical, is to understand how and why we can influence the world by a word. Words are constructed by phonemes, morphemes and sememes. Especially the last one, sememe, is created by the participation of many generations of people. A sememe stays as if dead while the word is not used, but once it gets into a stream of live speech, the sememe revives and is full of internal force and value. Word is the condenser of will, of attention, and of all sincere life. The genes of a whole person and of genealogy to which one belongs emanate in the ‘speaking word’. Florensky wrote:

The purpose of the name was to pick out an object from the general chaos of impressions and to unite it with other objects which had already been coordinated. The function of the name is to connect. The name de-solders the disorder of consciousness and solders together its order. It is both real and ideal. It is the beginning [‘arche’] of articulation and differentiation, of harmony and structure. In short, the name is not a sound, but a word, ‘logos’, i.e., the word as reason and meaning, both merged together. And if this is so, then Goethe was right to translate the Word of the Gospel [John’s Logos] as Deed – ‘Tat’?. “In the beginning was the Deed [“Im Anfang war die Tat” – Faust One],” for only the word “name” can be a deed. In the word we partake of the Universal Word, Universal

Reason, the Universal Deed, in which “we live, and move, and have our being [Acts 17:28]” (translated by Penny Burt).

Symbolic reality exists in and through the person. Discovering of this reality is risky and dangerous for the person, for opens the vertical dimension of personal being with their ups and downs. Personal being as all-embracing unity, including a superlative degree or perfection presupposes the realization of either the highermost and holy degree, or the declining and lowermost degree. The loftier one can rise, the further below one can also fall. In this sense, the sincerely repentant sinner is dearer to the Lord than the ‘sinless’ righteous person.

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CHAPTER VII

CULTURE AS ACCOMPLISHMENT OF SYMBOLIC MEANING

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Culture can be understood only in the broad and comprehensive sense. This in itself is a challenge because no exact definitions are possible or even desirable in the case of such an emotional and intellectual complex as the culture of a specific society. Culture like love will always elude definitions and remain awareness beyond words and concepts. It is precious belonging that is within us and also around, linking us to a whole expanse of life and still retaining its uniqueness in time and space. To each of us, it will have a special meaning and significance.

Cultural Identities are constructed through constant negotiation of the “I” and the ‘other’. Cultural identity is a way of life based on principles of inclusivity, diversity and co-existence. It negotiates the precarious nuances of the Homo sapiens and the latter’s psyche and produces a pattern of expressions and actions through what could be described as its civilizational manifestations, broadly evident in its cultural expression and its seemingly abstract and significant ramifications. In fact, with culture, the medium is the message. “Culture only becomes an issue, something that is explicitly thought about, because certainties about one way of life have been called into question. The wide dissemination of culture raises important issues. It is not adequate to answer the question ‘What is Culture?’ by defining it as ‘the best’. This simply raises further queries: Who decides what ‘the best is? Who has access to ‘the best? Or put in another way, who is to be taken as cultured?

This is a humble attempt in defining ‘Culture’ as having symbolic meaning. In my perspective ‘Culture’ is a living social ‘*metaboly*’ of signs, not limited to a convention but in trans-action with the inner recesses of the person, and with the qualitative, physical and significant environment. The question is not whether culture is a ‘System’ or not but whether we shall continue to conceive of culture either as an inert mechanical system or code, incapable of self-critical cultivation, or as a living system, that is, a way of living fully open to contingency, spontaneity, purposive growth and decay.

We often hear and speak of ancient culture, modern culture, a cultured person, cultured behavior, and the like, evidently with some faint feeling that it is good to be cultured. This will naturally mean that culture is that which is related to the good, which springs from the good and also promotes the good (without entering into the discussion of the nature of good, knowledge of which no doubt, is essential). To have any idea of what true culture is, we may say safely that culture is the result of an under-

standing or at least of a real aspiration for an understanding of the position of man in the world. Culture is tilling, cultivating, refining and “the working of the ground in order to raise crops”. It is the condition consequent upon the development and strengthening of inherent powers and capacities – physical, mental, moral or spiritual, the transformation of nature into a methodical structure of proportion and completeness, conducive to and responsible for the peace and happiness, not only of the individual, but of humankind as a whole. A certain type of education is in the background of culture. Culture refers to whatever is the best and the highest of what is capable of being known.

Culture can be regarded as a human value, which however consists in a perfect equilibrium of the three fundamental values of truth, beauty and goodness. The harmony of these three values in a crystallized form appears to be what we usually understand by ‘culture’. As a human value, culture is something which is to be achieved by conscious effort, by the self-cultivation of the individual. The culture of the individual is dependent upon the culture of the group or class which again is dependent upon the culture of the whole society to which the group or class belongs.

Normally a scholar is regarded as a man of culture. Similarly a musician, a painter or a priest – each one is regarded as a man of culture. But culture, as such, encompasses all the disciplines or all human achievements in one whole where each has its own contribution. Proficiency in any one of the human efforts does not constitute culture, because the culture of the individual cannot be isolated from that of the group and the culture of the group cannot be isolated from the whole society. Therefore culture is several cultural activities of several human beings – all taken into account at once. It is only by “an overlapping and sharing of interests, by participation and mutual appreciation that the cohesion necessary for culture can be obtained.”

By cultural activity we do not mean an activity of physical adjustments alone. It is profoundly different, it is subjective, there are human cravings, which are deeper than the physical, and demand specific fulfilment. There is a body of ‘expedients’ that are devised by mankind for its survival; it is a response to the ‘Animal’ in man to the challenge of ‘Nature’. But the human challenge is unique and is profoundly different from that of the lower animals, in that not only it tries to get over the physical world, but creates a new world of its own. It works not only through instincts, but also through aspirations and ideas. It is these human aspirations and ideas that can make a civilization and create ‘Culture’.

Everything that occurs within a culture has meaning because cultural elements represent the view and outlook of that cultural group. By looking closely at a variety of cultural practices and attempting to interpret the view of these practices, we can try to figure how a cultural group thinks, and what the members think is important. To analyze a society, social scientists examine certain components of culture. A few indicators of culture that exist in society are symbols, norms and rules of behavior, values and

objects. Thus, the culture of a society is comprised of at least three distinct elements: What people think or what ideas they uphold? What they do, i.e., what values they pursue and the material products or aesthetic forms they create, which largely mould the tradition of the past and the aspirations for the future. Ideas give rise to habits and beliefs, thereby perpetuating themselves through social institutions that provide stability. Aesthetic forms reflect the artistic expressions of a culture in its visual arts, music, poetry, as well as the sense of beauty manifested in the day-to-day living of individuals and social groups. The values of a culture are formed by the interplay of both ideas and aesthetic forms and provide norms of conduct, standards of behavior, and sources of faith and vision. Of these three elements of culture, values are of the greatest importance. Values develop the precious assets of wisdom and discrimination in specific cultures; and they also provide the dynamism for action and change, and impart vitality and quality to the life of the people. The understanding of a particular culture requires a correct comprehension of the ideas underlying it and a measure of intelligence about its aesthetic forms; it is, however, the values of a culture that contain its essence and offer the best way of understanding it and participating in it. A living and a vital culture is rooted in authentic and healthy traditions, have the capacity of continuous renewal and adaptation, and are developed by new aspirations and bold innovations. In this way the past, the present and the future are reflected together. The humanities and the arts, the sciences and the technologies, the network of communications and relationships, the magic of poetry and the transcendence of religion – all these spheres of action and speculation form the pattern of culture. The rich and fascinating diversity of these patterns is a precious heritage of mankind that needs to be preserved and developed.

From the earlier period of human society, man has created values because mere facts never satisfied him. He has consistently examined facts in terms of meanings and values. The tendency to evaluate factual realities in terms of ends and means is the proof of man's interest in those objects and activities, which carry some value. As constituents of culture only those ideas, habits and technical processes were evolved by man, which contributed to the enrichment of life, 'entailing' deep changes in man's personality

To continue our point in a different way, we may invoke Rabindranath's celebrated distinction between "reality" or "truth" of art and fact. A fact is one we know or perceive dispassionately by standing apart from it. But the reality or truth of art is fused with human involvement, his in-depth feeling, imagination and intimate experience or realization. Rabindranath Tagore says, "What we call literature and fine arts are imbued with profound joy of human realizations...." Or, "actually speaking, art is encounter with the form of nature not as it is, but as it is constantly taking shape within the human heart. Art is the music that nature evokes in man." What Tagore wants to point out is that art reveals not the world's physical structure, but its human significance. Its truths are enacted and confirmed in our consciousness. To use as an example – (a) A chair and (b) Van Gogh's famous

painting of a Yellow Chair, in a sense both (a) and (b) are given, but the ways they are given are completely different. (a) is a concrete thing, which gives itself completely and is given to awareness as it is. Similarly, (b) is also given but not in the same sense as (a). What is given in a painting or a song does not stand apart from the way or the manner in which it is given. A natural or a physical object like a chair may also exist in a non-relational context. But the artist's famous Yellow Chair 'exists' or acquires meaning only in the context of the artist's intense experience or realization. A simple chair out there is transformed into an art object "only when" in the words of Dewey, "it lives in some individualized experience. We do not ordinarily look at our familiar chair or table as though we see in it some in-depth mystery or light that was never on earth before. But the artist sees in it a possibility or significance in his creative involvement in the object. It is quite meaningless to speak of possibilities with regard to an ordinary chair, though we can meaningfully talk about the possible ways of using them. And this makes the difference between our ordinary experience of material object and our aesthetic experience. An art object, such as a painting, has no ready-made and no unchanging essence but "is revealed every time it is aesthetically experienced." Its meaning changes and it is filled with different possibilities under the impact of sensitive and imaginative attention. Even the artist himself finds different meaning in it at different times and in different stages of his development. An art object, unlike the natural object, exists not because of any core of "monotonous identity" but because of its capacity to renew itself under the imaginative gaze of the artist. Thus the ordinary chair is only given in our senses as such, but it is not anchored in any creative involvement that discerns several possibilities in it. On the contrary an art object is given not as such but only in the context of emergent possibilities or meanings under contemplation of varying degrees of acuity and intenseness. A tradition has no fixed and compelling structure, which an artist has to follow blindly. This would destroy creativity and originality.

Therefore culture is learned and not biologically inherited and involves arbitrary assigned, symbolic meanings. The ability to assign arbitrary meanings to any object, behavior or conditions makes people enormously creative and readily distinguishes culture from animal behaviour. Animals can be taught to respond to cultural symbols, but they do not create their own symbols. Moreover, animals have the capability of limited tool manufacture and use, but the human tool use is extensive enough to rank as qualitatively different, and human tools often carry heavy symbolic meanings. The symbolic element of language, especially speech, is again a vast qualitative expansion over animal communication systems. Speech is infinitely more productive and allows people to communicate about things that are remote in time and space. Speech is one achievement of this process that uniquely identifies us as humans, even, for that matter, as artistic expression. Both are sign practices dependent on, and probably generative of, the achievement of symbolic representation, and both reveal that to be

human is to be a living, communicative symbol. In case of a symbolic sign, the process of interpretation comes to the foreground from cultural perspective; that is to say, to be human is to be an interpreter. The very achievement of symbolic significance starts upon the basis of vast capacities.

Therefore, culture generically is the distinctive characteristic of man as opposed to animals. It implies the whole pattern of human thought and behaviour, which is not genetically but socially transmitted. Animal behaviour or interaction is more or less rigid or species-determined and a biologically adaptive response to a relatively constant environment. Human behaviour, on the other hand, has indeed biological foundation, but this does not mean that human behaviour can be explained biologically. For man, as Rabindranath Tagore puts it, is an angel of surplus, possessing a dimension of self-conscious meaning and purpose, and so his behaviour is not a mere rigid, mechanical biological response to his environment but shows infinite variability. Through his diverse inter-action man continually modifies his environment and in this process continually recreates himself. Taken in this way culture is nurture as contrasted with biological needs, refinement or reformation of human nature through manifold interactions with environment. Culture, therefore, is the context where an individual not only becomes an aspect in handling and operating differently certain tools and executes certain performances but also learns how to regulate his life according to certain values and norms. In other words, there is a scope of individual improvement *qua* individual.

The development of intelligence and physical power, says Rabindranath, is equally necessary in animals and men for their purpose of living; but what is unique in man is the development of his consciousness, which gradually deepens and widens the realization of his immortal being, the perfect, the eternal. It inspires those creations of his that reveal the divinity in him – which is humanity – in the varied manifestation of truth, goodness and beauty, in the freedom of activity, which is not for his use but for his ultimate expression. The individual man must exist for ‘man the great’, and must express him in disinterested works, in science and philosophy in literature and arts, in service and worship. This is true religion, which is working in the heart of all ‘his’ religions in various names and forms. He knows and uses this endless world and thus attains greatness, but he realizes his own truth where it is perfect and thus finds his fulfillment.

Toynbee calls this a process of “Etherealization“. Etherealization is the tendency of a ripening culture to withdraw itself from the life of the merely external world and concentrate more on the human element. It is suggested that cultural development is a gradual crystallization of more defined instruments. According to Toynbee, “It connotes omission and elimination whereas in the concrete examples of the phenomenon from which we have inferred the validity of our law the ultimate effect which the law produces by its operations is not diminution but an enhancement of practical efficiency or of aesthetic satisfaction or intellectual understanding or of God-like love.” When man is freed from the compulsions of the external

form he is led to be engrossed in issues that concern his destiny, good and purpose. Toynbee remarks, "The growing personality or civilization tends to become its own environment and its own challenger and its own field of action,"

The etherealization, Toynbee tries to show, affects even the secular aspect of "Culture" and communal life. The cumbrous first adaptations are replaced in the course of our strivings by a more integrated and simple alternatives. Language becomes increasingly classic, and art forms begin to gain a more integrated style. The original dumb response and reaction slowly becomes a conscious endeavor. Physical action is increasingly reduced to a lower status, and the attention is directed more towards the spiritual. These have been, according to Toynbee, characteristics of a growing culture. This is a shift from external to the internal aspect of life. Now there is a marked change in all explanations of the problems with which the men are confronted. When culture becomes alive to such a transfer of the sphere of its activities it does not preoccupy itself with mere biological adjustment. It then becomes more concerned with the problem of human Destiny. Toynbee believes "The criterion of growth towards self-determination is a prosaic formula for describing the miracle by which life enters into the kingdom."

Hence the motivating idea of culture is to augment man's powers in the pursuit of enhancing his physical and mental capacities manifold. It is no longer a myth that man should have arrogated to himself the status of the crowning glory of evolution or that he is superior to other forms of life, including the strongest, the swiftest, the fiercest and the largest of animals. No animal, however abominable, can capture man alive, but man can capture any animal alive with relative ease. This is due to his culture and the artifacts or tools he has created through centuries of his untiring endeavor. Culture is nothing but the ever changing and developing nature in the entire multiplicity of objectifications of human activity. The human activity is objectified not only in material objects but spiritually as well: Science education, professional skills and talents, works of art, for all their material "tangibility" are objectifications of social consciousness and knowledge. The same is true for spiritual needs as cultural phenomena: they are necessarily objectified, all the while remaining spiritual rather than material needs. It has often been held that objects, which enter as elements into culture, are not "natural" or independent or self-subsistent. They are dependent on self-consciousness and as items in it; their status is symbolic or expressive. What they express is a certain self-realization".

The culture of a person therefore consists in the sense of values fashioned in the light of his knowledge. The consciousness that constitutes culture is as much a value consciousness as it is a factual consciousness, it is the consciousness of the actual and the possible apprehended as significant. Man is constantly picturing to himself the possibilities of his existence; these possibilities constitute the values for which he lives. Being conscious of these possibilities man succeeds in emancipating himself from the other

factual necessities, and effects his entry into the realm of values. To live in the realm of values, is for him to be attached to and anxious for things whose existence is bound up with his own creative longings and aspirations, and the requirements of his specifically human or spiritual self.

Values are immediate objects of self-conscious individual experience. The knowledge and experience of the individual enter social communication and tradition in the form of symbols. In this sense the world of culture is a world of symbols expressive of knowledge and experience evolved in the process of value seeking. Culture emerges as a revelation in the individual psyche and enters social tradition creatively as symbol. The determinant of culture lies in the dialectical interplay of seeking, experiencing, reflection, symbolizing and communication. The understanding of culture involves understanding the work of ideal processes of human self-realization within a historically given context of symbols and meanings.

Cultural nuclei are the products of the conflux of the fields of creativity and appreciation. After they come into existence through the conflux of the fields of creativity and appreciation, they acquire relative independence. Cultural nuclei may be called 'transpersonal' in the sense that they are objective and relatively independent. Transpersonal cultural nuclei tend to raise a society to higher and higher stages of cultural progress and refinement. There is a cultural diversity in a society in which there is a preponderance of cultural nuclei. There is cultural diversity only in a free and 'open society'. The possibility of cultural diversity is ruled out in a totalitarian and 'closed society'.

Culture is the excellence of a Society. It is possible for almost all types of societies to have cultural nuclei, which may be either few or large in number. In aboriginal and mediocre societies cultural nuclei are sparsely distributed through out their respective populations. In a civilized society there is dense constellation of cultural nuclei. These cultural nuclei are formed when creative, appreciative persons in the various walks of life are continuously completing circuits between creation and appreciation of values. Cultural nuclei are formed through the integration of various sorts of values, such as intellectual, aesthetic and ethical values.

It is not surprising if one recalls that culture is nothing except a tradition of symbols expressive of values. Symbols in value show a triadic relationship where the conventions of a community of users mediate between the symbols and their significance. When this community changes in its conventions, its symbols, too, tend to become opaque. The process of seeking to preserve the living character of the past symbols can never be more than partially successful, for human creativity itself produces change incessantly. Just as the mirror reflects the object for the observer only when it is adjusted at an appropriate angle and under conditions of proper light, so is the effectiveness of symbols historically conditioned. And all cultural expressions fall within the general category of symbolism. Culture is in between nature and quasi-natural reality or civilization. The idea of nature is the invariant order of heteronymous invariant order apprehended through

the analysis of perceptible phenomena. The idea of culture, on the other hand, is the idea of autonomous order of values, of ideal modes of self-realization. Cultural apprehensions begin with the discrimination of the ideal and the actual where the ideal is necessarily presented through the symbols. Its boundaries in space and time may be said to be constituted by the boundaries within which its symbols are effectively operative i.e. culture may be said to constitute the area of communication.

Thus culture is the realization of the value images of the human soul, through action. This realization is both individual and social. The formation of the value image is, indeed, a fundamental principle of reality. Born out of bare awareness, passing through the process of semiosis, these value images acquire a determining character. Inarticulate or articulate symbols expressing these images are the primitive constituents of a culture.

Human acquaintance with the world begins with bare awareness, which gradually becomes more and more significant. In this process the bare impressions get their locus outside as more or less fixed, and these become the referents. Repeated experience of the referents leads to the formation of images in the mind. But these images are fleeting, and the mind in the beginning is more or less susceptible, not yet capable of exerting any conative pressure. A traditional image is either a natural thing, like a tree, or an artifact, let us say a crown. The crown, a hat of distinction, has been symbolic from the start, not so the tree; for in its original context or when such context has been projected around it. Even when so removed or improved, its meaning is inconsistent, differing from time to time and from place to place. In a culture, at some time, "tree" may come to mean virtue, or aspiration; and custom, affirming a general agreement, enriches it. Men of another time and place may find tree an image for home or mother, and for years all will applaud the association as the most normal thing in the world. Traditional images owe such meanings neither to necessity nor to chance, however, but to something in between. Finding a tree the image of mother or aspiration demands something of a tree, perhaps its appearance or shape, else the association, lacking felicity, could not endure.

Then the conventional symbols arise – the names; and the uttering of these names brings in the images. Images are not symbolic by themselves; they become symbolic depending on their surroundings. Traditional and conventional images, such as landscape and gardens, are symbolic in character. The red rose that is an embodiment of love gets its symbolic meaning when presented to someone. Let us take an example from Rabindra Nath Tagore: the sunlight falling on the dew drop on the lotus flower symbolically speaks of nature's beauty

People have culture primarily because they can communicate with and understand symbols. Symbols allow people to develop complex thoughts and to exchange those thoughts with others. Language and other forms of symbolic communication, such as art, enable people to create, explain, and record new ideas and information. A symbol has either an

indirect connection or no connection at all with the object, idea, feeling, or behavior to which it refers.

While exploring the problem of culture we have already noted the role of symbolism. However, the anatomy of Symbolism calls for the sharpest distinction between memories triggered by associations of physical effects and physical causes, such as clouds meaning water, sun meaning light, etc. We must underline non-mechanical and non-natural relationships between what we have called, in the text, arbitrary signs and their significance. In fact the whole of verbal speech, but for a few antopoetic words such as Hish and Aha, are interjections and as such are non-natural signs. Red has nothing to do with the ethereal waves or the term square with the shape square. We use such simple words by arbitrary indices. How do you do? Is this a symbol? All interjections and addresses organize discourse. All these symbols are rule-governed parts of our speech, which make our communication transparent, unequivocal. This is what symbols do? They render and articulate the domain of thought. Culture in other words is a way of expanding the Universe, extending the domain of facts into Meanings. Culture is an ongoing process.

To convey new ideas, people constantly invent new symbols, such as for mathematical formulas. In addition, people may use one symbol, such as a single word, to represent many different ideas, feelings, or values. Thus, symbols provide a flexible way for people to communicate even very complex thoughts. For example, only through symbols can architects, engineers, and construction workers communicate the information necessary to construct a skyscraper or bridge. People have the capacity at birth to construct, understand, and communicate through symbols, primarily by using language. Research has shown, for example, that infants have a basic structure of language – a sort of universal grammar – built into their minds. Infants are thus predisposed to learn the languages spoken by the people around them.

Therefore, culture is a constant effort to concretize and embody the depth, nobility and the unexplored domain of unfolding world of meaning. Symbols stand for a concept, idea, object or anything that, overtime, groups of people have come to recognize as having a specific meaning. Language is full of shared Symbols. They work by subtraction, not addition: simplification is the condition of the greatest possible compression and intensification: Character and situation alike take on a symbolic quality and are made to point to a range of experience beyond them. Symbol is a composite of image and context, which takes the place of description or exposition. In the case of private symbols, those created by the artists are used throughout a piece of work; the context is the work, and the symbols, meaning complex is created by repetition within, and association with, that context. In the case of public symbols, the context is the culture, which allows these symbols to be recognized and understood by members of the group. Symbols can also have different but equally valid, meanings to difference people. The aspect of symbol has been described as a process of “reverberation“. [The meta-

phoric process is] a process of tension, the apprehension of meanings somehow held in relation to each other, and to a central drive of interest, so that each meaning is more clearly defined' in relation to the other...more than the conceptual understanding is involved, it is only through readers imagination responding to the imagination of the Poet...that the work becomes alive...the imagination thus conceived is an instrument of knowledge – not 'knowledge of' something fixed and definite, but knowledge as a 'something' and echoing in the heart of the hearer.

Symbolism is not like other figures of speech. While images denote, symbols connote. Symbols suggest something indefinite while images are limited, if not definitely assigned. Culture is objectifying and expressing truth by symbols, a universe which is experienced and created by feelings. Culture thereby implies a set of psycho-biological processes that permits man to transcend sensitive experience through an abstraction which is a manifest interpretation in signs and symbols, thus converting the universe into a world appropriated, used and semanticized. Culture is one and universal; it refers to the possibilities of human interpretative mediation. The worlds of symbolic representations and images of ancient Persia, India, and Egypt, may all seem strange to us. We feel that we are groping about in the midst of problems. These images do not entertain us of themselves. The spectacle neither pleases nor satisfies us in itself; we must pass beyond the sensuous form in order to penetrate its more extended and more profound meaning. In other productions we see at first glance that they have nothing serious; that, like the stories of children, they are a simple play of the imagination, which is pleased with accidental and particular associations. These people of the distant past were demanding a meaning and a truer and more substantial basis of ideas. This, indeed, is what we find among the ancient Indians, Egyptians, etc., although in these enigmatical figures the meaning may be often very difficult to define. How are roles allocated amid this poverty and grossness of conceptions? How far, on the contrary, in the incapability of expressing by purer more beautiful forms the depth of religious ideas, is it proper to call in the fantastic and the grotesque to the aid of a representation of which the aspiration is not to remain beneath its object? This is a difficult point to decide.

Language, primarily and minimally speaking, is a system of symbols. Culture is much dependent upon communication as communication upon culture. Language essentially performs a social function helping us to get along together, to communicate and achieve a co-operation and understanding amongst us. As such language has to obey certain rules – rules which are available to all of us when we use language. In other words, however arbitrary the nature of signs may seem, once they are accepted in the corpus there is no more anarchy in their combinations. Their combinations are well organized and rule-governed all the moves we make must be according to rules. However fascinating it may seem to us, there cannot be a private language. Just as any sound is not a word, any handling of the pawns on the chessboard is not a 'move'. Similarly, any utterance is not a

significant statement. A move is either correct or incorrect, a statement either true or false. Where intelligibility and communications are the ends, absence of rules will defeat the very purpose. A full set of elements with rules of combination is what is meant here by a 'system'. Moves in ordinary language are or may not always be predictable, but at least they, must be identifiable to elicit response in a definite context. Symbols are the words in a language. They are symbols as opposed to their being 'iconic' as well as for their self-transcending reference to things and entities; all art is the symbolic representation.

To begin with any sign, notation of symbol comprising the distinct simple particle could be chosen capriciously or arbitrarily, but as we proceed with the game and start playing their mutual reciprocities and compatibilities, one is faced with the regime of inborn necessities taking possession of the entire proceedings of the game as it works and ends up in a gestalt and totality of inward meaning structure which shows itself as a source as the outcome of the entire game which is started as an arbitrary show ends up as a self explanation, self justified whole emerging from step to step. This injection is the biography of creativity of person of culture. But in culture we let them play their own game. Poetry cannot be ungrammatical but can take liberty with grammar, assimilate the rules of grammar and proceed to a higher rule of creativity, and then this is 'articulated' in the onward march. It has the capacity to transcend the empirical plane. In the interest of the incarnating vision a word becomes an icon.

Therefore consciousness is creative and its creativity is freedom. There are two opposing forces at work: one drags it towards the sensuous-given referent, the 'natural signs'; and the other pulls it away from subservience to matter. It is because of these two forces acting simultaneously that symbolic forms range along a scale, – some dominantly sensuous and some dominantly intelligible. Normal human consciousness is unable to entertain any object having either bare sensuous content or new meaning content. When the human soul's repetitions pass into the stage of conceptual thinking, myths are formed. This is a psychical but universal process. Myth formation is an expression of freedom. Myth-making is the result of the bondage/freedom oscillation of human consciousness. When it oscillates towards freedom the images become more suggestive. The world of facts then gets transformed, taking new complexes of meaning. Value images are born out of the experience of human soul, its contact with the real world. These experiences are capable of abstracting into and sometimes building forms and patterns out of the empirical, into a realm beyond the empirical. The world of facts and the world of values merge into one. This code of configuration grows over and above the real world. The world of myth rises above the real world; its figures and images are but the substitution of another form of materiality, a bondage to the sensuous. Myths are important determining constituents of culture. Mythology therefore, is born out of an inherent necessity of the human soul, which must communicate through language

The effort to express the content of experience, which lies deep in the unconscious regions of one's personality, searches for a device. The whole of that felt unity is not translatable into rigid concepts or intellectual artifacts. Yet the expression must take place, – otherwise there would be no art, no literature, and no philosophy. So our intellect employs different signs in order to have communication with others. This employment of a sign for a congeries of psychological correlates is called the process of symbolizing. In every human activity symbols play a vital role. Tensions of life can be removed only if the gap between the inner world and the outer world is bridged. The mechanical and somatic activity cannot do anything for man's emancipation from the isolation in which he is put. Symbolism therefore is an act of will by which hitherto meaningless movements or sounds are freely superimposed with a meaning. The original arbitrary creations get a social significance by constantly interacting with the external environment. Contrariwise, in the course of long petrifying traditions, these symbols lose the inherent dynamic element of 'will' that has forged them into service. Unconsciously a body of such symbols with a common denominator becomes organic to a person of society. That society owns these instruments as their most sacred attainments. Hence there is a tendency in all cultures to associate this organized set of symbols with the attitude towards theism. Such symbolic transformations are to be found in all cultural activities. One cannot go behind these symbolic expressions to intuit 'nature' or 'things' in themselves" directly, since experience is formally constituted of 'symbols' which determine all our human perspectives.

Thus there is a set of symbolic activities in the background of all cultural functions bring about varied products. Art, Music, Architecture, Economy and even government are shown to be derivatives from such primary artifacts of cultural feelings. In Spengler's words, "Everything whatsoever that has become, is a symbol and expression of a soul. Only to one having the knowledge of Men will it unveil itself. The restraint of law it abhors."

Thus a cultural life is full of such symbolic acts of will. By harnessing the interior workings of human effort, these processes arrive at an articulate body of integrated symbols, which are so necessary for cultural development and growth. In every cultural area we are brought to see a type and a characteristic group of significant symbols. The importance of their determining role in the cultural activity can never be over-exaggerated. Those are the basic foundations with the help of which alone, the varied achievement of culture could be fabricated.

Thus symbols play the most important role in the interpretation of culture. It is indeed necessary to investigate what cultural symbolism means and how it expresses the 'cultural potential.' Culture and its symbolism at every level are free from the stresses and strains of mere biological drives. There is a peculiar liberty, the ability to incorporate new meanings into trivialities as symbols that culture ushers in for man. And this proves the fact that though man is situated in the world of struggle and physical

scrambling, he can rise to a higher order of 'values' by the free choice that becomes the vehicle of his feelings. 'Symbols' liberate spirits from drudgery of mere routine. Thus Sri Aurobindo writes, "The widest spirituality does not exclude or discourage any essential activity or faculty, but works rather to lift all of them by its touch and makes them the instrument of the light, power and joy of the divine Being and the Divine Nature."

Such is the vision that enlivens the dead moulds of civilization into dynamic aspiring humanity. The time of change calls for a change of value base. The appropriate value base must respond to characteristics needs of Globalization. By the true needs of Globalization we here mean that we must learn to live in the globalized world as our ancestors lived in a village. For this we need an appropriate philosophy, if philosophy is to be taken as a source of globalized culture. Prof. Kirti Bunchua proposes a 'contemporary paradigm' that would lead to responsibility, collaboration, trust, mutual understanding and peace. He says "That only by deliberately engaging in breaking down the walls of distrust can we open the way to the trust on which friendship is based. History has brought us to the brink of a 'high tech' global society...The pressing task is to learn how to collaborate with sincerity...The way to such collaborations passes through both *kenosis* and *metanoia*. *Kenosis* means emptying oneself of the 'old man'. This emptied self can then be filled up through *metanoia*, to open the eyes to a new way of seeing, the contemporary way or paradigm. With this new outlook, we can become a 'new man' that sets no limits on love."

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PART II

SYMBOLS AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES

ISLAM

CHAPTER VIII

IMAGINATION AND MEANING IN SOME ISLAMIC SYMBOLIC NARRATIVES

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Taking our cue from the admirably concise summaries in “The Role of the Imagination” by Professor G. McLean, covering Aristotle to Kant and beyond, and Professor D. Power's “Imagination in...Ricoeur“; and bearing in mind the goal of these gatherings aiming to “understand the role of the symbolic in the development and transformation of cultures; we wish to share certain features of Muslim religious narrative tales and attendant conceptual discussions over the scope and validity of the Imagination...even the possibility of a distinct imaginal realm behind or beyond our ordinary conscious mentation. Despite the complex features inherent in examining these issues in their Islamic expression that ordinarily require interpretive and explanatory comments for the uninitiated, we shall go straight to the heart of narratives as they were conceived by several leading minds. Yet first we must attempt to draw some boundaries and make elementary observations about Islamic tradition and thought, since in recent years general ignorance and wrong ideas – among non-Muslims as well as Muslims – has become painfully evident. As one contemporary, thinking Muslim has put it, Muslims today have become “nomads of a lost civilization...Muslims forget the value of a book despite the fact that their religion was founded on a book and is all about the role of books...we are the displaced children of the civilization of the word, pariahs in the world of thought and literacy. We are the outcasts of the unthinkable and unmentionables subsisting on the scraps of hardened ideas.”¹

OVERVIEW

Throughout Islamic thought and experience there has been a marked tension between revealed givens mediated in Scripture and Prophetic narratives and particular Hellenic patterns of thought and meaning. The Hanbali juridical school always harbored a die-hard Traditionalist wing that actively opposed rationalizing and semi-rationalist currents, particularly those new-fangled ideas imported by circles in creative engagement with Hellenic ideas that reached early Islam under the Abbasid Caliphs from the remaining centres of Greek Alexandrian and Harranian and Syriac

¹ Khaled M. Abou El Fadl, *Confession of the Books: The Search for Beauty in Islam* (Lanham MD, New York, Oxford: University Press of America, 2001) pp. 75 & 266–7.

Christian schools. These disciplines termed “the knowledge of the ancients ‘ilm al-awa'il” (medicine, astronomy, cosmology, mathematics, physical sciences, alchemy, etc.) were often deemed suspect primarily for being non-prophetic in origin and in elaboration, while their utility was appreciated early on by intellectuals and the rulers who sponsored their efforts at collection and recovery. The assessment of this creative tension over the priority and weight to be awarded to rationality and/or philosophy and philosophically-impregnated systems of thought (including speculative Theology, Legal Theory, and Sufi metaphysics) has varied widely both among Muslims and Western students of Islamic thought.² We cannot enter this ongoing debate in any detail, except insofar as our meetings here are concerned to “make sure metaphysics never gets left behind” (McLean). And it remains true till our own day that Muslims very frequently privilege the normative juristic discourse and categories of the Law over other historically equally significant types of discourse that might provide more resources for adequately responding to changing cultural conditions within the wide variety of Muslim societies in our global context.

The first major manifestation of this tension arose in the course of the 2nd Hejira (8th century CE) between the strict Traditionalists Ashab al-Hadith who confined ‘knowledge’ to sacred texts (Qur’an and Prophetic Hadiths), and early rationalist Iraqi Jurist, Ahl al-Ray, who saw it as comprising case law and the body of legal rulings. The normative synthesis between these two approaches fructified the classical elaboration of Muslim legal thinking and practice, spearheaded by the creative work of al-Shafi’i who trained in both Makkah and Madinah, worked in Iraq and Yeman and died in Egypt. From an early period, linguists and grammarians asserted the relevance of metaphoric language (*majaz*) and symbolism not only for interpreting Scripture but for expressions of meaning in a variety of disciplines. This controversy about the admissibility of metaphor and symbol when comprehending the language of revelation, not to mention that of secular poetry, took shape in the famed debate over real literal meaning vs. metaphoric signification (*haqiqah majaz*). The rationalists among linguists and litterateurs, as well as the Mu’tazilah theologians tended to uphold the validity of *majaz*, and this became part of theological

² See, e.g., the informative and quite original overview by Hichem Djaït, *Europe and Islam – Cultures and Modernity*, trans. Peter Heinegg (University of California Press, 1985), especially pp. 42–96; ‘European Scholarship and Islam’ and ‘Islam and German Thought’, and pp. 99–103; ‘Europe and Universality’; as well as our survey “Islam and Reason,” *Al-Shajarah* [ISTAC, Kuala Lumpur], vol. 8 No. 1 (2003) pp.109–137; and for early developments our “Between Wisdom and Reason: Aspects of ‘Aql (Mind•Cognition) in Early Islam,” *Islamica* [University of London, School of Economics] v.I (1999) pp. 33–49.

discourse and polemics – e.g., over the very nature of the sacred Qur'an as Divine Speech being increate and eternal, or as created in time.

Thus, the image of God seated upon HIS Throne, or the related issues of divine attributes evoking anthropomorphic qualities (Hand, Face) and the visibility of God in the Hereafter, were subjected to intense polemics. Once the leading Sufi master of Nisapur and subtle Qur'an exegete Abu al-Qasim 'Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri (d.465/1072) visited Baghdad and convened a session of 'remembrance' attended by the masses and the elite. When the professional reciter reached the Qur'anic verse The All Merciful WHO is established upon the Throne (Q TaHa 20:5), the Traditionalist Hanbalis in the audience rose up in a mass chanting "HE is Sitting! Sitting!" –This provoked a riot against the Sunni disciples of the great Sufi which was not defused till a number were killed and the authorities were forced to intervene to quell the disturbance (the vivid account by Abu Bakr Ibn al-'Arabi [d.543/1148] *al-'Awasim min al-Qawasim* p.209). Indeed, the Traditionalists upheld their doctrine of "*bi-la kayf* / not asking how" regarding the imagery and language of revelation, debating among themselves whether the Divine Being experiences *mumassah* / 'physical contact' when HE sits upon the Throne.

Despite the cogent attack of the Aristotelians (Ibn Sina and al-Farabi in particular) by the great Shafi'i jurist & Asharite theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d.505/1111), his Sufi metaphysic works are colored by strong Neoplatonic elements, particularly *Mishkat al-Anwar*, his *Jawahir al-Qur'an*, and the recently discovered *al-Madmun bi-hi...* / "that Withheld from those Unworthy". Ghazali was especially drawn to the psychology of the rational soul and higher spiritual faculties of intellect that gave a rationale for prophecy and providence, popularized by Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and his school, even in the Persian vernacular. The indefatigable Traditionalist Ibn Taymiyah, who fiercely decried unfettered rationalism, correctly perceived this, especially in his detailed rebuttal of *Mishkat al-Anwar*³ –

³ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Bughyat al-Murtād fī l-Radd 'alā l-Mutafalsifah wa l-Qarāmiyah wa l-Bāṭiniyah Ahl al-Ilhād min al-Qā'ilīna bi-l-Ḥulūl wa-l-Ittiḥād*, written in 709H, also known as *al-Masā'il al-Iskandarāniyah*, ed. Mūsā b. Sulaymān al-Duwaysh (al-Riyāḍ, Maktabat al-'Ulum wa l-Ḥukm, 1408/1988; 615pp.) – a work joining al-Ghazālī with the later Andalusian Saint Ibn 'Arabī as objects of Traditionalist wrath. A sharp contemporary critique against al-Ghazali had already been mounted by North African & Andalusian Maliki jurists adhering to Ash'arite theology who issued *fatwas* for burning his opus *Iḥyā'*; a telling example is provided by al-Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-'Arabi (d.543/1148), *al-'Awasim min al-Qawasim* / *Protective Safeguards from Shattering Accusations*, ed. 'Ammār Talibī (Algeria, 1974; rpr. Cairo, Dar al-Turath, 1997) on pp.12–13, 24–38, 93, 232, 247. Ibn al-'Arabi cites from personal letters by his teacher al-Ghazali himself written in response to his queries, and launches into an extended attack upon Philosophy (pp.73–193); though rarely alluded to by Ibn Taymiyyah one century and a half later, there

where Ibn Taymiyyah discerned a uterine link between these ideas of Ghazali and those of the outstanding spiritual master from Andalusia Muhyi l-Din Ibn ‘Arabi who was dubbed ‘Doctor Maximus’/ the Greatest Master.

Ibn Sina was a religious intellectual who philosophized about mystical realities in the up-to-date scientific language of his day, explaining psychic phenomena and prophetic consciousness with terms drawn from revealed texts of Scripture and Hadith – “bi-lisa nil-shar‘ / in the terminology of revealed truth”, as he was wont to say. He took up and extended the achievements of al-Farabi who had discussed the intellectual illumination which comes from an entity called the Active Intellect or Agent Intellect, the last of the incorporeal Separate Intellects which are intermediaries between God and the created universe. Such illumination actualizes the potentiality for thought existing in man, and this brings about the production in humans of the modes of actualized intellect called the intellect-in-act, and the acquired intellect. Both thinkers taught that a human intellect whose acquired intellect has been actualized is not only close to the Active Intellect, but can achieve union with the Active Intellect.⁴ If this involves the theoretical and practical rational faculty as well as the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwah al-mukhayyilah*), such a person is said to have received a revelation from God through the intermediary of the Active Intellect. This person may be called with respect to his intellectual capacity a Philosopher and a Sage (*hakim*); with respect to his imaginative power (by which he is able to have veridical dreams, see visions, and perceive events in the present and the future): he may be called a Prophet.

Al-Farabī, Ibn Sina, and later Ibn Rushd (Averroes), gave religious functions to the Active Intellect: human prophecy results from an

is little doubt that the avid Hanbali polemicist was heavily molded by the Maliki magistrate's attack.

⁴ The verb “*halla* /to inhere” was employed by al-Farabi to describe the descent of the Active Intellect upon prophetic man (note that this Arabic verb was applied by Christian theologians to the incarnation /*hulul* of the Deity in Christ); Ibn Sinā and Ibn Rushd employed the term “conjunction /*ittisal*.” For Ibn Sina, near union with the Active Intellect is a result of the prophetic faculty; Ibn Sina, *De Anima*, ed. F. Rahman (Oxford, 1959) pp.248–50. Once only in his mystic treatise *Fil-‘Ishq /On Love*, he speaks of “union /*ittihad*” in terms of contemplative vision /*al-mushahadah*; see *Risalah FI-‘Ishq*, in *Traité Mystiques d’Avicenne*, ed. M.A.R. Mehren (Leiden, 1899-1901) p.22: the ultimate goal of the rational soul is “to love the absolute good instinctively...and this is what the Sufis call ‘union’.” Ibn Sina’s preference for ‘vision’ or contemplation to describe conjunction with the Active Intellect (rather than union in the strict sense), was not shared by other Muslim Peripatetics; Ibn Bajjah and Ibn Rushd vehemently critique those mystics who exceed the ‘limits of nature’ in their claim to be united or identified with God.

emanation of the Active Intellect. They recognized a role for the Active Intellect in human immortality, and accepted an ultimate human state wherein the human intellect enters into conjunction with the Active Intellect. The latter two functions have antecedents in both Hellenic and earlier Arabic '*falasifah*'. However, there is no real Greek precedent for their 'psychological' explanation of prophetic phenomena, which marks a fresh point of departure for the *Falasifah* initiated in part by al-Kindi. This was because, unlike earlier Greek and Christian Hellenic thinkers, the Muslim *falasifah* had to confront and resolve the relation of Philosophy with Prophetic Revelation with an immediacy and urgency which thinkers preceding Islam had not faced.

A key issue tied to this interaction with revealed religion was the question whether it is possible for humans to cognize immaterial being; or for the intellect to apprehend the Active Intellect without the help of sense perceptions or of images drawn from the imaginative faculty. This was a common doctrine of Neo-Platonist thinkers, Christian and Jewish theologians, and among Muslim theologians, the Sufis as well as the Isma'iliyyah – that God is unknowable *per se*, that He cannot be cognized by any conceivable intelligence – either of humans or of the Separate Intellects. Thus there developed a view among some Muslim *falasifah* that God and the Separate immaterial Intellects cannot be grasped by a human intellect whose activity depends on sense data and images; i.e., that the human intellect cannot cognize God since the human intellect is tied up with the body, and matter is a veil. This has to do with the limits of human cognition of God: whether metaphysical knowledge is possible? (Kant was later to deny this in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.)

This limitation of human intellect and the question of whether knowledge of God's essence was truly possible, arose from an epistemological difficulty at the heart of systematic Aristotelianism. For Aristotle, intellectual cognition on the part of humans cannot be achieved without phantasmata (images of corporeal things). If taken literally, this seems to rule out human intellection of immaterial beings, precluding all possibility of union with transcendent entities, which according to Aristotelians occurs between the cognizing subject, the cognized object, and the act of cognition. Muslim and Jewish Aristotelian thinkers attempted to elude or come to terms with this conclusion.

Al-Farabi regarded as possible the cognition of Forms that do not have and never had any connection with matter. For Ibn Sina the whole process of human cognition becomes a gradual progression or ascent from the lowest condition of potentiality to the highest condition of actuality – which is the apprehension of the 'objects of intellection' stored away in the Active Intellect termed *ittisal* or contact with the Active Intellect as the principal link between the human and God. Thus, the ultimate goal of the human soul is to become identified with the intelligible world, in which the forms of the whole, its rational order and the good overflowing from it, are

inscribed. Through ‘conjunction’ with the Active Intellect, the human soul becomes a replica of the intelligible cosmos, achieving the perfection proper to it as a citizen of that celestial realm.

One should carefully distinguish between the reason / ‘*aql*’ of the *Falasifah* and that of *Kalam* or speculative theology. Despite their later adoption of certain Greek logical notions and syllogistic techniques, Muslim theological understanding of ‘*aql*’ was quite different from the philosophical ‘intellect’. For the Mu‘tazilah the human ‘*aql*’ was viewed in terms of ‘inborn intelligence’ or practical reason, which included the knowledge achieved through techniques of speculative inquiry and rational demonstration (*nazar, istidlal*): every human person whose natural innate reason is complete (*bulugh al-‘aql, kamal al-‘aql*) must a priori necessarily know or intuit basic moral truths, good and evil, right and wrong. (This innate necessary knowledge / *bi-l-idtirar* and *daruri* comes close to the objective moral imperatives of ‘natural law’ in Christian medieval thought; for Muslim thinkers whose allegiance was bound to the revealed Law, such a concept of ‘natural law’ was avoided.) This forms the basis for *taklif* / ‘human moral obligation’ whereby man is obliged to perform acts of obedience (taught by revelation) whose value and purpose he consciously understands, since they agree with his inborn reason. Every person shares equally in this natural endowment of reason; humans are obligated to employ discursive reasoning in order to know God.

However, Traditionalist theologians differed with the Mu‘tazilah by affirming that while all knowledges have their source in reason, yet the obligatory duties are imposed upon humans through the authority of religious revelation (*sam‘* and *naql*). God cannot be subjected to the constraint of objective moral truths apprehended by human reason; rather good and evil are whatever God wills them to be. It was also commonly understood in popular Muslim ethical teachings (“*hadith-based ethics*”) that human inborn intelligence varies from person to person in degree or function (*tafadul* or *tafawut al-‘uqul*), these dissimilarities of human endowment of ‘*aql*’ being intended by God. This theme of God’s unequal distribution of the pre-ordained ‘shares’ of inborn intelligence among humans (which had pre-Islamic Arab roots) was important for early theological debates over *qadar* from the late 1st/7th century on. In time, this idea contributed to the emergence of the Sufi doctrine of the hierarchy of Saints /*al-Awliya*’ being those most abundantly endowed with cognitive insight – e.g. the Central Asian master al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi’s theory of the “Omni-Intelligence/*al-‘Aql al-Akbar*” – further enhanced or fertilised by the Shi‘ah imam doctrine akin to the ‘Pole’ of the Saints.

PRIMORDIAL COVENANT

We shall begin with the seminal Qur’anic tale of Adam’s progeny on the ‘Day of the primordial Covenant’ / *Yawm al-Mithaq* (*Q al-A‘raf*) / The

Heights 7:172 – 4), where humans are reminded:

172: And (remember) when your LORD brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their progeny (*dhurriyyatahum*) and made them give testimony against themselves [saying]: “Am I not your Lord!?” They said, “Yes assuredly! We testify! (*qalu bala shahidna*).” That [testimony was extracted] lest you should say at the Day of Resurrection: Of this we were unaware.”

174: Thus do WE detail The Signs, that perchance they may return.

In this powerful symbolic tale the entirety of humanity is extracted by GOD from Adam’s loins – often specified in commentary as being in the form of tiny ‘ants’ or cellular ‘atoms’ (*dhurriyyatahum*) – to be shown Adam, and being interrogated they all avowed recognition of HIM as their Lord and Creator in this primordial covenant: “Yes...We testify!” Every soul before birth in the body was prompted to declare recognition-/acknowledgement of Divine Existence and Unity. This tale forms one of The Signs (al-Ayat – ‘semiotic pointers’) divinely placed in the world of revealed sense (in the Qur’an, in external Horizons of Nature, within our interior plane) for humans to ponder and extract seeds of inner meaning. Even in this pre-creation moment (i.e. before physical bodies), human essence possesses some measure of comprehending awareness expressed in divine interrogation and responsive utterance.

It is important to take note of this fundamental feature of innate human awareness [neptic listening/attention] linked with speech (‘comprehension of speech’ – cf. Ar. *nutq*) so central to the notion of intelligence (Ar. *‘aql*). When we search for confirmatory expansive notions in the repertoire of Prophetic narrations (*Hadith*), the phrase «*istantaqahum* / HE interrogated them» occurs in a number of narrative elaborations of the Qur’anic tale of Adam’s progeny on the ‘Day of the primordial Covenant’. The explicit element of ‘interrogation’ repeats a well-established motif common in the first century Hejira (7th century CE) of testing a person’s intelligence by questioning them and weighing their replies or reactions. This motif occurs, for example, in early Muslim tales concerning the ‘succession of Solomon’, portraying how the prophet David tested his son Solomon for understanding and wisdom (*fahm* and *‘aql*) before appointing him to be his successor. And in a famous early narrative describing God’s creation and testing of the inborn human faculty of the ‘understanding-intelligence’:

When GOD created the intelligence (*al-‘aql*), HE interrogated him/ *istantaqahu*.⁵ Then HE said to him, “Come forward!” so he drew near. Then HE said to him, “Go back! [or: Turn Back!]” so he retreated. Then HE said to him, “By My Power and My Majesty! I did not create a creature dearer to ME than thee! I do not make you perfect save in one whom I love. Truly, thee alone I command and thee alone I forbid; thee alone I reward and thee alone I punish.”⁶

Another early Sufi interpretation of «Yes /*balā*» (The Heights:172) held that God endowed Adam’s progeny with varying proportions of ‘*aql* and *nutq*/intelligence and reason (*rashsha ‘alayhim bi-nurihi*’ sprinkled HIS Light upon them) whereby they comprehended HIS addressing them and made their avowal. One such inner reading or ta’wil is cited by the Central Asian theosophic·sage al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (d.295 H), in his *Adab al-Nafs*:

GOD created humanity in darkness, then HE sprinkled HIS LIGHT upon them – and HE knew who (the light) would fall upon and whom it would miss; then he extracted them (from

⁵ Or “HE examined-tested him” – namely, by bidding him & forbidding him, and then observing the response by the intelligence as an index to his innate understanding and rank of being.

⁶ al-Kulaynī (*al-Usul min al-Kāfī*, ed. al-Ghiffari v.I p.10 §1) takes the narrative of the 5th imam Muhammad al-Baqir (d. ca.114 H) from the earlier compilation of Ahmad b. Muhammad al-Barqī, *Kitāb al-Mahasīn*, ed. Jalal al-Din al-Husayni al-Urmawī al-Muhaddith (Teheran, 1370/1950), *kitāb masābih al-zulam, bab al-‘aql* p.192 §6. It also occurs in Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi, *al-Amālī* (Qumm, 1373) p.251 *majlis 65*; and eg. in pseudo-Qudamah b. Ja‘far al-Katib, *Naqd al-Nathr* (Cairo, 1933) p.4. Compare the report ascribed to the Prophet in Abu l-Fath Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Karajuki (d.449 H), *Kanz al-Fawa’id*, ed. ‘Abdullah Na‘mah (Beirut, Dār al-Adwā‘, 1985) I 57; and the version in the anonymous *Raqā‘iq al-Hilal fi Daqā‘iq al-Hiyal* [MS. 3548 BN (Paris) – ca.13th/14th century CE], translated by René R. Khawam as *The Subtle Ruse* (London & The Hague, East-West Publications, 1980) on p.23.

Sunnī versions of this narrative are well known, stemming mainly from the Iraqi Qadarī tradent and proto-Sufī sage al-Hasan al-Basrī (d.110 H), but unlike the Shi‘ī narratives which formed an essential preliminary for their epistemology and theology, Sunnī scholarly consensus explicitly rejected their authenticity and denied that any narratives about Intelligence were prophetically valid. The multiple transmissions of this famed utterance indeed reflect the teachings of leading sages of the final-third of the 1st century H, becoming ‘raised’ into Prophetic *hadith* during the course of the 2nd /8th century, and sparked an intense controversy over many centuries; see our forthcoming study *When God Created Wisdom* where this process is studied in detail.

Adam's loins) on the Day of the primordial Covenant as bright or as dark. Then he interrogated them on That Day /inna llaha khalaqa l-khalqa fi zulmatin thumma rashsha 'alayhim min nurihi fa-qad 'alima man yusibuhu wa man yukhti'uhu, thumma akhrajahum yawma l-mitha'qi bīdan wa sūdan, thumma istantaqahum yawma 'idh.⁷

Similar tales, often cast in the form of prophetic hadiths or narrative utterances of early sage authorities, clarify that the differences amongst humans are determined by the varying amounts of light showered upon Adam's progeny on that Day, with prophets and saints receiving the greatest portions of light.

The leading Khurasanī Sufi and Ash'arite theologian Abū l-Qasim al-Qushayrī reports an inner-interpretation of this seminal verse (The Heights:172) in his exegetic work 'Subtle Indications' wherein he undermines a widespread view that tongues must have existed to utter «Yes /balā!»: "...it is said, HE caused them [Adam's progeny] to respond by making real their direct-knowledge before the sight of any created being had fallen upon them or the trace of any produced being had manifested within their hearts."⁸ In truth there was a clash of views over whether this avowal by Adam's progeny "balā" was actually uttered by tongues in real time and place – reflecting the commonly held doctrine of the pre-existence of the Spirits/*arwah* – or whether this event should be understood metaphorically.⁹

In his major opus, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Ghazali places the only significant treatments of the intellect/*al-'aql* in two places: at the end of his *kitāb al-'ilm* opening the first half of the entire work (the half devoted to 'ilm al-zāhir and deeds of the limbs); and in the opening book of the second half, *sharḥ 'ajā'ib al-qalb* (the half devoted to 'ilm al-bātin and deeds of the heart). These two treatments of intellect in relation to

⁷ *Adab al-Nafs*, ed. al-Sā'ih (Cairo, 1993) p.93–4.

⁸ *Lata'if al-Ishārāt*, ed. 'Abd al-Latīf Hasan 'Abd al-Rahmān (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2000, 3 vols.) I p.366–367: *wa yuqālu, fa-ajābahum bi-tahqīqi l-'irfāni qabla an yaqa'a li-makhlūqin 'alayhim basarun aw zahara fi qulūbihim li-masnū'in atharun...*

⁹ To mention some key discussions: 1. al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d.413 H), *al-Masā'il al-Sarawīyyah*, ed. Sā'ib 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (*Musannafāt al-Shaykh al-Mufīd* VII), *mas'alah* §2 on p.47–50; idem, *al-Masā'il al-'Ukbarīyyah* or *al-Hājibīyyah*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ilāhī (*Musannafāt al-Shaykh al-Mufīd* VI), *mas'alah* §45 on p.113–115. & 2. al-Karājūkī (d.449 H), *Kanz al-Fawā'id* II p.141–143 [on the Prophet's *mi'rāj* and his witnessing the Prophets and 'Alī. & 3. Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazali's Persian *fatwā* on this precise question, ed. with commentary by Professor Nasrallah Pourjavady, text edited in 'Ahd-e Alast', in *Ma'ārif* 7/2 (1369 *shamsī* /1990) p.3–48, text on p.42–47; + cf. Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, I *kitāb al-'ilm – bāb 7, fi al-'aql wa sharafih* p.121.

knowledge are interconnected, one shedding light on the other; at the same time they both closely reflect and may be coordinated to a remarkable degree with many passages in his earlier and from most of his later writings. Of course, in certain of his later works al-Ghazali expands considerably upon a number of key issues that he treated concisely or allusively in *Ihyā'*.

When he introduces the seventh chapter of *kitāb al-'ilm* (in the first section – *bayān sharaf al-'aql*), al-Ghazali asserts that the glory of *al-'aql* is conjoined with knowledge, for “the intellect is the wellspring of knowledge and its starting point and its foundation,” with knowledge issuing forth from the intellect as fruit from the tree or as light from the sun. Indeed, the glory of the intellect is affirmed by God naming it to be light, as in the Light Verse (*Q al-Nūr* 24:35) “*Allāhu nūru l-samawāti wa l-ardi mathalu nūrihi ka-mishkātin* /God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth, the likeness of His Light is like a niche...,” just as God names the knowledge acquired from the intellect as ‘spirit’ & ‘inspiration’ & ‘life’ (*ruh*, *wahy*, *hayāt*) in the Qur’an (*al-Shūrā* 42:52, *al-An‘ām* 6:122, and *al-Baqarah* 2:257).¹⁰ At this point, al-Ghazali cites two hadith about *al-'aql* from Dāwūd b. al-Muḥabbar’s book,¹¹ the second one being the famous narrative of the creation of *'aql* in one of its better known versions:

The first that God created (is) the intellect; then He said to him, “Come forward!” so he drew near; then He said to him, “Go Back!” so he retreated. Then God Mighty and Majestic (swore an oath), “By My Power and My Glory! I created no creature more esteemed by Me than thee! By means of thee I receive, and by means of thee I bestow; by means of thee I reward, and by means of thee I punish.”¹²

¹⁰ *Ihyā'* v.I p.116–117. al-Zabīdī points out (*Ithāf* I 451) that al-Ghazali here relies on the *ta'wīl* of the Light Verse given by al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī; see *al-Dharī'ah* 70, & 206f.

¹¹ The *taraf* or mnemonic abbreviation of the first *hadīth* is often given as “*i'qilū 'an rabbikum wa tawāsaw bi-l-'aqli* / *Comprehend of your Lord and mutually enjoin one another to intelligence-understanding!...*” al-Zabīdī glosses *bi-l-'aql* here as “*bi-kamālihi*,” i.e. ‘exhort one another to perfect one’s understanding (of revealed truth and guidance)’; *Ithāf* I 452. As in several other reports found in Dāwūd’s *K. al-'Aql*, here the notions of *'aql* and *sabr* are linked; cf. *Q al-'Asr* 103:3...*wa 'amilū l-ṣālihāti wa tawāsaw bi-l-haqqi wa tawāsaw bi-l-sabr* / *and perform righteous deeds and mutually enjoin one another to [follow] the Truth and to [practice] long-suffering.*

¹² The final phrases “*bi-ka ākhudhu wa bi-ka u'tī, wa bi-ka uthību wa bi-ka u'āqibū*” occur in a number of variants (*bi-ka, la-ka, 'alay-ka*) open to several interpretations which may be rendered variously. (al-Ghazali here repeats the version cited by al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī in *al-Dharī'ah*.) The primary thrust of this narrative clearly concerns the role of innate human intelligence

The issue he raises in this provocative manner touches on the very nature of the intellect – is it an ‘accident’ [in the Aristotelian sense] and part of ‘necessary knowledge’ as the Theologians teach, or is it a simple ‘immaterial substance’ as the Philosophers maintain? And what of the role of ‘aql as an ‘inborn trait’ or innate endowment having a wide gradation of intensity? For the earlier Ash‘arī theologians and Legal Theorists /usūfīs, ‘aql is an ‘accident’; while the Traditionalists¹³ and Sufis viewed it to be an ‘inborn trait’ (gharīzah) and linked it with both the human primordial constitution /fitrah and light. Indeed, the multiple conflicting meanings embraced by the term ‘aql within separate Islamic disciplines show that it functioned as an equivocal or polysematic notion.¹⁴

What al-Ghazali accomplishes in this section on ‘the real nature of ‘aql and its divisions’ is a remarkable integration of the traditional ethical and the Sufi conceptions of intelligence being an innate faculty’ and practical wisdom, with the rational doctrine on intellect as ‘self-evident knowledge’ of *Shāfi‘ī usūl al-fiqh* and the speculative reasoning of *Ash‘arī kalām*. He clarifies that the theological view limiting the nature of ‘aql solely to ‘a variety of necessary knowledge’ is mistaken; clearly he was following his teacher al-Juwaynī, who had second thoughts about this restriction and had embraced the earlier 3rd/9th century Sufi theologian al-Muḥāsibī’s notion of human intelligence being an innate endowment (*gharīzah*) in terms of a readiness for perception and knowledge – i.e. a preparedness for both intuitive necessary knowledge and acquired demonstrative knowledge – as well as embracing illuminative vision (*mushāhadah*). al-Muḥāsibī conceived of this ‘innate faculty’ of ‘aql in terms of “a light in the heart,” just as vision is light in the eye; this light being part of the native constitution (“*tab‘an wa gharīzatan*”) enabling humans to perceive and articulate meaning and grasp knowledge.¹⁵

for moral obligation and the human ability to perform one’s own deeds, thus meriting reward or punishment. This tradition originated with pro-Qadarī circles of the Hijāz, Syria & Iraq (who upheld the role of *al-‘aql* as *hujjah*) during the final decades of the 1st century H. Despite its archaic origin and involved history, its ascription to the Prophet was most often rejected by critics; yet it also had defenders.

¹³ Hanbali traditionalist thinkers also upheld the view that ‘aql is a God-given inborn human aptitude, and not something acquired. In fact, Hanbali thinkers also accepted the variability or dissimilarity of human intellects, something denied by Mu‘tazilī and classical Ash‘arī thinkers.

¹⁴ al-Zabīdī provides a succinct listing of the complex variety of different meanings and definitions for ‘aql; see *Ithāf* 1 458.

¹⁵ *Mā‘īyyat al-‘Aql* p.203. al-Muḥāsibī inserts this reference to “light in the heart” = *basar* / ‘insight’, in the midst of mentioning several theological meanings for ‘aql that he rejects (*wa qāla qawmun...*), including that of the Mu‘tazilah; nor does he invoke any *hadīth* or *aqwāl* for such a meaning, as he

This is a process of re-valorization of the *ahadith* through enrichment of meaning by investing these traditions with deepened relevance for his thought. This creative re-appropriation is seen in his handling of ‘Alī’s *hadith*, where the Prophet says: “...then do you yourself draw near (to God) by means of your intelligence /*fā-taqarrab anta bi-‘aqlika!*” al-Ghazali cites this *hadith* again in *Ihyā’* III.1 *sharh ‘ajā’ib al-qalb* (v.III p.20), where he explains that this ‘drawing near’ is achieved only by means of acquired knowledge (*bi-l-muktasabah*, ie. reasoning and demonstration, in the third meaning above), not by means of the innate instinctive faculty (*lā yumkinu l-taqarrubu bi-l-gharīzati l-fiṭriyyah*) nor by means of self-evident necessary knowledge (*lā bi-l-‘ulūmi l-ḍarūriyyah*).¹⁶ This may be read as an implied reference to *‘ilm al-mukāshafah*. Such acquired knowledge is conceived of by al-Ghazali as an ‘impress’ of “the divine presence- /*al-ḥaḍrat al-ilāhiyyah*” within the human soul.

In a passage treating the real nature of knowledge from his *al-Mustasfā min ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl*, which is an exoteric work on the ‘roots of law’, al-Ghazali states:¹⁷

When the realities of the ‘intelligible objects of perception’ (*ḥaqā’iq al-ma‘qūlāt*) are impressed upon the intelligizing soul (*al-nafs al-‘āqilah*), they are called ‘knowledge’; and just as the sky and the earth and trees and rivers are imaged as being seen in the mirror as if they were present in the mirror and as if the mirror contains them all, so likewise the divine presence in its totality is imaged as being impressed upon the human soul. Now ‘the divine presence’ is a mode of ex-

does in his other works. On this notion of ‘light in the heart’, see our ‘Between Wisdom and Reason’, p.55.

¹⁶ He comments: “yet the likes of ‘Alī...are able to draw near (to God) by employing the intellect to avail oneself of the knowledge by means of which proximity to the Lord of the universe is bestowed.” Further, see R. Frank, ‘Al-Ghazali on *Taqīd*’ p.212, n.9.

¹⁷ *Mustasfā* I 69: *fā-ḥaqā’iqu l-ma‘qūlāt idhā nṭaba‘a bi-hā l-nafsu l-‘āqilah tusammī ‘ilman, wa kamā anna l-samā‘a wa l-arda wa l-ashjāra wa l-anhāra yatasawwaru an turā fī l-mir‘āti hattā ka-annahā mawjūdatum fī l-mir‘āti, wa kāna l-mir‘ātu ḥāwiyatan li-jamī‘ihā, fā-kadhālika l-ḥaḍratu l-ilāhiyyah bi-jumlatihā yatasawwaru an tantabi‘a bi-hā nafsu l-ādami; wa l-ḥaḍratu l-ilāhiyyah idh laysa fī l-wujūdi illā llāhu Ta‘ālā wa af‘āluhu, fā-idhā nṭaba‘at bi-hā sārāt ka-annahā kulla l-‘ālamī li-iḥātatihā bi-hi taṣawwuran wa nṭibā’an; wa ‘inda dhālika rubbamā ḡanna man lā yadrī: al-ḥulūla, fā-yakūna ka-man ḡanna anna l-ṣūrata ḥālatan fī l-mir‘āti wa huwa ghalāṭun li-annahā laysat fī l-mir‘āti wa lākin “ka-annahā fī l-mir‘āti.” // A uniquely confirmatory statement by Ghazali is cited by his hostile student Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī as a personal written statement provided to him in Baghdad in 490 H; see ‘*Awāsīm*’ p.24–26.*

pression for the totality of existents (*jumlat al-mawjūdāt*), for they are all within the divine presence since there is nothing in existence save God Exalted and His Acts. So if (the divine presence / the totality of existents) are impressed upon (the human soul), then (the soul) becomes as though it were (*ka-annahā*) the entire world, on account of its cognizance of (the entire world) imaged and impressed [within itself]; whereupon one who does not understand might suppose (such cognizance to be) ‘infusion’ [*al-hulūl*, ie. indwelling of the divine in the human], then he would be like the person who supposes that the image is resident in the mirror (*hāllatun fī l-mir’āt*); while he is mistaken, for the image is not in the mirror, rather: ‘as though it is in the mirror’.

This statement may be read with Ibn Sīnā’s psychology of the rational soul in mind: how the ‘intellect-in-act’ (*al-‘aql bi-l-fī‘l*) of the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nātiqah*) receives the impress of the intelligibles (*al-ma‘qūlāt*) from the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fā‘āl*), thereby fully actualizing its material potential or preparedness for knowledge by contact with the ‘giver of forms’ (*wāhib al-suwar*) thus realizing the condition of the ‘acquired intellect’ (*al-‘aql al-mustafād*). Yet in al-Ghazali’s terminology, knowledge is received through the intermediate causality of angelic intelligences (*bi-wasā‘iti l-malā‘ikah*).¹⁸

However, another interpretive principle is operative in this statement, expressed by al-Ghazali’s repetition of *ka-annahā* / ‘as though it is’, which has nothing to do with Ibn Sīnā. Let us return to his section on ‘the real nature of ‘aql and its divisions’ in the first book of *Ihyā‘*, where al-Ghazali addresses the question of how one may conceive of ‘aql being both a *gharīzah* and at the same time a variety of *‘ilm* (whether self-evident or demonstrative). Here he has recourse to a key principle of his theory of *ta’wīl*, namely the notion of *lisān al-hāl* [Persian: *zabān-i hāl*] or ‘situational speech’¹⁹ (lit. ‘his whole situation bespoke’ or ‘it is as though

¹⁸ See *Ihyā‘* I.1 *kitāb al-‘ilm*, *bāb 2* (v.I p.39 *ma’nā ḥuṣūlu sa’ādah bi-murāfaqati l-mala’i l-a’lā wa muqāranati l-malā‘ikati wa l-nabīyīn*); & III.1 *sharḥ ‘ajā‘ib al-qalb* (v.III p.25 *anna ḥaqā‘iqa l-ashyā‘i mastūratun fī l-lawḥ al-maḥfūz, bal fī qulūbi l-malā‘ikati l-muqarribīn*); also *Mishkāt al-Anwār*, English-Arabic ed. by David Buchman (Provo, Brigham Young University Press, 1998), chap. I § 51 p.19. Further, see the discussion on intellects & angels by R. Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System* p.39–46.

¹⁹ The notion of *lisān al-hāl* belongs to Arabic linguistic treatment of metaphoric language, whereby similes employing physical imagery are interpreted to bespeak of one’s condition or situation (*qāla lisānu l-hāl* ‘as if the condition/situation bespoke’); see eg. R. Dozy, *Supplément aux Dictionnaires Arabes* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1881) II p.537a. Rafiq al-‘Ajam, in his *Mawsū‘at Mustalahāt al-Imām al-Ghazali* (Beirut, Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn,

he said'), a principle applied consistently in a number of other writings to interpretation of key Qur'ānic verses and Prophetic *ḥadīth*.²⁰ 'Situational speech' forms part of the very basis (al-qā'idah) of al-Ghazali's approach to grasping knowledge;²¹ it operates at the level of 'conceptual existence' (al-wujūd al-'aqlī) which is defined thus: "when something has a spirit and a reality and a meaning (rūh wa haqīqah wa ma'nā), then the intellect obtains its sheer (conceptual) meaning without establishing its 'form' in imaginal or sensory or external (existence)."²² Examples of such 'conceptual existence' are God's Hand recounted in various ahādīth; and al-'aql

2000; in *Silsilat Mawsū'āt Mustalahāt A'lām al-Fikr al-'Arabī wa l-Islāmī* v.IV) does not list this term among al-Ghazali's technical vocabulary.

²⁰ See: **a)** *Fayal al-Tafriqah bayn al-Islām wa l-Zandaqah*, in *Majmū'at Rasā'il al-Imām al-Ghazālī* (Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1986–1988; rpr. one volume 1994) v.III p.79–83, on the five degrees of 'existence-presence' / *marātib al-wujūd* (*dhātī* 'essential', *hissī* 'sensory', *khayālī* 'imaginal', 'aqlī' 'conceptual', & *shibhī* 'analogous') – cf. R. McCarthy's translation in his *Freedom and Fulfillment*, Appendix I on p.130–134, as well as R. Frank's treatment in *Creation and the Cosmic System* p.46; **b)** *al-Imlā' fī Ishkālāt al-Ihyā'*, in *Ihyā'* V p.323 & 348–350 (perhaps his most detailed and significant treatment); **c)** the Persian *fatawā* treating questions on *yawm al-mīthāq*, ed. with commentary by N. Pourjavady, 'Ahd-e Alast', in *Ma'ārif* 7/2 (1369 *shamsī* /1990) p.3–48, text on p.42–47. **d)** A work known under the title *al-Madnūn bi-hī 'alā Ghayr Ahlih* [Cairo 1309/1891; also printed in margin of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīfī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (Cairo 1328, rpr. 1949); & in *Majmū'at Rasā'il* IV –see p.102–103] gives a garbled and inaccurate version, which might indicate its inauthenticity.

²¹ *al-Imlā'*, in *Ihyā'* V p.323. al-Ghazali exploits this notion in a number of other works (eg. in *Minhāj al-'Abidīn* p.219), yet without referring to it specifically as *lisān al-ḥāl*; he appears to apply it in a particular manner as a specific type of *ta'wīl* that bears some outward similarity to Mu'tazilī metaphoric exegesis, but is integrated into his epistemology and psychology. One may compare al-Ghazali's usage to al-Qushayrī's employing a similar approach in his *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* – eg. III p.46 on Q *al-Aḥzāb* 33:72, & p.145 on Q *Fuṣilat* 41:11; & compare the *ta'wīl* of these same verses in *Imlā'* (*Ihyā'* V 348–349). The relation of these 'five degrees of existence-presence' given in *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah* and in *al-Imlā'*, to the 'five luminous human spirits / *al-arwāḥ al-bashariyyah al-nūrāniyyah*' (*al-ḥassās* / sensible spirit, *al-khayālī* / imaginal spirit, *al-'aqlī* / conceptual spirit, *al-fikrī* / cogitative spirit, & *al-qudsī al-nabawī* / the sacred prophetic spirit) in *Mishkāṭ al-Anwār* (chap.2, 2nd Pole, p.36–41), has to be determined.

²² *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah* p.80: ...*fā-yatalaqqā l-'aqlu mujarrada ma'nāhu dūna an yathbuta sūratahu fī khayālīn aw ḥissīn aw khārījīn...*; & see *al-Imlā'* (*Ihyā'* V p.348): *talaqqī l-kalāmi fī l-'aqli, wa huwa l-mustafādu bi-l-ma'rifati, al-masmū'i fī l-qalbi, al-mafhūmi fī l-taqdīri 'alā l-lafzi l-musammā bi-lisāni l-ḥāl...*

in the famous creation narrative, «The first that God created (is) the intellect».²³

At this juncture in his *kitāb al-‘ilm of the Ihyā’*, al-Ghazali applies this notion to justify the reality of ‘*aql*’ as being both an ‘innate faculty’ as well as ‘knowledge’. He explains:²⁴

It looks like (*yushbihu an yakūna*) the basis of the term (*al-‘aql*) in linguistic origin is due to that ‘innate faculty’, and the same holds true for (its linguistic) employment; however, (the term *al-‘aql*) designates knowledge (*al-‘ulūm*) in view of its being the result-*yield* (of knowledge) just as something is known by its yield (*bi-thamaratih*). Thus it is said: ‘knowledge is reverential-fear (*al-‘ilmu huwa l-khashyah*)’ and ‘the knower is one who fears God the Exalted’, since reverential-fear is the fruit of knowledge. So (the term *al-‘aql*) becomes like a figurative expression (*ka-l-majāz*) applied to something other than that ‘innate faculty’ – but our aim here is not linguistic research. Rather, what is intended is that these four divisions (for the meaning of *al-‘aql*) exist, and the (same) term designates all of them. There is no disagreement over the existence of them all except concerning the first kind [namely, ‘*aql* as a *gharīzah*].

The truth is that (this ‘innate faculty’) exists; indeed, it is the root (of the other three)! And these knowledges²⁵ are *as though* they are comprised within that ‘innate faculty’ by means of the ‘primordial human-nature’ (*ka-annah mudamanatun fī tilka l-gharīzati bi-l-fitrah*). However, (these knowledges) emerge into existence when a cause occurs bringing them forth into existence, so that it is as though this knowledge is not something being received by (this ‘innate faculty’) from without, and as though (this knowledge) resides within it and then emerged into view (*ka-annah mustakanatun fī-hā fa-zaharat*). The similitude of this is water within the ground, for it emerges by digging the well²⁶ and collects together and is distinguishable by the senses –

²³ *Faysal al-Tafriqah* p.82.

²⁴ *Ihyā’* I.1 (v.I p.121).

²⁵ We normally render the plural ‘*ulūm*’ as ‘knowledge’ (sing.), which in English often acts as a collective plural; yet here we prefer to remind the reader that the text itself speaks of ‘knowledges’, which in this context would comprise both self-evident or intuitive knowledge, and the acquired knowledges of revealed injunctions as well as those of demonstrative certainty. al-Ghazali here insists that in the final analysis all knowledges are fruits flowing from the innate faculty of human intelligence.

²⁶ *al-bi’r*; while al-Zabīdī’s text has *al-qunī* / ‘canal’.

not that something new is conveyed to (the ground); likewise with the oil in the almond and the rosewater in the rose.

Therefore, the Exalted-One said (*Q al-A‘rāf* 7:172): When thy Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them bear witness against themselves, saying ‘Am I not your Lord?!’ They said, ‘Yes assuredly!’ Now its intended meaning is the avowal by their ‘inner-selves’, not the avowal by tongues (*iqrāru nufūsihim lā iqrāra l-alsinah*),²⁷ since they become divided with regard to the avowal by tongues where tongues and individuals are found to exist: [divided into two groups, either] an avower or a disavower.²⁸ From this aspect, the Exalted-One said (*Q al-Zukhruf* 43:87): And if you were to ask them who created them, they will surely say, ‘God.’ This means: ‘if you take into account their (varying) conditions, you may confirm by means of that (the true situation of) their inner-selves and their interior-conditions’,²⁹ – namely (*Q al-Rūm* 30:30) ‘the primordial-nature [endowed by] God with which He has originated people / *fītrata llāhi llatī faṭara l-nāsa ‘alayhā*.³⁰ That is to say, every human is primordially

²⁷ al-Zabīdī (*Ithāf* I p.463) glosses *nufūsihim* here as: “*al-mujarradah ‘an al-hayākil* / ‘their inner-selves’ denuded of physical-frames.” For al-Ghazali’s *ta’wīl* of this famous Qur’anic verse by means of this principle of *lisān al-ḥāl*, see the text of his *fatwā* on the question of the *mīthāq*, ed. N. Pourjavady, ‘Ahd-e Alast’, *Ma‘ārif* 7/2 (1990), esp. p.42–44.

²⁸ *fā-innahum inqasamū fī iqrāri l-alsinah ḥaythu wujidat al-alsinatu wa l-ashkhāsu ilā muqarrin wa ilā jāhidin*. That is to say, humanity becomes divided into two groups: those who adhere to their primordial avowal of His Lordship or who renew their avowal through divine assistance, and those who later disavow it – with this division taking place only when there eventually comes into real physical existence the individuals possessing tongues capable of avowal or disavowal; on these two divisions of people and their remembrance, see al-Ghazali’s final paragraphs in this section (*Iḥyā’* I p.121–122). Cf. al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf* I 463, ... *fā-l-iqrār thābit bi-naṣṣi l-āyah wa lākin lā bi-l-alsinah*.

²⁹ *in i‘tabarta aḥwālahum shahidta bi-hā nufūsihum wa bawāṭinahum*; i.e., comprehending the differing conditions of people in their grasping truth, leads one back to the differences in their primordial natures. One may construe this differently (... *shahidat bi-hā nufūsihum wa bawāṭinuhum*).

³⁰ This is the proper way to construe this passage, given that these same Qur’anic verses and identical *ta’wīl* with recourse to the principle of *lisān al-ḥāl* also occur in his *fatwā* on the *yawm al-mīthāq* (see ‘Ahd-e Alast’ p.45). This indicates al-Ghazali had already reached his understanding on this issue when he wrote the *Iḥyā’*, and maintained it during his last period in Khurāsān where he issued this *fatwā*.

endowed with faith in God Mighty and Majestic;³¹ nay, (they are primordially endowed) with cognizance (*maʿrifah*) of things as they truly are in themselves. I mean that (this cognizance) is as though it were comprised within (the ‘innate faculty’ of al-‘aql) owing to the closeness of (this innate faculty’s) preparedness for perceptive-comprehension.³² [He now proceeds to describe the two divisions of people in response to remembrance of primordial faith-cognition, the higher being that of ‘interior insight’ / *baṣīrat al-bāṭin*.]

The above-cited illuminating passage demonstrates not only the acumen of al-Ghazali’s thought, but illustrates his approach to conceptualizing ‘aql through harmonizing Sūfī insights with the rational disciplines of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *kalām*. He accomplishes this by explaining knowledge to be the fruit of the ‘innate faculty’ of intellect, latent within it and manifesting outwardly when the proper cause is present; and by linking knowledge with the inborn faith and knowledge embraced within the original human constitution (*fiṭrah*) of the Qur’an’s primordial covenant (*Q al-Aʿrāf*7:172). The *gharīzah* of the human intellect is thereby established as the root and the wellspring of the extended or figurative meanings for *al-‘aql* as knowledge. He employs the principle of ‘situational speech’ to provide the necessary conceptual support for this harmonization: while linguistically speaking *al-‘aql* is an ‘innate faculty’, it may also be denominated ‘knowledge’ by way of conceptual speech. The innate cognizance of God comprised in the human *fiṭrah* unites the reality of ‘aql as ‘innate faculty’ and ‘knowledge’.

Murtadā al-Zabīdī, the great commentator of Ghazali, makes a perceptive observation concerning al-Ghazali’s statement, “So the term *al-‘aql* becomes like a metaphoric expression (*ka-l-majāz*) applied to something other than that ‘innate faculty’.” al-Zabīdī points out:³³

Yet he said ‘*ka-l-majāz*’, and he did not say ‘*majāz^{an}* /becomes a metaphoric expression’ since he presents it as (linguistic) research, and for this reason he said at the beginning: ‘It looks like */yushbihu...*’. Now, his surface

³¹ *Fiṭratu llāhi* – in the sense of self-evident acknowledgement or innate recognition of the Creator yielding faith in God; see al-Zabīdī’s gloss (*Itḥāf* I 463): *ashāra bi-hi ilā thamarati l-‘aqli min maʿrifati llāhi l-darūriyyah...*, *innamā ‘anā bi-l-īmān maʿrifata llāhi l-darūriyyah wa huwa maʿrifatu kulli aḥadin annahu mafʿūlun wa anna la-hu fāʿilun fāʿalahu...*, *lā al-maʿrifata l-muktasibah*.

³² *Iḥyāʾ* v.I 121, *aʿnī annahā ka-l-muḍammanatu fī-hā li-qurbi istiʿdādihā li-l-idrāk*.

³³ *Itḥāf* I p.463.

meaning is irreproachable, except that in this he diverges from the rest of the linguistic experts (*a'immat al-lughah*) and the majority of the *mutakallimīn*, for they explicated 'aql only to mean 'knowledge', and no one of them made 'the innate faculty' to be the source of its meaning so that its application to 'knowledge' becomes (merely) a metaphoric expression. On this account, they [the speculative theologians] disapproved of al-Muhāsibī's previously mentioned thesis [namely, 'aql as a *gharīzah* and light].

We now have a better appreciation of al-Ghazali's position in upholding the view that the root meaning of 'aql is the divinely provisioned innate faculty of intelligence, and his departing from the consensus of his theological predecessors [namely, 'aql as necessary knowledge and as an accident]. The work of Ghazali's predecessor al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī provides another model for the integration of 'innate faculty' and 'knowledge'; while traditionalist religious scholars such as the Hanbalis defended the concept of *gharīzah*. Concerning the appeal to metaphoric meanings (*majāz* or *isti'ārah*) in explaining ambiguous verses in the Qur'an, this had always been a hallmark of rationalist exegesis among the Mu'tazilah. There are close similarities between al-Ghazali's appeal to the interpretative device of *lisān al-ḥāl* for adducing a 'conceptual' notion of 'ilm applied to the term 'aql, and parallel interpretations of Qur'anic verses by the Imāmī thinker close to the views of the Baghdadian Mu'tazilah, Muhammad Ibn al-Nu'mān al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d.413 H).³⁴ But even this apparent similarity does not account for al-Ghazali's insistence upon 'interior insight' being the sought for level of understanding of meanings enshrined in *Qur'ān* and *hadīth*. The work of al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī provides another model for the integration of 'innate faculty' and 'knowledge'; while traditionalist religious scholars, such as the Hanbalis, defended the concept of *gharīzah*. Concerning the appeal to metaphoric meanings (*majāz* or *isti'ārah*) in explaining ambiguous verses in the Qur'an, this had always been a hallmark of rationalist exegesis among the Mu'tazilah.

³⁴ See eg., al-Mufid, *al-Masā'il al-Sarawiyah*, ed. Šā'ib 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (*Muṣannafāt al-Shaykh al-Mufid* VII), *mas'alah* §2 on p.47–50, viz. *al-A'rāf* 7:172 & «*balā!*»: p.48 *anna llāha... akhadha min kulli mukallafīn yakhruju min zahri Adama wa zuhūri dhurriyatihī l-'ahda 'alayhi bi-rubūbiyyatihī min ḥaythu akmalah 'aqlahu...*; p.50 *wa dhālika kulluhu 'alā madhhabi ahli l-lughati wa 'ādatihim fī l-majāz*. And *al-Masā'il al-'Ukbariyah* or *al-Hājibiyah*, ed. 'Alī Akbar al-Ilāhī (*Muṣannafāt al-Shaykh al-Mufid* VI), *mas'alah* §45 p.113–115, viz. *al-A'rāf* 7:172, p.113: *wa akhadha l-'ahda min-hum bi-ikmālī 'uqūlihim wa ilzāmi anfusihim..., wa ikhbāruhu 'an-hum bi-annahum qālū «balā!» majāzun fī l-kalām...*

IMAGINAL BODIES

We now jump forward from Ghazali to the Shi‘ah notion of ‘model·archetype bodies’ or ‘ideal·image bodies’ that played an important role in the thought of Mulla Sadrā the Sage of Shiraz in the 17th century. Mullā Sadrā taught the reality of an imaginal faculty that is immaterial (jawhar mujarrad) and intermediate between the two realms of generated being, the present material world and spiritual existence in the Hereafter, serving as the theatre for the ‘imaginal forms’ (al-ṣuwar al-khiyaliyyah) located within the human soul and generated therein after separation from the body. This immaterial imaginal realm of being possessing a higher more intense reality than the world of material forms was key to Mullā Sadrā’s metaphysical interpretation and defense of Islamic eschatology as depicted in revelation.

The later 18th century Safavid *savant* and leading religious official, Muhammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, in his commentary on imām al-Bāqir’s hadīth about the creation of the intelligence (cited above) refers to one interpretation of *istantaqahu* in al-Bāqir’s report as being parallel with the event of the yawm al-mīthāq, and to be interpreted as a linguistic metaphor (*Mir‘āt al-Uqūl* I 29). Actually al-Majlisī accepted the reality of what he terms the ‘prototype bodies’³⁵ /*al-ajsād al-mithāliyyah* or ideal prototypes of our human physical bodies. This had been referred to in certain early traditions by the terms ‘phantom·forms’ /*ashbāh*, or ‘luminous bodies’ /*ajsād nūrāniyyah*. Linguistically, the Arabic term *jasad* refers to the ‘body’ or corporeal-form of any rational creature, including the *jinn*, *Iblis*, and Angels. Majlisī asserts that only the prophets and imams (*al-awsiyā’*) know the entirety of the universe so as to decide if such bodies do not really exist, whereas what theosophic·sages and intellectual·scientists (*al-hukamā’ wa l-riyādiyyūn*) maintain is merely conjecture and surmise.³⁶

³⁵ Majlisī comments (p.354): *ammā l-ajsādu l-mithāliyyatu llatī qulnā bi-hā fa-laysa min hādihā l-qabīl kamā ‘arafta taḥqīqahu fī l-mujallad al-thālath, wa aktharu akhbāri hādihā l-bābi yumkinu ḥamlahā ‘alā zawāhirihā....* See also Majlisī’s treatment in *Biḥār al-Anwār* v.5 [= 3rd vol. in author’s arrangement] *Kitāb al-‘Adl wa l-Ma‘ād, abwāb al-‘adl – bāb 10 al-ḥīn wa l-mīthāq*, on p.245, p.255, & his *bayān* on p.260–276 with lengthy citations from al-Mufid’s *al-Sarawīyyah* & Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s *Tafsīr*.

³⁶ Majlisī further invokes supporting evidence (p.354) from al-Shaykh al-Bahā’ī, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*; and regarding the Imāmī reports on the ‘*ashbāh ‘an yamīni l-‘arsh* /phantom·forms on the right side of God’s Throne’, Majlisī opines: “*wa naḥnu lā nunkiru wujūda l-ajsāmi l-mithāliyyah wa ta‘alluqa l-arwāḥ bi-hā ba‘da l-mawti, bal nathbatuhā li-dalālati l-aḥādīthi l-mu‘tabirati l-ṣarīḥatah ‘alayhā, bal lā yub‘adu ‘indī wujūduhā qabla l-mawti ayḍan fa-tata‘alluqa bi-hā l-arwāḥu fī ḥālī l-nawmi wa shibhihi min al-aḥwālī llatī yaḍ‘afu ta‘alluqahā bi-l-ajsādi l-aṣīlah fa-yasīru bi-hā fī ‘awālimi l-mulki wa l-malakūt....*” (pp.354–5). It appears from these statements that Majlisī accepts

In a later chapter of the Book of Heaven and the World, Majlisī is less guarded about his acceptance of this ‘prototype body’, accepting that it may function even while in the present physical body and differentiating it from transmigration / *tanāsukh*, although an ideal•prototype body / *jasad mithālī* may exist in an animal form as well (namely, in the case of *maskh*³⁷). Human spirits / *arwāḥ* inhabit their prototype bodies and move around in them during sleep and after the death of the physical body while they await the final bodily resurrection. This notion of a prototype or imaginal body is also employed by Majlisī to explicate traditions about the pre-cosmic creation of the luminous forms of the imams and their primordial ‘clay’ / *ṭīnah* in the Throne realm.³⁸

To the best of my knowledge the Imamī Shi‘i notion of prototype bodies was perhaps first conceptualized by the 5th/11th century scholar versed in Mu‘tazilite thought, Muḥammad b. al-Nu‘mān al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d.413 H), when treating the question of the pre-creation ‘phantom •forms’ / *al-ashbāḥ* of the Family of the Prophet glimpsed by Adam as glittering lights on the Throne:³⁹

...wa lam yakūnū fī tilka l-ḥāli ṣuwaran muḥyātan wa lā arwāḥan nāṭiqatan, lākinnahā kānat ṣuwar^{an} ‘alā muthuli ṣuwarihim fī l-bashariyyah tadullu ‘alā mā yakūnūna ‘alayhi

much of what Mullā Sadrā asserted regarding the ‘imaginal forms’, but on a Traditionalist basis of Imamī narratives without the philosophic trappings.

³⁷ BA v.58 *bāb 42 ḥaqīqat al-nafs wa l-rūḥ wa aḥwalihimā*, his comments on report §41 on p.54; and see his remark on §40 p.53, *anna l-jasada l-mithālī mawjūdun fī ḥāli l-ḥayāt ayḍan*. As for *maskh*, see below.

³⁸ A good example of this class of reports is imām al-Ṣādiq’s utterance cited by al-Kulaynī, *Uṣūl al-Kāfī I Kitāb al-Hujjah, bāb khalq abdāni l-a‘immah wa arwāḥihim wa qulūbihim a.s.* §2 p.389: «*inna llāha khalaqānā min nūri ‘azamatihī thumma ṣawwara khalqānā min ṭīnatin makhzūnatin makhnūnatin min taḥta l-‘arshi, fa-askana dhālika l-nūra fī-hi fa-kunnā naḥnu khalqan wa basharan nūrāniyyīna...* / Truly God fashioned us out of the light of His Sublime•Grandeur, thereupon He shaped our ‘proportioned•form’ from a stored ‘clay’ concealed beneath the Throne, then He lodged that light within (our ‘proportioned•form’ / *khalq*) so that we became ‘model•creatures’ and luminous humans...» – explicated by Majlisī (BA v.58 *bāb 42*, §22 p.45) thus:...«*thumma ṣawwara khalqānā*» *ay khalaqa la-nā ajsādan mithāliyyatan shabīhatan bi-l-ajsādi l-aṣīliyyah, fa-hiya ṣuwaru khalqihim wa amthilatuhu, fa-yadullu ‘alā anna la-hum ajsādan mithāliyyah qabla ta‘alluqi arwāḥihim al-muqaddasah bi-abdānihim al-muṭahharah wa ba‘da mufāraqatihā iyyā-hu, bal ma‘ahā ayḍan kamā anna la-nā ba‘da mawtinā ajsādan mithāliyyatan tata‘allaqa arwāḥunā bi-hā...* / «thereupon He shaped our ‘proportioned•form’» that is to say, He created for us prototype bodies resembling the actual bodies... [We render *khalq* in this narrative according to its *taqdīri* sense.]

³⁹ See eg. *al-Masā‘il al-Sarawiyyah, mas‘alah* §2 on p.39.

fī l-mustaqbali min al-hay'ah / in that state they were not living forms nor rational spirits, rather they existed as 'replicas' in the manner of the 'ideal images'⁴⁰ resembling their forms in (the condition of physical) humanity – exemplifying what they would be like in the future with respect to exterior appearance.

Thus, al-Shaykh al-Mufid conceived of these representational forms as ideal prototypes */muthul* for their future corporeal bodies, not as rational spirits (*arwāḥ*). However, it must be observed that in other contexts al-Mufid rejected vulgar popularizing Shi'i beliefs based on literal anthropomorphic interpretations of problematic singular-attested narratives (*ahādīthi l-āhād wa khabar min turuqi l-afrād*) that viewed the *arwāḥ* of the Prophet and Imams to be God's first creation (*al-khalq al-awwal*), and which he felt opened the door to beliefs akin to reincarnation or even to heretical philosophical doctrines. Majliṣī himself cites Ibn Bābawayh al-Sadūq's Risālat al-I'tiqād on the Imami doctrine of souls */al-nufūs* as being first creation spirits */arwāḥ* (BA v.58 bāb 42 p.78); followed by al-Mufid's Sharḥ 'alā l-I'tiqād wherein he critiqued his teacher al-Ṣadūq's doctrine (ibid, p.79 – 83):

...what appeared to him as similar to (our doctrine on pre-existing spirits) and deluded him is the teaching of many heretical philosophers who claim that the souls are not afflicted by generation and corruption and that they subsist (after death), whereas the composite bodies perish and decay / *wa lladhī ḥakāhu min dhālika wa tawahhamahu huwa madhhabu kathīrin min al-falāsifati l-mulḥidīna lladhīna za'amū anna l-anfusa lā yalhaquhā l-kawnu wa l-fasādu wa annahā bāqiyyatun wa innamā tafnā wa tafsudu l-ajsāmu l-murakkabah* (ibid, p.81)

And al-Mufid goes on to observe that this is why Sunnis accuse the Shi'ah of *zandaqah*. al-Shaykh al-Mufid offered his own interpretation of such Imami ahadith whereby the *arwāḥ* are taken to be angels and the *ajsād* are understood to be humans.

Mufid's pupil Muhammad b. 'Alī al-Karājukī (d.449 H) appears to have been guided by his teacher's insights when interpreting several hadith reports that described Muhammad's ascension through the heavens (al-mi'rāj) wherein the Prophet witnessed an angelic prototype or ideal image

⁴⁰ We prefer to read the plural *muthul* (sing. *mithāl*) instead of 'alā *mithli suwarihim*..., which also makes good sense.

of ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib beneath the divine Throne,⁴¹ fashioned by God for the sake of the Near Angels in order that they may slake their longing to view ‘Alī’s face and to visit and honor him in heaven. We may recall that there was a general consensus among the Imāmiyyah, along with the Zaydiyyah and Mu‘tazilah, that the Prophet made his ascent to Jerusalem and then through the Heavens in a waking state in both body and spirit (see their *tafsīrs* on Q al-Isrā 17:1, al-Zukhruf 43:45, al-Najm 53:1 – 18). It is a standard feature of the Islamic mi‘raj narratives to portray the Prophet being greeted by his fellow Messengers and Prophets during his ascent; while the Shi‘ah generated elaborate narratives that also featured the Prophet’s confronting what at first he took to be Ali himself in the vicinity of the Throne, but which turned out to be Ali’s angel-double.⁴² Karājukī explains how this could happen:⁴³

It is conceivable for God the Exalted to originate /ahdatha for His Messenger in that situation replicas /*suwar* resembling the (bodily) forms of the imams (a.s.) in order that (the Prophet) may view them all together in their perfection; thus he would be like one who witnessed their (physical) persons by means of his vision of their ideal-prototypes /...*ka-man shāhada ashkhāṣahum bi-ru’yatihi mithālihim*.

Majlisī himself strongly confirms the reality of Muhammad’s bodily ascent supported by Qur’anic verses and the overwhelming evidence of multiply attested narratives, and condemning those of his contemporaries who gave it a spiritual or dream interpretation as being weak in religion, or

⁴¹ al-Karājukī, *Kanz al-Fawā‘id*, ed. ‘Abdallāh Na’mah (Beirut, Dār al-Aḍwā’, 1985) II 138–143, particularly on p.142–3 where he cites a report from *Īdāh Dafā‘in al-Nawāṣib*, a work by his teacher Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. Shādhān al-Qummī, transmitted through Aḥmad b. al-Aswad al-Kātib al-Isfahānī (d. ca. 312 H) on a ‘sunni’ *isnād*, with Karājukī giving his own comments on how the *suwar* of the imams were generated by God to enable the Prophet to view all of them in their perfection during his Ascent. Majlisī also cites this passage, along with his own comments and interpretation, in BA v.18 *Ta’rīkh Nabīnā Ṣ – abwāb aḥwālīh, bāb 3 – ithbāt al-mi‘rāj wa ma’nāhu*, p.293–302.

⁴² One may sample this class of reports stressing the shared light origin of the Prophet and Ali, in BA v.18...*bāb ithbāt al-mi‘rāj*, p.317–8 §32, p.364–6 §70, p.370–1 §77, p.377 §82, p.386–7 §94b, p.380–4 §86; all taken from 3rd – 4th century H Imāmi sources.

⁴³ *Kanz al-Fawā‘id* II 142; cited in BA v.18...*bāb ithbāt al-mi‘rāj*, p.299–300.

as duped by the seductive chatter of the philosophists (*al-inkhidā' bi-taswīlāt al-mutafalsifin*).⁴⁴

This notion of 'prototype bodies' developed by al-Mufid and al-Karājukī does not appear to be directly connected to the notion of an 'imaginal body' introduced by al-Mufid's contemporary the philosopher Ibn Sīnā, despite al-Mufid's inclination to view the human reality in a philosophical manner as *jawhar basīt*. Ibn Sīnā's notion arose out of his psychology of the functioning of inner senses of the soul with intellection, in particular the thought-function of the 'imaginal faculty' (*al-takhayyul, quwwah khayaliyyah*) once the soul separates from the body. Behind these early Imami speculations over the *suwar* and *mithāl* of the Prophets and imams, and despite the rationalist tone of al-Mufid's 'prototype bodies' ingeniously serving to validate a problematic doctrinal point, one may glimpse an earlier series of notions unfolding from esoteric doctrines of the Iraqi *ghulāt* /exaggerators over the 2nd–4th centuries H.⁴⁵ Indeed, the question might be posed whether Ibn Sīnā himself could have been indebted more than indirectly to certain Imāmī conceptions, or to esoteric Ismā'īlī teachings current within the 4th century H 'Persian School' reworking specific gnostic notions concerning the *ashbāh* and *azillah* cultivated in particular among 3rd/9th century Kūfan *ghulāt*.⁴⁶

Yet in the context of the thought world of his own era, Majlisī's exploitation of an earlier Imāmī notion of 'prototype bodies' is best understood as a Traditionalist reaction against the notion elaborated by Mullā Sadrā concerning an imaginal faculty that is immaterial (*jawhar mujarrad*) and intermediate between the two realms of generated being, the present material world and spiritual existence in the Hereafter, serving as the theatre for the 'imaginal forms' (*al-suwar al-khayaliyyah*) located within the human soul and generated therein after separation from the body. In response, Majlisī refurbishes al-Mufid's notion of pre-existing ideal-images, thereby remaining faithful to the evidence of the *hadiths*

⁴⁴ BA v.18...*bāb ithbāt al-mi'rāj* p.289–90; Majlisī goes on to rail against some of his Shi'ah contemporaries who had been so duped – namely, the philosophist theosophic-sages – given their sketchy knowledge of the abundant traditions among the Imamiyyah and the consensus of their ancient authorities on the reality of bodily ascent; while contrasting this to majority Sunni views who despite their paucity of narratives nevertheless also upheld a straightforward literal interpretation.

⁴⁵ For a concise orientation to ideas on 'phantom-forms' /*ashbāh* and 'pre-existing shadows' /*azillah*, see Heinz Halm, "Gölāt," *Encyclopædia Iranica* XI 62b–64b.

⁴⁶ Consult a thought provoking study by D. De Smet, 'La doctrine avicennienne des deux faces de l'âme et ses racines ismaéliennes', *Studia Islamica* 93 (2001) p.77–89. On the philosophic role of the imagination in general among Islamic philosophic streams, consult the very important study of Jean R. Michot, *La destinée de l'homme selon Avicenne* (Louvain, 1986).

narrated from the imāms while opposed to any philosophist immaterial understanding of a spiritual existence.

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CHAPTER IX

**THE ROLE OF RITUAL IN THE
SHI'ITE MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF IRAN**

AHMAD KAZEMI MOUSSAVI

Ritual has been defined generally as “repetitious and stylized symbolic bodily actions that are centered on cosmic structures and/or sacred presence.”¹ It may be said that ritual brings the individual and his cultural identity to encounter the transcendental realm. Although to a certain extent, ritual may be considered as “non-rational or formalized symbolic behavior,”² it nevertheless plays a very important role in molding the cultural identity of a community. Some scholars such as Heinz Halm place ritual at the core of any religion. He states that the community “is created not by the profession of belief in dogma but through the process of performing rituals.”³ William P. Alston states, “It is generally supposed that a given ritual has a point only if certain theological doctrines are objectively true.”⁴ With a different outlook, Emile Durkheim considered ritual as “the means by which individuals are brought together as a collective group.”⁵

In this essay, I explore how Shi'ite ritual as a cultural phenomenon interacted and harmonized with the social system of the Safavid period of Iran. The Safavid period in Iran from 1499 – 1720 CE witnessed the emergence of several theological and traditionalist schools of thought which affected the course of the expansion of writings and practices of ritual. Traditionism (Akhbarism) was revived in the mid – Safavid era due to the circumstances created by Safavid political dominance and its non-doctrinal extremism that made it possible for the Safavid polity to triumph in Iran. In many respects, the Safavids owed their political success in Iran to the new wave of Shi'ite extremism (*ghuluww*) of messianic inspiration that developed particularly among the Turkish tribes in the areas of eastern Anatolia and northwest Iran. The adherents of these ideas often sought to externalize their devotional attachment to the person of the Imams (saints) from the Household of the Prophet. This attitude paved the way to foster a stronger set of ritualized behavior within the Islamic practices of collective pilgrim-

¹ Evan M. Zuess, “Ritual” in *Encyclopedia of Religion* (London & New York: Macmillan, 1987) v.12, p. 405.

² *Ibid.*

³ Heinz Halm, *Shi'ite Islam: from Religion to Revolution*, trans. Allison Brown, (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), p.41.

⁴ William P. Alston, “Religious Language,” *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 8 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1967) v.7, p. 172.

⁵ Catherine Bell “Ritual and Society” in *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 25.

mage and ritual commemoration. As a result, there emerged a new function and scope for the Shi'ite practice of visitation to the tomb-shrines of their Imams, as well as for the practice of commemorating the anniversaries of their deaths, especially the battlefield of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn b. 'Ali at Karbala in lower Iraq (Muharram 61 H /October 680) celebrated in the Muharram ceremonies of 'Ashura.

By the end of the Safavid era, key notions of seeking the intercession of the Imams and of otherworldly salvation were incorporated by the '*ulama*' (jurisconsults) into the shrine visitation rites and mourning observances.⁶ An important aspect of the *Muharram observances* of the Safavid era is the expanded scope of people's participation in the performance of this ritual. In Muslim law, collectivity is required in several specific performances such as the Friday prayer and the Two '*Id* prayers, as well as the '*Arafa* walk during the *Hajj* pilgrimage. Except for military campaigns (*jihād*), self-initiated Muslim gatherings – such as the *tarawih* or night prayers in the month of Ramadan and Sufi recollection practices (*dhikr*) – have no legal designation in the Shari'ah. But collective funeral and memorial services are approved of advisedly in *fiqh*. Nevertheless, at least since the fourth/tenth century, Shi'ite commemoration practices during Muharram exceeded normal levels of Muslim collective devotional practice.

The historian Ibn al-Athir (d.632/1234), when reporting the events in Baghdad for the year 352/963, describes the occurrence of a public lamenting demonstration by men and women dressed in black garments who struck their faces. This description reveals many characteristics of the Muharram procession of that era. However, there is no indication of banners and standards or of grouping people within the crowd, which are peculiar to the Safavid period. Illustrations given by European travelers demonstrate that most elements of the '*dasta gardani*' rituals existed during the reign of Shah 'Abbas Ist (rgn. 996-1038). '*Dasta gardani*' requires preparations to form factions (*dasta*) and involves rallying the grieving volunteers of a special quarter or of a professional group in a city, who then walk and parade with special banners and standards. Jean Calmard, the contemporary French author, provides us with enough evidence from the accounts of European travelers to suggest that it was during the reign of Shah 'Abbas that "the mourning ceremonies dedicated to the Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn had become a big communal feast comprising an increasing number of dramatic elements – often very realistic – in pageants incorporated into processional rituals."⁷ Furthermore, Shah 'Abbas encouraged visitation to the Imams' tombs by his own frequent practice of pilgrimage to their tomb-shrines and by building roads and hospices for the visitants to these shrines.

⁶ Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi's works depict all of these features, see especially his voluminous *Bihar al-Anwar*. Also consult Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1987) p.168.

⁷ Jean Calmard, "Shi'i Rituals and Power," *Safavid Persia*, p.154.

The Italian traveler Pietro della Valle, who visited Isfahan in 1025/1616, describes the 'Ashura observance as the largest ceremony in which huge factions were present with special banners and standards. Each faction was equipped with several horses and camel-litters surrounded by a group of mace-bearers to protect them from the intrusion of rival factions.⁸ The question remains, however, why the Muharram observance should form such organized processions during the reign of Shah 'Abbas.

The celebrations of Muharram, along with its Shi'ite ideology, traveled to Northern India during the first decades of the seventeenth century. An Indian model of the celebration of the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn was reported by the traveler, Amir Wali, at Lahroe around 1045/1635, giving a similar description of the Muharram processions. This Safavid court policy to vulgarize the Shi'ite lamentation rituals was combined with the *'ulama's* tendency to incorporate a wider range of the rituals into the applied law or *fiqh*. The *'ulama* of this period were certainly close to both the Safavid power and to socio-economic influence. Most of the *'ulama* either introduced or legitimized a larger ritual groundwork which resulted in the increasing practice and larger scale of the Muharram ceremonies and ritual mourning rites. The French traveler, Charden, recorded that, "Camel sacrifices were introduced (or reintroduced?) in Persia by 'Abbas I, acting on the advice of a Shi'i doctor [i.e., religious scholar]."⁹ Yet there were also certain religious scholars who were not close to the power elite, and who disagreed with such an expansion and elevation of the Muharram processions, and some even outlawed the self-inflicted, mortifying measures that often occurred during these processions.

The picture that one may draw from the juridical accounts is that the leading Shi'ite *'ulama* of the late Safavid period went out of their way to emphasize the importance of ziyarah to the Imams, especially that of Imam Husayn on the day of 'Ashura. They tried their utmost to popularize the cult of the Twelve Imams by employing almost all available rhetoric to stylize and reinforce the salvational value of visitation and mourning rituals. Their rhetoric, as surveyed above, placed high value upon the sanctuaries necessitating frequent visitations, commemoration of the sufferings of the Imams, weeping and lamenting for them by identifying with their sufferings (especially on the day marking the tragedy of Karbala), paying charitable alms, reciting elegies (*marathi*), earnest supplications (*munajat*), and frequent prayers while fasting. In this manner, they sought to create an ambiance in which ziyarah and the commemoration of selected events in the religious calendar of the Shi'ah should occupy a central place in Safavid social life. This ambiance tended to generate and enforce attitudes from which the *'ulama* benefited the most. The popular rites of visitation to the tomb-

⁸ Pietro della Valle, *Voyages dans la Turquie, l'Egypte, la Palestine, le Perse, les Indes orientales et autres*, in Nasrullah Falsafi, *Zindagani-yi Shah 'Abbas-i Avval* (3 vols., Tehran: 'Ilmi, 1990) v. 3, p.853.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

shrines of the Imams and the mourning rites of the month of Mu-harram, on a new and more imposing scale, are the two most outstanding sets of rituals that changed the socio-religious character of the Shi'ite community from the late Safavid period onward. Neither of these rituals were new to Islamic societies or even to Shi'ah cultic practice, but the increased scope and depth of impact they mustered in the post-Safavid era produced a unique feature peculiar to Shi'ite Iran and its 'ulama, providing Shi'ism with several of its most distinctive features.

We now turn to the question of how the popularization of these two ritual practices contributed to increasing the power of the 'ulama. This problem can be dealt with from different viewpoints. Here, I will try to sketch some of the psychological and economic impact of the expansion of these rituals on the status of the 'ulama.

1. The 'Atabat in lower Iraq became, almost at the same time, both the seat of the Shi'ite 'ulama' and the object of organized pilgrimage. The highly meritorious act of visitation made travel to Najaf and Karbala a routine practice for most Shi'ite generations of this era. The rise of a new range of sermon-sayers (*rawdah khwani*) disseminated the obligation of this observance, as has been suggested by authors such as al-Majlisi himself.¹⁰ New psychological dimensions were attached to this practice, which gave the 'Atabat visitations a more intense emotional aura than even pilgrimage to Mecca. The act of pilgrimage, in the words of Nakash, "meant a movement from a mundane center to a sacred periphery which suddenly became central to the individual."¹¹

In such sacred ambiance, the first requirement from a pilgrim is to renew his covenant (*'ahd*) with the Imams in their position as the Divine Guides. This demand is usually fulfilled by the visitant reading the visitation-guide or by repeating what the attendants of the sanctuary instruct. After performing all parts of the *ziyarah*, the pilgrim would naturally seek a live personality in which the authority of the Imam may be crystallized. Here, the supreme mujtahid of the 'Atabat appears as the representative of the Imam who can satisfy certain psychological requests of the pilgrim. The supreme *mujtahid* can be met either during the sunset prayer in the shrine courtyard, or at his house if the pilgrim has some *khums* or voluntary alms-money to pay. The guidance of the sanctuary attendants or of the sermonizers usually paves the way for meeting the grand *mujtahid*. Therefore, the attitude of the pilgrim to the status of the supreme *mujtahid* will be shaped in an ambiance created by *ziyarah* as well as by the mourning processions.

2. The centrality of *ziyarah* and *Muharram processions* in Shi'ite social life increased the 'ulama – bazaar ties, giving them a new scope. Before the Safavid period, the ties between merchants and Sufis were quite strong in the form of networks of associations. By the late Safavid period,

¹⁰ Several of Majlisi's Persian writings such as *Zad al-Ma'ad* and *Hilyat al-Muttaqin* appear to have been specifically written to meet this demand.

¹¹ Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, p.165.

'ulama such as al-Majlisi had checked the Sufi influence on the one hand, and had succeeded in building a new range of socio-religious relations with the bazaar classes, on the other. These relations included: i) new jobs created by the expansion of the rituals; ii) increased payment in charities (particularly the *khums*); and finally iii) devotional attachment to the position of the supreme mujtahid, which eventually gave birth to the institution of the *marja' al-taqlid* in the mid-nineteenth century.

As for the first element, there were increased demands for a series of new equipment, such as chains (*zanjir*), standards ('*alam*), poniard (*qam-mah*), and couch (*nakhl*) to be deployed in the Muharram processions. In addition to the equipment manufacturers, the mourning services demanded professions such as sermonizer, mourner, and sanctuary attendants on a very large scale. All these artisans and servicemen naturally sought the words or rulings of the grand mujtahids in the 'Atabat for the legitimacy and expansion of their professions.

Secondly, the weight given to the *ziyarah* and *Muharram rites* encouraged most ritual performers to purify their personal records by settling their due taxes with the high ranking 'ulama of the 'Atabat. Among the religious taxes, the *khums* (which now encompassed a fifth of any income) played a significant role in financing the Shi'ite institutions of the 'Atabat. One-half of the *khums*, called 'shares' of the Imam (*sahm al-imam*) must be directly assumed by the supreme mujtahid in his capacity as the vicegerent of the Imam. This money was usually spent by the mujtahid to finance the stipends of the students at Shi'ite learned institutions in the Iraqi 'Atabat and sometimes in Iran (e.g., in Qumm). Concerning the remaining one-half, the tax payer should either prove that he had spent it to help needy people in the proper way, or deliver it to the same mujtahid.

Thirdly, the devotional attachment of Shi'ites to the figures of the Imams was symbolized in the person of the supreme mujtahid. The contemporary Ayatollah Mutahhari rightly observed: "The courtesy and devotion performed by the *khums* payers to the person of the *marja'* (the supreme *mujtahid*) gave a double value to the implementation of the law regarding the three shares of the Imam."¹² This attitude was developed in an ambiance dominated by *ziyarah* and the *Muharram lamentation rites*. The charisma derived from the vicegerency of the Imam was actually crystallized in the mourning rites during the shrine visitations.

3. The emergence of the institution of *marja' al-taqlid*, or the supreme model for emulation, in the mid-nineteenth century is due to the increased centrality of ritual practices. The above mentioned elements not only contributed to the strength of the 'ulama's power, but also gave rise to a hierarchical structure within the body of 'ulama. There emerged many occasions for which the final opinion should be declared by a single supreme *mujtahid*. Determining the special dates and occasions when

¹² Murtada Mutahhari, *Bahthi Darbare-ye Marja'iyat va Ruhaniyyat* (Tehran: Sherkat-e Intesharat, 1962), p. 180.

businesses should be closed was an important matter that required the fatwa (juristic opinion) of the leading *mujtahid*. Suspension of work for different reasons is a universal phenomenon; nevertheless, closing the shops in the bazaar in modern Shi'ism was closely connected to religious sentiments as determined by the leading 'ulama. These dates include the first day of each lunar month according to the exact timing of 'Ashura (10th Muharram), of 20th Safar (40th day after the event of 'Ashura), of the 21st of Ramadan (the martyrdom of Imam 'Ali), and of the moon sighting for 'Id al-Fitr (the feast after completion of the month of fasting), as well as the date of memorial services for any deceased *marja'* or exemplary authority.

Closing the shops of the bazaar functioned as a prerequisite for the Muharram ceremonies due to the public processions (*dastah gardani*), which had become an essential part of mourning rites since the mid-Safavid period. The same public processions were now employed in the death and memorial days of the grand *marja'*, ever since the demise of Shaykh Murtada Ansari in 1281/1864. Such commemorations functioned as the last recognition of the status of the deceased *marja'* by the emerging *maraji'*. We know that the houses of grand *maraji'* of the 'Atabat and of Qumm in Iran were among the main stopping points of the Muharram processions, where they would pay tribute to the status of the vicegerents of the Imam. In this manner, such public processions and the closing of the shops, which were originally parts of the Muharram rites, were also employed for establishing the authority of the new emerging *maraji'*.¹³

As we saw in the first part of this survey, the juridical works of the Late Safavid 'ulama connected individual Shi'ite piety to the visitation of the shrines, and this bore its fruits in the Qajar era. The expansion of the ziyarah and Muharram rites made the 'ulama the focal points of the society not only for spiritual guidance but also for mercantile and communal settlements. Public processions were beyond the approach of most juristic-minded 'ulama. Nevertheless, they expanded in the post-Safavid era in spite of the fact that some mujtahids refuted self-flagellation and any kind of self-mortification resulting in injuries. The use of public processions for political purposes in the Tobacco and Constitutional movements, and then especially during the Islamic Revolution of Iran, proved that these may also serve the interests of the 'ulama effectively. The social esteem and influence that the 'ulama gained from this development of Shi'ite ritual surpassed the 'ulama's scholarly achievements during the same periods. It is no surprise therefore, that both the charismatic authority of the 'ulama (their status as vicegerency of the Imam) and their hierarchical position (*marja' iyyah*) emerged with a new orientation when the performance of the rituals was at its peak during the Qajar era.

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¹³ Further see Moussavi, *Religious Authority in Shi'ite Islam*, pp.237–39.

In the name of Allah

CHAPTER X

SYMBOLS AND THE SYMBOLIC OUTLOOK ON THE ASHURA EVENT IN THE TIME OF GLOBALIZATION

ADEL SARIKHANI

INTRODUCTION

The study of symbols has been given great importance in the last century. Sciences, like literature, art, mysticism and religion, identify symbols and the school of symbolism starting in the late 19th century in Europe which was based on a symbolic attitude to the world and the self. The study of symbols is scientifically valuable and artistically joyful since it plays an important role in the recognition of symbols, emotions, feeling and imagination. This recognition of symbols is, in fact, making the remained thoughtful works of the ancients more brilliant. The researcher's job is much like that of an archeologist who after excavation, cleaning and reordering, transfers the archeological objects to the story of the ancient opinions about the self, world, and so on. When the human succeeds in finding and identifying them, he discovers the holy and hidden chain in the collective unconscious mind which links him to the past. The least benefit of this is to prevent the development of a feeling of disintegration from existence and nature, and the resulting confusion and futility. Carl Jung says: It is a grave mistake to put cultural symbols aside justifying that they are rationally weak. Symbols and belief in them is a crucial base for our mind and constitute vitally forces which is necessary for making a society. Ignoring these symbols would impose an irretrievable loss, since they rouse deep emotional reactions in what is human.

SYMBOL

There is no unanimous, comprehensive, and unquestionable definition of symbol, and it varies from signs to metaphor, like a dark jail which represents a sorrowful heart. Jung, more simply and clearly, defines it as: a phrase, name or even picture that might represent a familiar thing in daily life which, in addition to its common and clear meaning, has implicit meaning, as well. Human life has been full of symbols, so that some have defined the human as an animal that mostly uses symbols.

It should be noted that human nature naturally inclines to symbols, which differ from signs in due to their "Holiness" or transcendent sense.

This holiness is important in the structure of symbols because it differentiates symbols from signs. Red light, for example, is a stop sign, but not holy; it is just conventional, but the flag of a country which is conventional represents the national identity of the people of that country and therefore it is holy and respectable.

The source of the “holiness” of symbols and the emotional relations of humans with symbols were elucidated in the 16th century. Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swiss religious leader and correspondence theorist, believed that visible facts of the world are symbols for the invisible spiritual world. But in Europe, in the 18th century, the scientific, experimental and positivist philosophy of August Comte and such literary schools as realism rendered immaterial and holy issues unwelcome.

Nevertheless, the poets, philosophers and mystics influenced the emotions and feelings through imagination and, to some extent, succeeded in directing them toward the deep truth of the human in the age of the machine. Symbolic imagination plays an important role in the mitigation between the machine civilization, on the one hand, and human emotions and spirituality, on the other. Some Western scholars believe that the only way to balance the western machine civilization and dehumanization is a familiarization with the emotion which filled Eastern life, art and culture. With respect to the above-mentioned introduction and the great importance of symbols in the world, it is good to look at them from Islamic perspective, as this is compatible with human nature.

There are many cultural symbols on Islam. One of the most important symbols is the Ashura event. Imam Hussein, the Islamic side of the Karbala happening, symbolizes his movement as “I have not moved for rebellion and uprising, or on the basis of caprice, or for putridity and cruelty, but to reform the nation of my ancestor, Imam Ali (peace is upon him) I want to command good deeds and prohibit bad deeds and follow the way of my ancestor and father. The influence of symbols on people’s deeds and ideas is more than mere speech. Many books, especially the Holy Qur’an, emphasize the imitation of symbols such as Abraham, Asie (Pharaohs wife) Mary (Maryam) and her son, and Mohammad, particularly in beliefs and actions.¹

The Qur’an emphasizes symbols, especially common symbols for all, and says: “O followers of the Book come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate aught with him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah; but if they turn back, then say; Bear witness that we are Muslims“.

There are many symbols in the Qur’an and we point to only some:

1-Jesus: about 93 verses of Qur’an have spoken about him: We may make him a symbol to men and a matter which

¹ Qur’an Tahrim / vers no. 11.

has been decreed. So she conceived him then withdrew herself with him to a remote place. And the throes (of child birth) compelled her to betake herself to the trunk of a palm tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died before this...Then (the child) called out to be from beneath her; grieve not, surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you. And shake towards you the trunk of the palm-tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates...and she came to her people with him they said; O Mary surely you have done a strange thing...but she pointed to him. They said: How should we speak to one who was a child in the cradle? He said: Surely I am a servant of Allah: He has given me the Book and made me a prophet. (Qur'an 19-21, 31)

2-Mary: We made her and her son symbols for the nations (Qur'an 21-91)

3-Muhammad: Certainly you have in the Apostle of Allah (Muhammad) an excellent symbol, for one who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much. (Qur'an 33-21)...

Symbols are also influential in the adjustment of both normal and abnormal individual and social behaviors. So in Islamic and Iranian culture, there are different national and religious symbols, the most important of which is Karbala event and its martyrs, especially Imam Hussein (as). Taking a close look at the Iranian behavior, one can envisage the integration of the everlasting event of Karbala and the very life of Iranian Muslims; the cultural and religious celebrations during the year in Moharam and Safar in particular substantiate this claim. There are, of course, many messages of Imam Hussein (as) symbols which are still not applied in our life.

Some of the symbols integrated in the behavior of Imam Hussein's followers are: bravery, freedom, patience, manliness, loyalty, helping the oppressed, seeking martyrdom, sincerity, seeking justice, reform, peace, and supporting religion. Although there have been numerous books and articles on the symbols of Ashura, and in some cases these have been distorted, we would try to investigate the effect of Ashura pattern in Iranian culture and the role it can play in globalization. The secret and symbols of the Karbala event among the Muslims will be considered. Finally, the role of Karbala symbols in the peace process, freedom and international security will be discussed.

We will speak here about those who affected this unique event, a great tragic occurrence that has served as a lesson for all ages and lives as an incomparable fact and overwhelming source of advice and admonition. Spiritual and worldly people alike see such an event but once, for never again will heaven and earth witness such a panorama. This survey of the unique symbolism of Imam Husain is analytical in essence. As the purpose of this essay is to give a qualitative rather than quantitative account, it deals

with the causes, policy and results of this eternal revolution. This is done in the hope of unveiling the startling aspects of the revolution's message, which often is neglected in its traditional commemoration.

This article tries to answer the following questions. First, why did this movement take place? What are the basic symbols of the Karbala event? What effects can these symbols induce in human life? Can it help globalization? What are the effects of these symbols in Iranian and Eastern culture?

The answers to the above questions are by no means easy, because they involve analysis of the prevailing conditions, before and after the revolution. Indeed, comprehensive answers would require volumes in order that one might be satisfied, not to mention the stormy and turbulent events of the time, which add substantial difficulties for objective research work.

To understand Imam Husain's personality and the collective culture of the society, the symbols of his movement and a summary of the Islamic view of life is necessary.

THE ISLAMIC MESSAGE

Islam's principles of liberty, justice and fraternity conferred equal rights of citizenship on the rich and the poor, the black and the white, the Arab and the non-Arab. This message of Prophet Muhammad was spread to every nook and corner of the world.

Therefore Islam is a philosophy of life: it gives reasons and a set purpose for living. Furthermore, it defines the best ways to secure progress and happiness. This is done by elevating the spiritual side and satisfying the material needs of people.

Islam considers man as a viceroy of God on earth (Qur'an 2-30). This status is one of high honor, but it is also critical, for its requirements must be satisfied. Thus, man is in an envied position, and consequently his acts and behavior are expected to conform to the high level he is occupying. Thus Islamic concepts and laws are inseparable parts of the Islamic ideology; they are the practical expression of Islam in society and life in general.

These concepts and laws are essentially concerned with harmonizing people's relationships among themselves and with other beings, and above all with the Creator. The basic Islamic outlook on this life is an introductory course, as this worldly life is viewed as a prelude to another eternal life. Therefore, this world is a preparatory stage for people in order to attain the spiritual level which permits them to enter Paradise. Hence, success and failure are not measured with this worldly or materialistic supremacy. The Islamic measure differs from the materialistic standard by accounting for the life hereafter. Satisfaction of God is the sublime aim which surpasses all other inclinations and wishes. This is by no account to neglect material supremacy, but puts it in its rightful place. It is with the satisfaction of God that Muslims seek material achievement.

IMAM HUSSEIN

Imam Hussein's life and status in Islamic history are formidable. He was one of two sons of Imam Ali and Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet Mohammad. His father, Imam Ali, was openly declared by the Prophet as the Commander of the faithful, not to mention his knowledge, bravery, and steadfastness, brotherhood to the Prophet, justice and piety. Fatimah was the dearest daughter to her father. Al-Tirmidhi narrated through Usamah ibn Zaid that the Prophet said "The dearest member of my family to me is Fatimah." She was declared by the Prophet as the master of all women in the whole world. She and her husband were the members of the family singled out for their qualities and roles.

They are examples for Muslims, both men and women. Their role was an extension of that of the Prophet in the sense of leading the great cultural transformation from the darkness of an infidel's culture to the brightness of Heavenly light.

Thus the Prophet once declared, "Husain is of myself and I am of Husain, O, God be pleased with those who please Husain". This declaration came from a responsible wise leader, the Prophet of God, who would never commit a mistake during the performance of his Prophetic task. He was delivering the Islamic Message and informing people of those who will act as springs and guardians of this Message in the future. The Prophet of God made another statement which leaves no doubt of Imam Hasan's and Husain's role. He said "Hasan and Husain are the masters of youth in Paradise". This was presented as a credential to the Muslim nation in order to hold firm to their leadership.

At a certain time the Muslims at Medina appreciated the glory and good results of the Islamic Message and intended to reward the Prophet for his effort in guiding them. The gift they presented to the Prophet was some gold which they had collected. The Prophet's answer came in the following verses which were revealed during this incident. "Say: 'No reward do I ask of you for this except being kind to those of kin'" (23/42). Al-Kashaaf narrated that when this verse was revealed, people asked the Prophet "O Prophet of God, who are these of kin which this verse makes their respect obligatory upon us?" The Prophet answered, "They are Ali, Fatimah, and their two sons". However, this did not imply disrespect for other Muslims, companions or the rest of his kin. Looking objectively at the message the verse indicates first of all reluctance to accept material reward. A reward, to be suitable, cannot be restricted to the material only. Hence, the verse indicated the real reason behind this respect to some specific people was not because they are his relatives as such, but to safeguard the Islamic Message. The role they were to play in the Islamic history required such respect in order to enable them to perform their task; this implies those who dislike Islamic conduct and life. Jabir narrated that the Prophet, in his speech after performing the last pilgrimage, said, "O people I am leaving the book of God and my family (*Itrah*) for guidance. If you hold fast to them, surely you

will never go astray". This *Hadith* was narrated through some twenty different sources of trusted chains of narrators. Muslim in his *Sahih* quoted some of them.

The last few Hadiths are impressive in many respects. First, they were narrated by different sources of different inclinations which add extra weight to them. Secondly, the same content of all indicates the consistency of the event.

Imam Husain, as already stated, was a member of the family of the Prophet. He was brought up in the Prophetic guidance where he received the direct concern of the Prophet. The ideal atmosphere where he had grown up with his grandfather, father, mother and elder brother was the highest level ever attained. Thus he acquired wisdom, generosity, bravery, piety and letters. He occupied outstanding posts during his father's reign in the Islamic State. During the terror and corruption which swept the Muslim World at the hands of the Umayyad, he was the sole hope of the Muslims to restore the establishment of the Islamic laws which would bring them the prosperity, peace and happiness of the two worlds. He never failed the Muslims, but acted as expected of a great ideological leader and discharged his duty to the best.

Imam Hussein in the Views of Non-Muslims

Imam Hussein introduced his movement as a symbol inspired from the prophets' ways and fact-seekers. In the history of Imam, many anti-cruelty movements have come to fruition in the Muslim perspective. More interestingly, some non-Muslims from East and West attest to this: Mahatma Gandhi says: "I carefully studied the life of Imam Hussein, the supreme martyr of Islam and sufficiently looked at Karbala pages; if India wants the victory it should peruse Imam Hussein". Charles Dickens also says: "If Imam Hussein aimed at worldly desires I do not understand why he took his family for the sake of Islam." An English orientalist says: "The best lesson I get from Karbala is that Hussein and followers highly believed in Allah; they, through their action, made clear that numerical superiority in the confrontation of virtue with evil is not important. What astonishes me is the victory of Hussein, though with a minority." Edward Brown says: "Can one find a heart that would not feel sad when talking about Karbala?" Even non-Muslims cannot deny the purity of the spirit that managed the war. Washington Irving, the American historian, says: "Imam Hussein could save his life by submission to Yazid's willpower, but the responsibility of the movement leadership did not let him identify Yazid as a caliph. He was ready to accept any difficulty in order to save Islam from the hand of Umayyad. Under the hot sun and rain of Iraq, Hussein's spirit is everlasting. Oh, the hero, the symbol of bravery, oh, Hussein":

These are just some of the words about the great event of Karbala. These angelic figures, seventy-two in number, under

the leadership of Hussein pitched the camp of magnanimity, honor and faith and constancy in the desert arena of Karbala. They were human in body but angels in soul.

Those who in watering the tree of religion, in preserving the culture of Divine unity, and in safeguarding the efforts of the previous prophets and saints with an unspeakable zeal, shed their precious blood in Jihad for the cause of Allah.

The Prophet said to Fatima, the paragon of virtue and the mirror of the divine attributes for all ages, that the companions of Hussein were like stars in the sky. They competed with one another in sacrificing their lives for their leader. Their graves would be in the heavens.²

ASHURA (TENTH DAY OF MUHARRAM)

Before dawn on the day of Ashura (the tenth day of Muharram, the first lunar month of the Muslim calendar) the Imam had a revelatory dream. He said he saw a pack of rabid dogs attacking him and among them was a dog spotted like a leper, which was the (fiercest of all). Shimr, who eventually personally killed the Imam, was a leper. In a second dream he saw his grandfather, the Prophet, who told him that he would soon be joining the divine folk. And so, his dream came true on that very day of Ashura.³

The first dream depicted the true nature of the enemies of the Imam (a) and the second depicted the divine certificate of merit given to him by the Messenger of God(s). The battle of Karbala was the human conflict between truth and falsehood where although the disbelievers had apparently won the day, in reality it was the believers who were victorious. Worldly people are egoists, and divine personalities are God-fearing and are annihilated in Him. Divine people resonate with the melody of truth, while those whose hearts are blind sing the song of fancy. The pious destroy the abode of the body to build the mansion of the soul. But to become lion-hearted, godly men, you must first learn good manners. Imam Hussein's companions were all distinguished and pious personalities. Those in the Caravan of Light knew well that their journey would end up in paradise, thanks to their devotion to their leader for the cause of Allah.

YAZID

Yazid was the son of Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan, from the family of Umayyad, one of Quraish's families. Abu Sufyan acted as the chief adversary in the infidel's campaign against Islam. Muawiya's mother, Hind, ate

² Bahar vol. 44, p. 264.

³ Maqtal of Kharazmi vol. 1, p. 25 r and Bahar al-Anwar vol. 25, p. 3.

the liver of Hamza, the Uncle of the Prophet because of her burning hatred and beast hood.

Muawiya too was an active opponent of Islam. Indeed, Abu Sufyan's family performed the strategic, financial and morale boosting in the infidel's campaign against the Muslims. Their efforts, wealth and diplomacy were of great weight in preventing the spread of Islam among Arab tribes. Time had lapsed, and Mecca was suddenly besieged with the enormous forces of the Muslims. The unbelievers at Mecca were struck with seeing the Muslim fighters who had caught them unprepared. Thus, the infidels had no choice but to abandon the arrogance which had prevented them from accepting Gods sovereignty. During this incident, historians recorded some peculiar stories about Abu Safyan's family, but one thing is certain, namely, that they accepted Islam unwillingly, and for that were treated in a special way. For instance, they were given extra donations in order to turn their hearts towards Islam. But whether this generosity had any influence to produce a change in their materialistic thinking is a different matter. Indeed, subsequent events revealed no change in their way of thinking and life. Yazid was brought up in a family whose atmosphere was vivid with emotion for its dead who had fought Islam.

However, Yazid had some unique qualities in an adverse sense. He was known as a playboy during his youth. Historians record him being drunk, committing adultery and, in general, leading a very corrupt life. Some even quoted Yazid saying, "The family of Hashim staged a play to get a Kingdom. Actually there was neither news from God nor a revelation".

Factors of Origins Deviation

How did Muawiya ascend to rule and claim succession of the Prophet; what had happened to the dynamic forces which had awakened the world? The Prophet's voice had not yet died away regarding the responsibility of Muslims. He once said, "He who sees a cruel governor, violating Gods laws, breaking His Covenant, acting in contrast to the Tradition of the Prophet, doing mischief and intruding upon people's rights, then does not try to change that governor through action or speech, God has promised him a suitable place in Hell".

We all may wonder over the causes of the deviation which led to this deplorable situation. We know with certainty that Islam is a perfect and practical religion and that it is no doubt assured of guiding Muslims to a stable and prosperous life. Therefore, besides the 'natural obstacles encountered in the sequence of events, the only possible errors are confined to the subsequent status of the Muslims, their handling of affairs, and their conformity to the Islamic laws. This topic is so large that it cannot be dealt with in this short review. But in brief it is well known that the Islamic State extended its borders to vast areas embracing huge populations. The short time of conquest made its cultural assimilation near to impossible. Besides

the language difficulties and primitive means of communications and propagation, many Arab tribes which had even fought against Islam after the Prophet's departure to the next world came under the political influence of Islam; needless to say, any real and thorough cultural transformation needs time as a basic factor. A complete transition from one culture to another might require generations before the new culture is firmly established.

The second factor in determining any cultural change is the presence of the kind of ideological leadership which has a deep insight into the message and potentially ready to sacrifice for its success. Naturally, the ideological leader is expected to conform to the message, otherwise the aim of his presence would not be realized. Some people, only in Medina, had elected Abu-Bakr as the successor to the Prophet. Abu Bakr himself remarked that there were other people who were more able than he for the task.

Indeed, noticeable in Islamic history are the many incidents and Hadiths which encourage Muslims to follow and proclaim the leadership of Imam Ali after the Prophet. For instance, Tafseer Abi Is-haq al-Nisabouri al-Thaalibi, who died in 337 A.H. (916 AD), commented on the following verse,⁴ quoting from Abu Dhar al-Ghifari, "I heard the Prophet (s) with these ears or would be deaf, and saw him with these eyes or would be blind; the Prophet once said, "Ali is the leader of the best believers, and victorious who supports him, and weak who doesn't ". Abu Dhar added:

One day we were praying with the Prophet, a beggar had entered the mosque. The beggar was requesting people for help but none helped him except Imam Ali. While Imam Ali was offering his prayer, he donated his silver ring by pointing his finger to the poor man and the latter took it filled with joy. After this incident the Prophet prayed humbly to God and said, "O God, my brother Moses asked You, "O my God, expand my breast; ease my task for me; and remove the impediment from my speech, so that they may understand what I say; and give me a Minister from my family, Aaron, my brother; add to my strength through him, and make him share my task that we celebrate thy praise without stint,⁵ and remember thee without stint". And you answered: "Granted is thy prayer, O Moses". "O God I am your servant and Prophet. Expand my breast; ease my task; and give me a Minister from my family, Ali, my brother; add to my strength through him, and make him share my task".

⁴ Qur'an/5:58,59.

⁵ Qur'an/5:58,59.

Abu Dhar concluded:

By God, as soon as the Prophet completed his prayer the trustworthy Gabriel came with the following verses: “Your guardians are God, His Prophet and the believers who pray and give alms while prostrate to God...⁶

Ibn Sinan narrated this incident in *Sahih al-Bukhari*. Ibn Abbas narrated this story in *Asbab al-Nuzol* by Imam Wahidi. All interpreters of *Kanz al-Umaal* held the same opinion of the cause of the revelation of this.

On different occasions, the Prophet (s) told Imam Ali, “You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, but there is not Prophet after me”. The consistency of narrations leave no room for doubt that Imam Ali was chosen by God and His Prophet to be the ideological leader after the Prophet's departure. A noteworthy point is the number and variety of people who confirmed the authenticity of these stories. Perhaps the most outstanding occasion, which sank into people's memories, is the Prophet's speech during his last pilgrimage. In a large congregation of Muslims he declared, “He whoever I am his master, Ali is his master too. O God assists whoever supports him and disgraces those who have enmity towards him”. Indeed, these are only a few quotations which Imam Ali had from God and the Prophet. Hence it can be safely concluded that Imam Ali's exclusion from his assigned duty marked the first major mistake. The inevitable consequences were a slow deviation, which ended up in a turbulent stream of events, which no one was able to exercise control over. Abu Bakr's reign lasted two years or so, which was an eventful epoch. Abu Bakr as the Caliph appointed Umar ibn al-Khattab, and the former ruled for ten years. His reign is particularly important because of the vast changes and events which took place during his time. The conquest of vast areas brought enormous wealth to the Muslims. But the way this wealth was handled had created complex problems which forced Umar to admit their grave sequences. Indeed, he tried to reform the laws but it was too late to act for he was murdered. Umar ibn al-Khattab was the first person in charge of Muslim affairs to start uneven donations of rations among Muslims. He used to prefer some people to others for various reasons which generated social classes and sparked off enmities and rifts in the Muslim society. The laws were not in conformity with the Tradition of the Prophet or even with Abu Bakr's procedure. A rather serious measure taken by the Umar was his appointment of six nominees to the Caliphate post. Uthman ibn Affan was chosen by Abdul Rahman ibn Auf to be the next Caliph, after being turned down by Imam Ali. His monetary policy was the focal point of resentment, because he donated large amounts of money to his relatives while the rest of

⁶ Qur'an/5:58,59.

the people were left empty-handed.⁷ Indeed, the governors who were assisting in administering the country had neither ability nor piety. It is believed that they were appointed because they were kin to him.⁸

These policies were not only foreign to Islamic conduct and ideals but caused tremendous sufferings and hardships to the majority of Muslims. Responsible Muslims played their role in warning. Thus, the situation reached its danger point one day and exploded, which resulted in Uthman's murder. The people went to Imam Ali (a) calling him to perform his assigned duty. But the abnormal situations existing at the time did not make his task easy; indeed, the very acceptance of his duty during such situations was not healthy. Imam Ali's reply to the Muslims was negative. He said

Leave me aside and seek someone else....⁹ the horizons are black and gloomy while reason is rejected. You should know that my acceptance means what I know will be applied and obeyed. I shall not conform to one's ideas or listen to others' rapprochement. On the other hand, leaving misdemeanors I am one of you, listening and conforming to whom you have appointed for your affairs. I am better a minister than commander for you.¹⁰

In this speech, perhaps, he wanted to gauge the people's interests and determination. Moreover, he showed his disinterest in power and ruling as an aim by itself. But the vast majority of Muslims was determined to see the Prophet's words and will implemented. They left no choice to Imam Ali but to accept his rightful role of being the ideological leader of the Muslim community.

For Imam Ali's reform, the major problems at the time were the existence of a corrupt and incompetent administration, unjust social privile-

⁷ Muruj al-dhahab 2/241 by Al-Masaudi al-Ansab and al-Ashraf (5/25, 28,48,52) by al-Baladhiri.

⁸ For instance, al-Waleed ibn Aqabah ibn Abi Muaeet was appointed to govern Kufa. Al-Waleed was reputed to be a drunkard and people were very dissatisfied with his behaviour. The peoples' pressure was tremendous that Uthman had to yield and finally replaced him by another one. The new governor was Saaid ibn al-As who had the famous statement "Iraq is Quraish's garden, we take or leave of it whatever we like" (Muroj al-dhahab 2/346 by al-Masaudi). Muawiya was governing Damascus and Jordan during the reign of Umar, Uthman added to his state Hams, Palestine, and Jazera. Egypt's governor was Abdullah ibn Abi Sirah. All the previous governors are Uthman's relatives. The most striking feature of this group of rulers was their contempt for people's rights and dignity. They simply looked at the whole Muslim country as their private property, as it is shown in al-Waleed's statement.

⁹ Nasr Ibn Mozahem Menghari, vagheh safean, Thehran, Cultural Institute of Rasa, 1996, p. 119.

¹⁰ Sharif- Raazi, Nahjolahagheh, khtbeh 3, p. 11.

ges, and the wide financial gap between the rich and the poor. Thus, Imam Ali's reforms covered these three major fields.

Administration

All previous governors were instantly expelled from their posts. This was bitterly taken by the Quraish who were accustomed to rule and get the lion's share of money and authority. It is not out of place to mention that the new governors were not only known for their piety and good conduct, but possessed sound administrative abilities. However, it must be taken into account that the conditions in which they were operating and the unstable situation of that period gave them no chance to manifest fully their talents. Still, the marks which they left in the society were so deep that they survived and have been remembered for generations.

Protection of Rights

The rights of Muslims, whether social or financial, were carefully observed and protected. Thus Imam Ali (a) declared "O people, I have the same rights and obligation as the rest of you" Therefore, he cut the access of every intruder who wanted to exploit his position or kinship or religious reputation. Imam Ali again stated, "It should be known that whoever is an immigrant (*Muhajir*) or a supporter (from Ansar), who accompanied the Prophet (s), and thinks he is better than others for his companionship, then his goodness will be rewarded by God in the Hereafter. Every person is entitled to the same rights and obligations. Money belongs to God, which must be divided equally among people. No one will get a greater share than others; those pious people would get their reward in the Hereafter."¹¹

Monetary Policy

The extravagant monetary policy of Uthman distributed wealth among his relatives and associates seriously imbalanced the society. Imam Ali had to take some drastic measures against this existing unnatural imbalance. Thus he warned all people:

I shall follow the Prophet's Tradition and execute whatever he had commanded, hence, every gift which Uthman gave, or God's money which he donated will be returned to the treasury. Nothing will cancel its belonging to the treasury even if it was married with, or distributed in the broad country. Justice must be implemented. If someone feels it hard to accept justice then injustice is harder to accept.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

They were not pleased with the new regime and worked continuously to hinder the stabilization of the new authority. Dissents and wars were launched successively shaking the whole State, economically, socially, politically and morally. Meanwhile, the poles of Quraish who were campaigning against Imam Ali's rule, realized that they were fighting Islam again. It was not Imam Ali as a person they were fighting, but it was the ideals and policies which he (a) had advocated. The Umayyad who accepted Islam under other conditions than belief found that their materialistic thinking could not reconcile with Islamic values. Hence, they decided to distort Islamic values and ideals, since opposing Islam openly was fatal, as they had experienced previously. So Muawiya ordered the formation of a committee to fabricate Hadiths and distort the interpretation of Qur'an. Five years lapsed which were full of violent events. The battle of camel in Basra, Seffin battle against Muawiya, Nahrawan battle against Khawarij, and many other campaigns were continuously on the move. Thus the opposition was able to feed unrest in practically every part of the Islamic State, which shook the authority of the new administration. Imam Ali (a) was murdered at Kufa mosque, and Muawiya was given access to rule the whole country. The circumstances in which Muawiya assumed power will be discussed later. The following points are the main features of his rule.

Authority: Muawiya's Reign

Muawiya assumed authority by sheer force. He did not hide this fact and put it plainly in his address at Kufa. He said "O people of Kufa, do you think I fought you to establish prayers or giving alms, (Zakat) or perform pilgrimage?" He continued, "I know you pray, pay alms, and perform pilgrimage. Indeed, I fought you in order to command you with contempt, and God has given me that against your wishes. You must be certain that whoever has killed any of us, he will be killed. And the contract between us of amnesty is under these feet of mine".¹²

Terrorism

Muawiya's rule was terror in the whole Muslim land, sending many convoys in various regions of the country to spread this terrorism. It was narrated that Muawiya summoned Sufyan ibn Auf al-Ghamidi, one of his army commanders, and said,

This Army is under your command; proceed along the river Euphrate till Heat. Any resistance in the way should be crushed, and then invade Anbar. After that penetrate deep into Median O Sufyan; these invasions will frighten the Iraqis and please those who like us. Such campaigns would attract fright-

¹² Bahar Al anvar, Vol 22, p. 202.

ened people to our side. Kill whoever have different opinions from ours, loot their villages and demolish their houses. Indeed, the War against money is similar to killing, but is more painful to their hearts.

Another commander, Basar ibn Artat, was summoned and ordered to proceed towards Hijaz and Yemen. Muawiya instructed him, "Proceed to Medina and expel its people. Meanwhile, people in the way who are not from our camp should be terrorized." During Muawiya's reign Islamic Concepts and Laws, even basic human rights, were denied to people. No one was free to express opinions. Spies were employed to terrorize people: besides, the army and police spared no opportunity to crush people and silence their voices. Some documents reveal Muawiya's instructions to his governors. For instance, the following letter was addressed to all judges. "Do not accept the witness of Ali's followers or his descendents in courts." Another letter stated "If you have evidence that some person likes Ali and his family, then omit his name from the rations of Zakat". Another letter continued, "Punish whoever is suspected to follow Ali and bring his house down" Such was the situation of Muawiya's rule. Historians who were recording these waves of terror described them as unprecedented in history. People were so frightened that they did not mind being called atheists, thieves, but not followers of Imam Ali.

Discrimination

Another facet of Muawiya's rule was the discrimination between Arabs and non-Arabs. It is an established fact that non-Arabs during Muawiya's reign were treated as third class citizens. Although they embraced Islam, they still had to pay Kharaj and Jizyah! Non-Arab soldiers in the state armies used to fight for bare subsistence.

Fabrication of Hadiths

Perhaps the most dangerous mischief, which Muawiya had embarked upon, was the fabrication of Hadiths. When he was facing Imam Ali (a) as an adversary, he found his case a hopeless one. His past was dark and shameful, while that of Imam Ali was glorious and shining. In order to sustain his campaign and boost his followers, Muawiya had to attract some companions of weak character, and employed them to fabricate Hadiths. Naturally, his aim was to boost his campaign, challenge adversaries, and legalize his claim to rule. As Hadiths are considered as the second source of Islamic legislation after Qur'an, it was very important to divert this danger. The exposition of this trend to the Muslims at large was vital.

Appointing Yazid

Muawiya was not ruling as an individual, but was representing a way of thinking different in nature from that of Islam. However, he was not content to leave the ruling stage without making sure that it was properly looked after. His pragmatic and materialistic mind drove him to prepare the crowning of his son, Yazid, although he made many promises that he would not contemplate installing Yazid. The conditions at the time were not suitable because there were still Muslims who were politically conscious and wanted to see the restoration of Islamic laws and values. Hence, Muawiya had a difficult job to perform before leaving this world. Indeed, he tried his best to buy the allegiance to his son of Army commanders, chiefs of tribes and distinguished personalities. But his efforts failed with many, and he left general instructions on the way to deal with them. Imam Hasan's Policy Wars and internal strife during five long years caused tremendous strain among people. Imam Ali's speeches at Kufa clearly manifested this phenomenon. People were tired of wars, because they were worn out economically. The murder of Imam Ali was disastrous in the political sense. Imam Ali and Muawiya symbolized the apparent dispute between the two parties. The murder of Imam Ali (a) gave Muawiya a stronger hand in the political field, since his opponent had disappeared from the stage.

Muawiya was busy preparing the installment of Yazid as his heir in ruling the Muslim world. In writing to Imam Husain he found no pleasant answer to his demands. Thus, Muawiya reminded his son to beware of Imam Husain. Yazid took his father's advice and promptly wrote to his governor at Medina, al-Waleed ibn Utabah to secure recognition from Imam Husain. But Al-Waleed's efforts were in vain. Imam Husain's reply was definite and direct. He said "We, the family of the Prophet, are the essence of the message and the visiting place of angels... While Yazid is a corrupt, drunkard, murderer and fostering his sins. A person like me cannot obey a person like him".¹³ His father arranged Yazid's ascent to power. Thus all the power at his disposal was transferred to Yazid. And the latter used every means to obtain submission to his unholy policies of oppression and aggression. Yazid had no legal right whatsoever in his claims and demands. On the contrary, he was responsible for many illegal acts that demanded scorn and required punishment. The abomination changes were the cause of Imam Husain's symbolic revolution in Karbal.

SYMBOLS OF THE KARBALA EVENT

Karbala' proved to be the beginning of the downfall of the Banu Umayyah dynasty which had usurped the Islamic khalif by deceit, repression, and corruption of the Muslim community. Though the Imam was martyred with his family and companions, and apparently his murderers

¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 44, p. 225.

seemed to emerge winners from the conflict, it was the martyr of Karbala' who was the real victor. The mourning ceremonies that have been held through the last fourteen hundred years to commemorate this most significant event in the history of Islam are generally known as Muharram ceremonies, as they are held during the month of Muharram in remembrance of the 'Ashura' movement. This incident has its background whose elaborate details have been given by Muslim historians and I need not cite them here. Briefly, it may be said that Imam Hussein's revolt, staged against the tyranny, injustice, and repression of the regime and torture and execution of pious Muslims, which violated the Islamic concept of a just Islamic polity and society, was to uphold the ideals and values of Islam propounded in the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet, to rescue the higher human values, moral, social, political and spiritual, and to preserve the true spirit of Islam. It was basically aimed by the martyred Imam to rescue Islam as the message of the last Prophet, a message that had to endure, not only in the hearts and spirits of saints but on the plane of society, and he achieved his purpose most completely. The episode of Karbala' became the everlasting stage on which, more than anything else, the great spirit of an Imam was put on eternal display, not in mere words or traditions recorded in books, but against the background of the greatest tragedy in human history and scenes of love and loyalty, bravery and sacrifice, nobility and high spirituality, blood and battle, and also those of treachery and betrayal, human abasement and wretchedness, perversity and depravity. Due to his refusal to compromise with godlessness and tyranny, all great Islamic mystics, thinkers, writers and poets, have remembered the Imam as the symbol of monotheism, (there is no god but Allah). In the words of the great Indian Sufi of Iranian origin, Khwajah Mu'in-al-Din Chishti:

He gave his life but wouldn't give his hand in the hand of Yazid (for allegiance, *bay'ah*) Verily Hussein is the foundation of monotheism.

Mahmoud Ayoub in his study of the devotional aspects of 'Ashura', "Redemptive Suffering in Islam", justifiably interprets the Imam's message to Muslims as a call for enjoining good and prohibiting evil. In a will he made to Muhammad ibn Hanafiyyah while departing from Mecca, the Imam declares:

Indeed, I have not risen up to do mischief, neither as an adventurer, or to cause corruption and tyranny. I have risen up solely to seek the reform of the follower of my grandfather (S). I want to command what is good and stop what is wrong, and (in this) I follow the conduct of my grandfather and my father, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

In a letter that he wrote to the people of Kufah, in a short sentence he outlines the Islamic concept of a worthy ruler:

By my life, the leader is one who acts in accordance with the Scripture, upholds justice in society, conducts its affairs according to what is righteous, and dedicates his self to God.

Addressing Hurr ibn Yazid Riyahi and his troops, who had been dispatched by 'Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad, the infamous governor of Kufah, to intercept the Imam's caravan on the way and to stop him from entering Kufah, Imam Hussein ('a) quotes this tradition of the Prophet (s), which states the duty of Muslims vis-à-vis corrupt and un-Islamic rulers:

O people! Verily the Messenger of Allah (s) said: "Whoever observes a sovereign legalizing what God has made unlawful, violating the covenant of God, opposing the Sunnah of the Messenger of God, and treating the creatures of God sinfully and oppressively, and does not oppose him with his speech and action, God has a right to bring him to the same fate as that of the tyrant." Indeed, these people (i.e. Yazid and the ruling Umayyad) have committed themselves to the following of Satan, and abandoned obedience to God. They have given currency to corruption and abolished the Islamic laws, plundering the public treasury, making lawful what God has forbidden and forbidding what God has permitted. And I, of all people, have a greater right to act [in accordance with the Prophet's exhortation].

When Imam reached Karbala', at a distinctive point they had been forced to stop and to disembark by the orders of Ibn Ziyad, the Imam stood up to address his companions. In that sermon he declares that life under tyranny is not worthy of man, unless the people rise in an attempt to restore the higher values.

Don't you see that what is true and right is not acted upon and what is false and wrong is not forbidden? In such a situation, the man of faith yearns for the meeting with his Lord. Indeed, (in such conditions) to me death is happiness, and life under the yoke of tyrants is disgrace.

Giving the details of Imam Hussein's refusal to accept a tyrannical and unjust ruler, starting from his journey from Medina to Mecca and afterwards through its various stages until the Imam reached Karbala', the scene of his battle and martyrdom, historians refer to verses which are said to have been recited by the Imam on the night of the 10th of Muharram (the day of 'Ashura'):

O Time (*dahr*), fie on you of a friend. How many are those you claim at the morn and eventide. Many a friend, and many a one seeking revenge, Yet Time is not satisfied with a substitute or proxy. Truly judgment belongs to the Glorious One; and every living soul takes the path [of death].

It is important to note that the Imam's address to Time inspired a number of Muslim thinkers to propound a new revolutionary concept of Time with reference to the Qur'anic verses in the al-'Asr. The Imam did not actually vilify time, but he condemned the time-servers. Otherwise Time, as interpreted by Iqbal, the contemporary philosopher poet of the Indian subcontinent, is, in the light of the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions, an expression and manifestation of the continuing process of God's creativity as well as the creativity of the human being. While addressing Time, Imam Hussein ('a) indicated that man is not a time-server but time is at the service of man. He proved by his example that man has the power to turn the tide of time and he actually did.

Hussein ('a) initiated a movement that proved to be an archetype representing an eternal struggle of truth against falsehood, justice against injustice and tyranny, human dignity against dehumanization, the revolt of the oppressed against oppressors, and overpowering of the strong by society's weak. The un-Islamic rule of the Umayyad was challenged after him by his followers and descendants, such as Zayd ibn 'Ali, Yahya ibn Zayd, and before them by Mukhtar al-Thaqafi and the Tawwabun, which created a ferment that finally resulted in the overthrow of the Umayyads and the coming to power of Banu 'Abbas, who deceitfully claimed to avenge the martyrdom of Husayn ('a) and to advocate his revolutionary mission.

However, this movement continued to be inspired by the message of 'Ashura' during the reign of the 'Abbasid caliphs and afterwards. The emergence of Shi'i Sufi movements, like those of the Sarbedaran, the Nuqtawis, and the Mar'ashis, as well as the Fatimi-Isma'ili sects, culminated in the victory of the Safawi Sufi order in Iran, who made it a point that the 'Ashura' movement should continue as an inspiring force and dynamic principle in Muslim polity and society. It was the Safawis during whose reign the 'Ashura' commemoration ceremonies took a particular shape.

RITUAL CEREMONIES OF ASHURA

The remembrance of the tragedy of Karbala' as a ritual, did not remain confined to Iran and Iraq, but also influenced the socio-political and cultural life of Muslims in the Indian sub-continent. As a result of this, in India, particularly in Avadh, there developed a culture that was inspired by the spirit of 'Ashura' which was all-embracing. Other Muslim sects and even non-Muslims came under the cultural influence of this movement.

Shari'ati and Mutahhari in particular, Imam Khumayni and other champions of the revolutionary ideology of Islam in Iran made use of the

traditional ritual 'Ashura' ceremonies to reach the common Muslim masses for effectively conveying their message to the grassroots of the Muslim society.

The tragic event of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (*a*) at Karbala' deeply influenced the tide of time in various ways, in the fields of philosophy, *kalam*, political thought, social reform, and cultural resurgence of the Muslim world. In India (and also Pakistan and Bangladesh), a culture developed that was inspired and motivated by the 'Ashura' movement. Presently one can find the influence of the 'Ashura' movement in this region even in non-Muslim literature and culture. Even in the so-called progressive (Marxist and modern) literature, particularly poetry, one can find Karbala' and 'Ashura' used as metaphors to depict the present reality. All these aspects may be elaborated in the form of a lengthy article or even a book, but here, for the purpose of brevity, I would abstain from going into details.

Recently, when *ta'ziyyah*, *majalis* and *rawdah khwani* became popular rituals among the Shi'ah, Sufis, and some other Muslim sects, gradually more and more such descriptions were improvised and many events that never occurred were intertwined with the historically recorded events and authentic traditions of the Imams (*a*). This was done sometimes intentionally and sometimes due to ignorance by *rawdah khwans*, *zakirs* and poets. In poetry there might be some justification for the flights of imagination at the pretext of poetic license, but in written prose works such mixing of myth with history and attributing inauthentic or totally false traditions to the Imams (*a*) is unpardonable. This practice was started by some professional *rawdah* writers with a view to gaining popularity among naive audiences by touching their most sensitive chords to make them weep. Mulla Wa'iz Kashifi, the author of *Rawdat al-shuhada*, is severely criticized by Muhaddith Nuri in *Lu'lu' wa al-marjan*, and by Mutahhari in *H'amaseh-ye Husayni*. Muhaddith Nuri devotes the major part of his book to describing how sinful it is to attribute some sayings or occurrences that have no authentic basis.

Every religion and culture has its own myths along with its history and set of beliefs or ideology. The myths woven together with historical facts create the ethos of the popular Shi'i psyche. The *ta'ziyah* and *majalis* provided a basis for the integration of the entire cosmos into the community of Imam Husayn's devotees. They served as a perpetual instrument of keeping alive the memory of the tragedy of Karbala' by all possible means.

The other approach which made use of 'Ashura' as a vehicle of social and political action may be reconciled with the spiritual and ritual view of the sufferings of Imam Husayn (*a*) in a creative and innovative way. The Shi'i ethos is dominated by an urge to relive the sufferings of the Holy Family (*a*) every year. The Shi'ah re-enact the sufferings of Husayn (*a*) and his family with renewed vigor year after year. In this enactment of reliving 'Ashura', men and women, young and old, all participate with a unique sense of commitment and devotion. Thus the 'Ashura' sufferings have come to occupy the very core of their own individual existential experience. That

is why poetry inspired by this interiorized subjective experience becomes a genuine and authentic expression of collective human suffering and attains universal validity. For the mourners of Imam Husayn ('a), 'Ashura' is the "Eternal Now." This experience occurs in a pure and real space-time continuum, a duration that is eternity. It transcends serial mathematical time of day-to-day life and renders meaning and purpose to human existence.

This experience prompts every member of the community of Husayn's devotees to participate in jihad and a holy struggle against untruth, injustice and all forms of repression and exploitation of the weak (*mustad'ifin*) by the oppressors (*mustakbirin*). Rituals are essential elements in every religion, but during the periods of decline of a community they are taken as substitutes for the true spirit of a faith, and religion is reduced to mere ritualism. Shari'ati called the ritualized form of Shi'i faith *tashayyu'-e siyah* ('black-clad Shi'ism,' that is, a Shi'ism given to passive mourning) as against the true Shi'i creed which he called *tashayyu'-e surkh* ('red Shi'ism,' the red colour symbolizing blood, sacrifice, struggle and martyrdom), which stands for active struggle against all that is untrue and unjust. Shari'ati and Murtada Mutahhari used the 'Ashura' idiom for awakening and arousing Iranians to the political relevance of Muharram ceremonies, paving, through their speeches and writings, the ground for the overthrow of the vicious Pahlavi regime.

Freedom is at the core of Imam Hussein's message. The Imam fought for the freedom of all humanity from hunger, poverty, tyranny, exploitation and injustice. He chose death for himself as a free being and, by choosing death, he chose God and His Will. In his speech delivered before his journey to Iraq he spoke of his choice in the following words:

O God, You know that we did not seek, in what we have done, acquisition of power, or ephemeral possessions. Rather, we seek to manifest the truths of your religion and establish righteousness in your lands, so that the wronged among your servants may be vindicated, and that men may abide by the duties (*fara'id*), laws (*sunan*) and your ordinances (*ahkam*).

Imam Hussein ('a) recited some verses in answer to Farazdaq, whom he met soon after he started on his journey from Mecca, when he was informed by the poet that while the hearts of the Kufis were with the Imam (a), their swords were with Banu Umayyad. The gist of these verses is that "If bodies be made for death, then the death of a man by the sword in the way of God is the best choice." The choice of violent death in the way of God was a better choice not only in the eyes of the Imam (a), but all men among his relatives and his companions chose death in the way of God of their own free will. Death was not forced on them by the choice of Imam Hussein (a) either, rather, several times, particularly on the night of the tenth Muharram; the Imam advised and persuaded them to leave him alone with the enemy. The old and the young among his family members and

companions declared that death in the way of God was a better choice in their view. The Imam (a) blessed them with eternal freedom for their free choice. The responses of Muslim ibn 'Awsajah, 'Abbas ibn 'Ali, 'Ali Akbar ibn al-Husayn, al-Qasim ibn al-Hasan and others brought tears to the eyes of the Imam (a). Not only the men but also the womenfolk of his family and those accompanying his companions offered their loyalty and exhorted their husbands and sons to make their own free choice for sacrificing their lives. They encouraged their men to welcome death on the day of 'Ashura'. Women played a very important role in the 'Ashura' movement of the Imam (a), highlighting the role and freedom that Islam has bestowed upon them.

CONCLUSION

With respect to the afore-mentioned, it is concluded that the Karbala incident presents the following symbols and indications to mankind:

1. Freedom
2. Love of God (Allah)
3. Piety
4. Generosity
5. Challenge to crudity
6. Justice
7. Equality
8. Fraternity
9. Reform of affairs
10. Injunction of good and prohibition of evil

Explicitly, nowadays, to acquire a safe society without aggression and cruelty it is necessary to address these symbols as its patterns. Nowadays, some of these symbols are manifest in the culture of more than one billion (1,000,000,000) Muslims throughout the world, especially Iranian Muslims.

Without respect to the afore-mentioned messages there will be no hope of acquiring the globalization emphasized in Islam.

In the hope of that day!

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AFRICA

CHAPTER XI

AFRICAN CULTURE AND SYMBOLISM: A REDISCOVERY OF THE SEAM OF A FRAGMENTED IDENTITY

ANDREW IFEANYI ISIGUZO

In the book, "Writing for Your Life," Deena Metzger states that "self discovery is more than gathering information about oneself." She continues, "In the process of...discovering our story, we restore those parts of ourselves that have been scattered, hidden, suppressed, denied, distorted, forbidden, and we come to understand that stories heal." Since time immemorial, individuals and communities have turned to the arts for a sense of identity and history. It is through the arts that many still find a map to self-discovery. Given the nature of man as a cultural animal, man is able to make representations of his cultural identity through symbols in the form of art, language, myth, ritual and names, to mention but a few. The nexus of this study is necessitated by a relatively simple question about the cause of changes in cultural symbols and identity. We wondered why only relatively few garner enormous success while the vast majority of others are relegated to the growing heap of failures.

African culture, since the colonial invasion, has experienced rapid change. Contemporary African culture is merely a mixture of traditional elements and alien features. As a matter of fact "...the African today is a living confluence of cultural rivers, the major rivers being, on the one hand, the traditional culture with its tributaries of religion, social structure, language, values and worldview, and, on the other hand, the Christian-Western culture (and other alien cultures including Islam) with its own tributaries" (Theophilus Okere, "African Culture: The Past and the Present as Indivisible Whole" in *Identity and Change: Nigerian Philosophical Studies*, p.10). African identity is in crisis as its authentic cultures are almost at the vanishing point. There is an urgent need, therefore, to restore those parts of ourselves that have been fragmented, distorted or corrupted, and to strengthen the resilient cultural forms that are still in practice all over the continent and in the diaspora.

My aim in this chapter is to examine the crisis of African cultural identity and to find ways of healing it through symbols discovered in different African cultural settings. The focus is to discover the rallying point of African cultures first and then move towards relating this principle to various African symbols. Many authors (African and Western) have offered different strands of thought concerning the pivot upon which swings the course of African identity. Some have called it communalism, while others have called it egalitarianism or paternalism. But none of these concepts can

exclusively interpret the African worldview as found in religion, social life, language and art. We need a concept that embodies African community consciousness and solidarity, and at the same time, expresses African religion, politics and language. There is a vast spectrum of African cultural forms and any attempt at a retrieval or revivification of the culture in African symbols must consider these shades of African cultures.

WHAT IS A SYMBOL?

A symbol is something such as an idea or object, conventional or non-conventional, that is used to represent something else. A symbol can be abstract or non-abstract. Abstract symbols do not depend on their concrete material substance. There are abstract entities that are capable of abstracting themselves, freeing themselves, purifying themselves from their possible concrete substance (P. Moyeart: *Worshipping of Idols and Images*, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Unpublished lecture note, 2004). This explains the so-called “intellectual leap.” The clearest examples of abstract symbols are mathematical symbols and names. You can refer to numbers by “ABC,” by “123,” or by “+” *ad infinitum*. It does not matter the choice of symbols; you are allowed to replace them as long as the internal coherence is maintained. However, in terms of proper names, the issue can be approached from both sides – a proper name can be considered an abstract symbol or a non-abstract symbol. The name of a person can be replaced at any time, which makes it an abstract symbol. But if there is a strong link between the reference and the referent – between the name and the person – making it impossible to change the name once it has been given, then it is no longer an abstract symbol. Once a name becomes a concrete symbol, it comes close to what we call sacred. (This idea was criticised however by J. Frazer in his “Golden Bough.” Unfortunately, I will not go into his argument about why someone's name cannot be sacred here). If names and mathematical numbers are abstract symbols, it means there is an existing gap between the profane and the sacred, and the link between the name and the referent is completely extrinsic. To say that a name is a concrete symbol means there is no gap, just in the same sense as you can touch the person or touch a body by using his name, for example, when someone plays a word game with your name.

The demonstration of abstract and concrete symbols leads us to the triadic evaluation of symbols in Western culture, which consequently influenced the interpretations of missionaries and colonial officials who found their way in different parts of Africa from the early part of the nineteenth century to the second quarter of the twentieth century. By triadic I do not mean Charles Sanders Peirce's illustration in semiotics, but the triadic demonstration on the levels of the person found in Hegel, August Comte, Freud and J.G. Frazer. According to this model, there are three kinds of persons or groups, each can be classified on the basis of their symbol-use. While these philosophers did not use the same terms to explain their claims,

they share ideas in common. I shall group them as: first, the primitive; second, as children; and third as madness. These three groups are used as examples of people who are still at the level of crypto-symbolism.

In the primitive culture, there is an awakening sense of symbolism, but it is not completely realised. The problem with this group's use of symbols is that the sensation awakened by the symbol is not strong enough to lead it to abstract or make abstraction of the difference that exists (the gap) between the reference and the referent. The primitive sense of symbolism is deficient, which is why they fail to make meaning out of the symbols and lose it the moment they use it. Hegel, in his philosophy of history, divided the three different worlds of existence as childhood of spirit, adolescence spirit, and major spirit. Hegel characterizes this stage as one of consciousness in its immediacy, where subjectivity and substantiality are unmediated. Hegel discusses China, India, Persia and Africa specifically and suggests that these cultures are "unhistorical" and "non-political," and, instead, are subject to natural cyclical processes. Hegel put the Greek and Europeans in the second and final stages, respectively. There is a missing link between subjective freedom and substantiality in the ethical life of the Greek polis. In contrast, the Germans and the rest of Europe, who occupy the final stage, are given to reflection and make good use of abstraction. As such, Hegel argues, the tension between the two principles of individuality and universality ensues, which manifests itself in the form of political despotism and insurgency against it. Hegel is telling us that the primitive (Childhood) is the state of those people who are not capable of distinguishing between the object and the real thing signified. Though they can abstract – after all, they can use names, they can speak, they have language – in the presence of the referent, they lack the sense of difference. As Wittgenstein said, they can kiss the symbol, touch it, yet they are not able to develop their abstraction to the level of differentiating the image or name from the person.

Children are in the same state as those primitives, but they have some future. In the beginning of their development, children are on a very low level of symbolization, says Freud. They use symbols in the sense that they can replace a person with a puppet. Small children can make that replacement. In the beginning, very young children who are using a puppet as a symbol for someone else may confuse the two. According to some psychologists, if a child is not capable of making the distinction between a puppet and his mother, then they are not completely developed intellectually. This claim is wrong, however, because it suggests that we derive distinction whilst it is originally given. This is the claim of psychologists such as Piaget and Colberg, but I will not go into this argument here. We can read Sigmund Freud's explanation on the knowledge distinction of the child in the second chapter of "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920).

A similar mistake can be found in many approaches to hallucination. Many psychologists contend that when a person has a hallucination, he or she is confusing a kind of image with the real. In contrast, I argue (follow-

ing Edmund Husserl) that in a hallucination no one is confusing anything. A person who has a hallucination knows very well that their hallucination is radically different from the ordinary object that he or she can perceive.

So, do children have to learn something? Yes, but to learn is not all it takes to make that transition from indifference to a difference. Children must specifically learn to develop a sense of symbols. It requires accepting that to use a symbol for their rage is nearly as efficient as a direct expression of that rage – that’s what must be learned. To accept that symbolization can have the same value – that to kiss the photo of my beloved has nearly the same value as kissing the person. This is the crucial point. Every time that we are under the pressure of strong passions – a deep suffering, deep love, or a deep hate – our sense of symbols will come under pressure, too. If I am losing the person I really love, then it will be very hard to accept symbols, to find relief in them. Sometimes my aggression may be so intense and my indignation so strong that symbols are not strong enough to catch, so to speak, my aggression. Instead of killing a person in a puppet, instead of torturing the person by using a puppet, my aggression is so strong that I have to torture the person himself. However, this does not mean that I have to learn to connect the distinction between the person and the symbol. It’s a cognitive process of the emotions. This is how many people deal with emotions. And how do we deal with emotions? We deal with them in symbols.

SYMBOLISM IN AFRICAN CULTURE

The African worldview is replete with symbols. African symbols are “sources of insights into African orientations to life” (N.K. Dzobo “African Symbols and Proverbs as Sources of Knowledge” in *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies, I.* eds. Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye, CRVP.Series II. Africa, Vol.1, 85). Dzobo distinguishes signs and symbols in terms of the degree of qualitative information that is conveyed through them. “While signs provide simple information, symbols are used to communicate complex knowledge” (*ibid.*, 86-87). Given the diversity of the continent and the attendant whimsical changes in the cultures of the people of Africa, it becomes so difficult to have a uniform classification of symbol systems for the continent. However, I will take a few examples from two countries to illustrate my point here. In Ghana, there are six major groups of symbols, says Dzobo. These include *adinkra* symbols, stool symbols, linguistic staff symbols, religious symbols, and oral literary symbols. Each of the symbolic groups conveys information concerning the way of life of the people, different situations, and the history of the society. *Adinkra*, for example, is a Twi word and derived from one of the popular national cloths of Ghana called *adinkra*, which means “to say goodbye.” The cloth is adorned with a black colour background and designs such as *Owu atwedee*, “the ladder of death, everybody will climb it one day to go to God.” *Adinkra* is a traditional mourning cloth worn in many communities in

Ghana at funerals and memorial services to commiserate with the bereaved family and send forth the dead person to the land of ancestors (*ibid.*, 89-94).

Colour has symbolic meaning in African culture and each colour conveys particular information when worn or displayed in significant places or situations. Black is the symbolic colour used at funerals in almost all parts of Africa. It is the color of the official mourning cloth at funerals, especially those for a person who has died at a young (unripe) age. White is a colour symbolizing purity and joy, which is usually worn at funerals of an old member of the community. The differences in the colour of cloth at funeral services convey different cultural messages. The death of a young member is always painful because it is believed that one has not accomplished his task in the land of the living to give him easy passage to the land of the ancestors. It is in fact taken as a double tragedy – for the deceased and the bereaved. The former is going to suffer in the land of the spirits, which may cause the spirit to appear to its relations in the form of a ghost in the land of the living. The living do not want to see the ghosts of loved ones because of the unpleasant sight that comes with it.

The death of the aged member, on the other hand, is a welcomed death. The living make merriment to commemorate the deceased and perform rituals to herald his easy passage to the land of the ancestors. Often, when the deceased has lived a good life and was loved by many, the members wish not only easy passage to the ancestral world for the loved one, but also to show readiness to welcome him into this world again. This informs the African belief in reincarnation (I. Onyewuenyi, *African Belief in Reincarnation*).

The colour red is a spiritual colour and has a very powerful religious significance. It is the colour of the cloth used to adorn the table of a shrine. For example, in Igbo land, among my own ethnic group, the Benins and Yorubas in Nigeria, the red colour is worn by the chief priest of the local shrine whenever he is at the shrine performing his duty, and at the King's palace, or any public place where he is called upon to perform rituals or make sacrifices to the gods for one purpose or another. This colour is significantly marked out for the *Eze muo* or *Dibia*, “spiritual king” or “native doctor” respectively.

THE CRISIS OF AFRICAN IDENTITY

African people eat and live religiously, said Arthur Leonard. This means that traditional religion is the center of African identity. Unfortunately, the desire for traditional religious practices started diminishing when the first European missionaries set foot on African soil. While forms of religiosity may differ, all traditional societies practice one form of religion or another. As Arthur Leonard once wrote, Africans are “a truly religious people of whom it can be said, as it has been said of the Hindu, that they eat religiously, bathe religiously, dress religiously, sin religiously ... (the) religion of these natives is their existence and their existence is their

religion.” This observation is true of every human society insofar as the dominant ideology has a religious character, as is the case of traditional communities. We see this in the case of the Africans in their daily lives, in their social ritual, in the numerous monuments and shrines that dot every compound.

As soon as you approach the typical religious object, you are overwhelmed with awe. Is it the shrine, the evil forest, the cave, the river, the tomb of the ancestors? These evoke feelings of both dread and reverence. The moral code is hallowed. However, the sacred has, indeed, become the profane. Like the Greek gods deserting Olympus, the African traditional deities are deserting the traditional shrines. But where have they gone and who has chased them away?

The forces responsible for the apparent demise or progressive disappearance of our traditional gods, our deities, and venerable ancestors followed in the wake of our colonial conquest by Europeans – although it is arguable that without our colonial experience the same process would have come about eventually. Mankind's intellectual, scientific, and technological development is not the monopoly of any race or culture. Sooner or later, the religious phase in mankind's intellectual, scientific and technological development, as August Comte observed, was bound to yield to a dominant metaphysical and then a scientific phase. Another way of putting it is to say that the forces of modernity would have set in sooner or later.

The historical forces which can be held responsible for the fate of our traditional religion include: (1) Western education, philosophy, science and technology which have increased our knowledge of nature and its laws; (2) Western religion, with its ideological campaign against traditional religion and culture. This process of desacralization, or secularization, was described by Max Weber as the increasing rationalization of life. The same process can be looked at from the perspective of modern industrialization and commercialization of life. Everything is now the subject or object of business. Everything is vendible; nothing is sacred any longer. The sacred Long Juju of Arochukwu (the ethnic group of eastern Nigeria, at the northern part of Igbo land) is very famous and was once dreaded by foreigners and natives alike. The Long Juju shrine has now been converted into a business outfit. The defeat of the Igbo by British colonial forces may be seen as the victory of one religion over another, the defeat of one god (the traditional) by another, namely, the white man's god.

Culturally, it is as if the traditional African script of “submit to family and community authority and immerse yourself in and partake of all group values and norms” was rewritten during the colonial period. Through force, Western education and missionary proselytization, the colonialists subordinated traditional African authority and the values and norms of African communalism in the minds of Africans. This new anti-African script remains deeply embedded in the minds of contemporary Africans. According to Nyasani, Africans have:

...adopted and assimilated wholesale whatever the West has to offer. The end result is not just a cultural betrayal but a serious case of self-dehumanization and outright self-subversion both in terms of dignity and self-esteem. Indeed there is no race on earth that abhors its own culture and is so easily prepared to abdicate it and flirt with experimental ideas which promise no more than vanity, to a large extent, like the African race.... Africa is simply overwhelmed and decisively submerged by the never-receding tide of cultural imperialism (1997:126-128).

Psychologically, Nyasani argues, the Africans' "natural benign docility" has contributed to and exacerbated Africa's widespread social and cultural demise via Western acculturation. He argues that "it would not be difficult to imagine the ripe conditions encountered at the dawn of European imperialism for unbridled exploitations and culture emasculations which left many in African society completely distraught and culturally defrocked. Indeed the exploiting schemers must have found a ready market glutted with cultural naiveties for quick but effective alienation" (1997:113-114). The post-colonial era has been no different, Nyasani says, in that contemporary "black Africa is painfully crucified on the cross of blackmailers, arm-twisters and their forever more enslaving technologies and each nail of the cross belongs to the economic aid donor nation" (1997:96)!

Perhaps we can best understand what has happened to our traditional religion from another perspective: man's world transforms as his productive forces improve. As we probe and understand more of the laws of nature, we have less need for superstitions and mysticism. As we improve our instruments of production, exploring and turning inside-out the caves, the burial grounds and evil forests, building our cathedrals and mansions in their place; as we cross the mountains, rivers and seas with our technologies, build our tunnels, our bridges and flyovers as we fly high into the skies, we push the gods farther into distant horizons, away from familiar terrain. But wherever the gods may be, the important thing is that we can deal with our environment, without offending them, or violating taboos.

Whichever way we look at it, the once powerful and dreaded deities and gods – Amadiḡha/Kamalu, Igwe-ka-Ala. Ibina-Ukpabi (Long Juju), Ala, Imo, Osimiri, Agbala, etc. – have lost their power and sacredness. They have lost their divinity – "the mighty have fallen." But perhaps, they are not flat on the ground yet and may not be for quite some time. Fustel de Coulanges has observed that:

The Contemporary of Cicero (the Roman Orator) practiced rites in the sacrifices, at funerals, and in the ceremony of marriage. These rites were older than his time, and what proves it is that they did not correspond to his religious belief. But if we examine the rites which he observed or the formulas

which he recited, we find the marks of what men believed fifteen or twenty centuries earlier (“The Ancient City”, p.14).

In the same way, there is hardly any rite of our modern Christian religion that does not have a counterpart in traditional religion. Indeed, traditional religion has captured modern Christianity. Both the older denominations and the newer sects are now competing as to which can be seen as the most indigenous in approach and which best projects the native spirit in its appeals. As a matter of fact, those Christian priests who ran foul of their orthodox faith when they advocated a synthesis of the Western and traditional elements in religion must now feel vindicated as they watch recent developments in our religious observances.

The greatest negative impact of Western colonialism on our society was the attempt to uproot and destroy the entire fabric of our culture and our religion, which was dubbed pagan, and to indiscriminately impose Western religion on our society. Our people were weak and easily succumbed to the force of Western religion and as a result acquired a colonial mentality.

Those who decry the systematic and uncritical destruction and neglect of traditional religion and culture, do so not solely from the point of view of cultural nationalism or from a metaphysical or epistemological point of view. The identity of a people, as has often been maintained, is a function of their history and culture. Any nation and any people without such an identity deriving from their history and culture lack the basic ingredients of stability in national character. As T. U. Nwala observed in Igbo philosophy:

There could be no better comparative analysis of the theology of the two religions – Christianity and African traditional religion. Today, there is no longer any doubt as to whether the traditional African possesses a religion or not. His religion is no longer seen as that of paganism and devil-worship; nor is his culture any longer the devil's work, nor even are his ancestors any longer held to dwell in hell as was hitherto the fashionable view among Christian religious leaders.

Moreover, the Christian worldview and traditional worldview share some basic characteristics – both are transcendental, mystical, authoritarian, ritualistic, held as sacred, based on faith, full of myths and festivities, and have a code of conduct. Several decades ago, the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church recognized the authenticity of traditional religion. Consequently, during Vatican II, the Church “advocated for norms and rules for adapting the liturgy to the genius and traditions of the people.”

The difference between Christian and traditional religions is more of a cultural difference. The Christian worldview, theology, ritual and moral code are embedded in a different cultural and historical reality. In fact, when we eliminate the more astounding superstitions of traditional religion,

we shall have a religion purer and more authentic than contemporary Christianity. Christianity has ceased to be the religion of Christ: "It is now the religion of Western capitalist society. It now sees the world in the eyes of the industrial capitalist society and defends it even though it may verbally criticise it" (T.U. Nwala, *Igbo Philosophy*, p. 236.)

In the eyes of the modern Christian, the world is nothing but a stock exchange. In Nigeria today, the Christian – no less than the Moslem – sees his mission on earth and his destiny as nothing other than becoming richer than his neighbour. The Ministry has today become a veritable commercial career. As Marx, himself a Jew, observed: "The god of the Jews has been secularized and has become the god of the world. The bill of exchange is the Jew's actual god" (*Writings of the Young Marx*, p. 206.) He went on to state that, "Christianity arose out of Judaism, it has again dissolved itself into Judaism" (p. 247).

African traditional religion is not quite defeated. Its original influence may have waned quite tremendously owing to the forces examined above. The transfer of allegiance from traditional religion to Christianity was made easier because both share certain common articles of faith, rituals, and codes. Their worldviews, logic and morals, as stated above, have common characteristics. Indeed, Marx was right when he observed that any two religions are "different stages in the evolution of the human spirit, as different snake skins shed by history" and we must "recognize man as the snake that wore them..." If the adherents of these religions see them for what they are, "they will no longer find themselves in religious antagonism but only in a critical, scientific, and human relationship..." The snake that wore the skins called religion can, if it likes, try putting them on again – though one skin, that is, one religious mode, is not exactly like another.

As to whether traditional religion and its gods and the ancestors are surviving or reincarnating, we can only refer to the facts as they manifest themselves today, namely, that the forces of modernity, of Christianity, secularization, science and technology have not succeeded in rooting them out completely. This is because religion has never been a separate and autonomous aspect of life. It is part of the totality of man's existence and springs from the social and material conditions of his life. It is part of the meaning which his life has taken. And since what was put in traditional religion's place (i.e., Christianity) is itself a religion, with the essential elements – faith, the sacred, the supernatural, myths, ritual, moral codes, etc. – then what we find today is an adaptation of the social and cultural practices of the former traditional religion. This is why such deep-seated beliefs embedded in the religious practices of the people – such as belief in life as a continuous process with adjunct beliefs in reincarnation, life-after-death, and the importance of polygamy, ancestor veneration, divination, title-taking, masquerade, secret societies, traditional medicine, religious healing, etc. – still survive in one form or another.

The call for a synthesis of traditional religion and Christianity made by well-meaning clerics (e.g., Canon Ilogu) has gone beyond the realm of

logic. It is now a cultural fact. Christianity is fast adapting itself and gives a Christian garb to traditional cultural elements, a development that leads to cultural bastardization. The Aladura sects are one of the strongest examples of this process of synthesis and transformation. The orthodox religious denominations and sects are fast adopting the Aladura forms of religious expression in order to remain relevant to the peoples' cultural sensibilities.

The religion that has been strongest in trying to capture the spirit and practice of traditional religion is the Godian religion, which began as neo-traditional religion. Its advocates, heeding Canon Ilogu's advice, have gone on to systematize the theology of traditional religion by providing it with a philosophical base, a creed, enlarging the corpus of Saints to include venerable local deities and ancestors. Godianism takes its standpoint from traditional religion, whereas the thousands of Christian sects that spring up almost daily and in every backyard take their standpoint from Christianity. They lack a cultural philosophy and merely eclectically and haphazardly adapt African and European elements as it suits them. Some of them still remain hostile to traditional culture.

Godianism began as a nationalist and protest movement, as a rejection of Western colonialism and its imported religion. It soon developed into "a bold and unique effort to give traditional religion a systematic interpretation in the face of Christian and Islamic influences and in the face of the realities of the modern age." Godianism has become evidence of the creative genius of the modern African as it tries to incorporate certain Christian structures in its worship and theological expression.

The problems that face the modern African, in general and in particular, go beyond that of religious domination. The modern African's problems are largely moral, economic and political. In the face of the persistence of these problems, religion – be it traditional, Christian, Islamic, or even Aladura or Godian – has proved itself utterly impotent. Currently, religion has ceased to be a sacred affair; it is merely the worship of private property and wealth rather than God. Such problems hinge upon the sorry fact of inequity in our society and the death of democracy and democratic norms at the national, state and local levels. Today the battle for democracy, social justice and equality rages in our society both inside and outside the walls of churches and temples.

The "New Yam festival" of my people, the Igbo, is an annually celebrated event to herald the harvest season in August. This important cultural event is rejected as profane idolatry by the Christians. The usual ritual practice was performed by the Eze muo at the traditional shrine with the king and elders in attendance. A fowl was slaughtered with the blood sprinkled around the shrine and used to perform sacrifice to the gods. This ritual is now performed by the Catholic priest or pastor at the various Christian churches. The sacredness of the shrine has now been transferred to the sacredness of the Christian temples. This informs the degree of crisis and corruption that meets African culture. It is now time to heal and revive the shattered identity for the seam to emerge, because *Onye na eweghi ihe*

arimama di ka onye nwuru anwu: A person or a people with no identity is as well as dead.

SEAMING THE FRAGMENTED CULTURAL IDENTITY

To seam means to suture together that which was dismembered or fragmented. Sometimes it may involve two different things that were never together, and at other times, it may require joining both the dismembered part with the new members to form a whole. Oftentimes the dismembered part of the whole may no longer be found useful to the new body. For example, if one joins old pieces of cloth that were dismembered as a result of weakness of the linings caused by wear and tear, they may dismember again despite being sewn to new pieces of cloth. African identity has been corrupted and needs urgent and serious attention to seam the fragments together. This process involves incorporating the new ideologies already adopted by the African people and the resilient traditional elements that provide the symbolic meanings of African culture.

African scholarly approaches outside the social sciences have been theoretically and methodologically eclectic and tend to protect and liberate Africans, not dominate or control them. For example, the Kenyan medical doctor and author Kihumbu Thairu (1975) offers a personally challenging approach that focuses on the need for Africans to rediscover who they are, independent of their assimilated Western values and ways of thinking and behaving.

African people are community-conscious beings and attach great symbolic meaning to community life. *Ubuntu* (a Zulu word) serves as the spiritual foundation of African societies. It is a unifying vision or worldview enshrined in the Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, i.e. "a person is a person through other persons" (Shutte, 1993:46). At bottom, this traditional African aphorism articulates a basic respect and compassion for others. It can be interpreted as both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic. It both describes a human being as a "being-with-others" and prescribes what "being-with-others" should be all about.

Citing the Xhosa proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, South African philosophy professor Augustine Shutte writes:

This (proverb) is the Xhosa expression of a notion that is common to all African languages and traditional cultures.... (It) is concerned both with the peculiar interdependence of persons on others for the exercise, development and fulfilment of their powers that is recognised in African traditional thought, and also with the understanding of what it is to be a person that underlies this.... In European philosophy of whatever kind, the self is always envisaged as something "inside" a person, or at least as a kind of container of mental properties and powers. In African thought it is seen as "outside," sub-

sisting in relationship to what is other, the natural and social environment. In fact the sharp distinction between self and world, a self that controls and changes the world and is in some sense “above” it, this distinction so characteristic of European philosophy, disappears. Self and world are united and intermingle in a web of reciprocal relations (1993:46-47).

In contrast to Gyekye's mutually enhancing understanding and Shutte's idea that the community empowers and inculcates “personness,” Nyasani (1997) possesses a far less egalitarian view of the individual in African society. According to Nyasani, the African individual hardly knows how to act outside the context of his community's prescriptions and proscriptions. For Nyasani, the existence of the individual in African society is “quasi-dissolution into the reality of others for the sake of the individual's existence” (1997:60). For him, “everything boils down to the 'me' in the 'we' or rather to the survival of the self through the enhancement and consolidation of the 'we' as a generic whole... Thus, in Africa, the individual will go to all lengths to ascertain the condition of the corporate 'we' and to play his part, if necessary, to restore the balance of wholesomeness” (1997:81-82).

According to Nyasani (1997:56-57), African, Asian and European minds are products of unique “cultural edifices” and “cultural streams” that arose from environmental conditioning and long-standing cultural traditions. Within the African cultural stream, Nyasani claims, are psychological and moral characteristics pertaining to African identity, personality and dignity. Makgoba (1997) goes further and argues that throughout the African Diaspora peoples of African descent are:

linked by shared values that are fundamental features of African identity and culture. These, for example, include hospitality, friendliness, the consensus and common framework-seeking principle, *ubuntu*, and the emphasis on community rather than on the individual. These features typically underpin the variations of African culture and identity everywhere. The existence of African identity is not in doubt (1997:197-198).

Regarding personality characteristics he believes to be inherent in the African mind, Nyasani identifies and discusses sociality, patience, tolerance, sympathy and acceptance as:

areas in which the African mind seems to reveal itself in a somewhat dramatic way. It reveals itself through what may rightly be called a congenital trait of sociality or sociability. It further reveals itself as a virtuous natural endowment of patience and tolerance. And lastly it manifests itself as a natural

disposition for mutual sympathy and acceptance. These three areas then appear to serve as important landmarks in the general description of the phenomenology of the African mind (1997:57).

Caught in a social pyramid characterized by a one-way vertical authority structure and a two-way horizontal family and communal support system, the African mind, beset with superstition and destabilized by Western acculturation, is relatively unlinear, uncritical, lacking in initiative and therefore “encapsulated,” says Nyasani. This, Nyasani insists, has been extremely negative for Africa, especially in terms of the African individual's creativity and ability to innovate:

(W)hat we experience in the practical life of an African is the apparent stagnation or stalemate in his social as well as economic evolution....It is quite evident that the social consequences of this unfortunate social impasse (encapsulation) can be very grave especially where the process of acculturation and indeterminate enculturation is taking place at an uncontrollable pace....By and large, it can safely be affirmed that social encapsulation in Africa works both positively and negatively. It is positive in as far as it guarantees a modicum of social cohesion, social harmony and social mutual concern. However, in as far as it does not promote fully the exercise of personal initiative and incentive, it can be regarded as negative (Nyasani 1997:130-131).

Nyasani (1997) identifies the traditional African family as a setting wherein the vertical power structure of the society is introduced and sustained as predominant over the freedom of individuals. For Nyasani, there is a “fundamental difference between the traditional African child and a child in the Western culture. The child in Africa was muzzled right from the outset and was thereby drilled into submission to authority from above” (1997:129). Within the communal context, Nyasani (1997) argues that Africans exhibit an:

endemic and congenital trait of what could be described as a natural benign docility generally brought about by years of blind social submission and unquestioning compliance to the mystique of higher authority that reigns surreptitiously yet effectively in all black African societies in varying degrees. This benign natural docility is generally regarded as positive, legitimate and virtuous strictly within the context of a traditional social regime (1997:113).

Community norms, he says:

are merely received but never subjected to the scrutiny of reason to establish their viability and practicability in the society....Maybe, it is because of this lack of personal involvement and personal scrutiny that has tended to work to the disadvantage of the Africans especially where they are faced with a critical situation of reckoning about their own destiny and even dignity (Nyasani 1997:63-69).

Steven Shalita (1998), Kampala bureau chief of the sub-region's premier English weekly newspaper, *The East African*, blames the colonial past, in part, for African passivity and complacency. He argues that:

a passive attitude to life is common in many parts of Africa, where most people are satisfied with the minimum. Many Africans prefer to engage in subsistence farming rather than farming for profit and even then, they wait for some bureaucrat to tell them about food security to save them from starvation when drought strikes....This complacency by ordinary people can partly be blamed on the colonial legacy which put such emphasis on government. It caused them to believe that government owed them a living and if things went wrong, why then government was to blame and must find a solution (1998:10).

Ubuntu is the seaming line that joins the fragments of African cultures. This is magnificently confirmed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in these words, "A person with *ubuntu* is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole." Everyone has the assurance that where you lack is where I gain, and where I lack is where you gain. No one is entirely more important than the other. No man is complete or capable of satisfying his life desires without, in one way or another, being dependent on the other, as life is made up of complementing each other for personal and societal goals. This African communalism is the seaming line of African identity where the individual is immersed in the community and derives his personality only from the community.

CONCLUSION

The sacredness of land in Africa makes it very significant in African life. At ceremonies, shrines, and ritual events, land is always consecrated by sprinkling liquid (wine or blood of animals) to appease the gods of the land. In the same manner, through proverb, the Igbo say *an ebuzo zuta ala ma choba ute* ("It is the usual practice that one own a secure space before acquiring a bed to sleep on" or *a na etugwuru ala ma bia dabiri* ("You must

find a seat before thinking or relaxing on a chair”). Both proverbs stress the importance of the land. It would be foolish of one to spend money on items when there is no place to put them. More foolhardy is one who desires to own a house, but has not thought of a space of land to erect it.

Having come this far and having discovered the seam of African identity, I see it wise, then, to discuss the future of African identity in global interaction. The world is closing in and trying to form a global village – a public space where every culture interacts dialectically. Unfortunately, there is not yet a level playing ground for all cultures. Although the space appears wide, the dominant cultures exert much influence on the weaker ones. If the purpose of globalization is to come true, all cultures must meet in an open and free space, as illustrated by Habermas. Any attempt by stronger cultures to prove themselves mightier than others, if they refuse to adopt the method of give-and-take, of being open and seeing the other as a free agent with equal right to space, then the goal of globalization will be a mirage.

We cannot know what conflicts and friction lie ahead in the course of global interactions. Dialogue requires assuming a pose of openness while at the same time holding tenaciously to personal views until proven otherwise. All African cultures must interact communally as one voice in a shared space of solidarity, care for each other, and refuse to play the second fiddle any longer. The character of passivity to matters involving other cultures and any African community should be looked into with one eye. This is the symbol of shared humanity expressed in the philosophy of *Ubuntu*.

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CHAPTER XII

PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF MYTHS AND SYMBOLS: THE ZAN-GBETO CULT

MADUABUCHI DUKOR

This work is a study of the Zan-gbeto Cult of the Ogu people of Badagry Local Government of Nigeria. Although the language and the set-up of this rich traditional heritage have some unique features as distinct from so many others like Egungun (Yoruba), the Eyo (Yoruba), Muo (masquerade cult in Igbo land) and the Cargo cult, Azande, and so on, there are some fundamental affinities in their thought processes. Consequently, although this study concentrates on the Zan-gbeto tradition, I am also convinced that my assumptions and conclusions are valid, at least to a large extent, with regard to African Culture generally. Zan-gbeto tradition is an epitome or expression of religious humanism and philosophy.

The festival and cult, named after the sea god of peace, is embraced by members of all religious denominations among the people of the Badagry Local Government area of Nigeria. The leaders and chiefs of this tradition are traditionalists, as well as the Christians and Moslems. This partly accounts for religious harmony and the understanding among the Badagry people of Nigeria. During the festival, the supreme deity is called upon through the sea god or spirit, Zan-gbeto, to protect and hear the people. For this reason, among others, therefore, my concepts of polymonotheism,¹ Theistic Panpsychism and Humanistic Theism² for the African metaphysical worldview are also valid for Zan-gbeto culture.

The tradition, as a religion, tradition and philosophy of a people is explainable and rational in its context. The philosophical significance of this

¹ 'Polymonotheism' is a term or concept which I postulate for understanding or describing the African philosophico-religious world-view. What I mean by Polymonotheism is the idea of unity in diversity of forces, that is, belief in one supreme being as well as in the plurality of lesser beings or gods. It is coined, as it were, from polytheism which is the belief in plurality of gods and monotheism which is the belief in one God. For detail see M. Dukor, "African Polymonotheism: An existential humanistic culture" in *Philosophy and Social Action*, New Delhi Vol. 14 No. 2, January-June, 1989, pp. 23-31.

² "Theistic Panpsychism" is a concept or term which I coined for understanding the African metaphysical world-view. It is supposed to show that, although the Africans believe that there is a psychic dimension in everything in the universe (Panpsychism), they also believe in the existence of a supreme being (theism). African panpsychism is strictly theistic and not atheistic. For detail see M. Dukor, "God and Godlings in African ontology" in *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*. XVIII (Forthcoming).

tradition is its religiosity which underlies the African philosophy. It is also important to note that this tradition, in theory, belief and practice, is the same with similar traditions among the peoples in the west-coast of Africa namely the Ijaws, the Itsekiris and Ilajes of Nigerian, the Ewes of Togo and Ghana and virtually all the people inhabiting the shore of the Atlantic Ocean in Africa.

RELIGIOSITY OF AFRICAN CULTURE

The Zan-Gbeto cult is fundamentally religious. Because African people have a high religious consciousness, they are extraordinarily religious. Old African administrators acknowledged this and so referred to them as “incurably religious people.”³ An average African man is highly idealistic and this is what accounts for his religiosity. Suffice it to say that religion permeates all aspects of African culture. The people think in religious terms and this is noticeable in their music, dance, art, architecture and so on. According to Walter Rodney, “African dance and art were almost invariably linked with a religious world-outlook in one way or another.”⁴ And to John S. Mbiti, “the individual is immersed in religious participation which starts from birth and continues after his death. For him, therefore, and for the larger community of which he is part, to live is to be caught up in a religious drama....Both that world and practically all his activities in it, are seen and experienced through a religious understanding and meaning.”⁵ Religion is the matrix with which all aspects and elements of African culture can be explained. There is hardly a distinction between the secular and the sacred. Zan-gbeto cult, and its festival is, therefore, immersed in a religious drama.

Equally religious are the ontologies and metaphysics of the Africans. Everything is defined from its relations with supernatural forces. In African ontology, there are God, gods, spirits, man, animals and plants, phenomena and objects, space and time. God is the highest force which creates, controls, and informs others, and man is the center of this ontology. “The animals, plants and material phenomenon and objects constitute the environment in which man lives, provides a means of existence, and, if need

³ “Theistic Humanism” is a doctrine which I think best describes the African understanding of God and Man. African culture is, ipso facto, Humanistic and Theistic. Classical theories of humanism and theism tend to show that both concepts are irreconcilable. But in African culture they are a unity. Theistic Humanism is therefore a philosophy of the Africans, which has its theoretic and philosophical root in African polymonotheism and Theistic panpsychism.

⁴ E.G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London, Sheldon, Press 1962), p. 9.

⁵ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Undeveloped Africa* (Washington D.C., Howard University Press 1982), p. 35.

be, man establishes a mystical relationship with them.”⁶ Traditions, cults and festivals in Africa establish or affirm the people’s mystical relations with phenomenon or gods. Cults and festivals, therefore, are characterized by a celebration of life, humanism, universalism, symbolism and transcendentalism.

OGU PEOPLE AND ZAN-GBETO

Ogu people occupy a wide and aesthetically beautiful expanse of land adjacent to the sea border between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. “Badagry is on the edge of land, the edge of the Atlantic ocean and shares its boundary with the then kingdom of Port-Novo (Now Republic of Benin)”.⁷ Ogu people include not only the people that live in Badagry town but also people from neighbouring villages that make up the Badagry local government area, who also were the inheritors of Zan-gbeto tradition. These people are peace-loving. Thus their disposition could be partly accountable to the sea god of peace for whom and in whose honour a festival is celebrated annually. Although there are Yorubas, Ogus, and Ghanaians as settlers in Badagry and environs, the Ogu were the people who carried the Zan-gbeto tradition from the Republic of Benin to the Badagry Local Government area of Nigeria. According to Chief K. A. Amosu, an Ogu man from Ajido, an initiated member of Zan-gbeto cult, a retired major in the Nigerian Army and once the Chief Security Officer of Lagos State University, the first place the Ogu people settled in Nigeria with the cult was at Ajido, his native community. According to him, immediately after the people arrived in Ajido, there arose a disagreement between two brothers of the ruling family over who was the rightful person to be the Oba or traditional ruler of the Ogus. As one of them inadvertently went back to their original home in Republic of Benin to get permission for his *Obaship*, the other one swiftly got the support of the people with him in Nigeria and installed himself as the Oba. The result was that when the one who left for the Republic of Benin came back, he heard of his brother’s installation as the Oba, and since two kings cannot control a domain, he decided to settle in Badagry town and introduced the Zan-gbeto cult there. The history of Zan-gbeto can therefore be traced to the original home of the Ogu people which is the Republic of Benin. However, today, the Ogu people have sparsely settled in Badagry, Ajara, Ajido, Shoki, Ere and Vawhe of Nigeria where they celebrate and maintain the tradition. These areas constitute “an

⁶ J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London, Heineman 1969), p. 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

eastward extension of Gu-speaking, Ogu people who are to be found in fairly large concentrations in the Republic of Benin".⁸

An interesting phenomenon in Africa is that people of fundamentally different cultures could settle in a land and interact. A case in point here is the interaction between the Awori-speaking Yoruba people and the Gu-speaking Ogu people. The Zan-gbeto tradition, though Ogu in origin, has been able to survive in the midst of other cultures of Yoruba origins like the Egungun and the Ayo. The interaction has been going on in the face of such potentially formidable odds as language barriers. It is important to note that the language of any people is a *sine qua non* to understanding the logic of their thought. Professor Funso Akere says:

Although the Gu language is distinct from any of the dialects of Yoruba language, there have been extensive interactions between Ogu and Yoruba people in Badagry. The interaction between the Awori-speaking Yoruba people of Lagos and the Gu-speaking Ogu people of Badagry Local Government area and parts of Dahomy (Republic of Benin) has a fairly long history...It was one which involved both linguistic and socio-cultural contacts.⁹

The pertinent question then is; why all these linguistic and socio-cultural contacts without any culture dying off for the survival of the other in accordance with Darwin's theory of natural selection?¹⁰ What might be partly accountable for this is the similarity in the fundamental thought process of African cultural groupings. E.G. Parvinder acknowledges this fact:

The filling up of ethnographic detail produces an impression of chaos where there is in fact only variation on a few themes. African societies can be broadly classified into a limited number of economic and political types, and the difference between the most varied African tribes is slight when compared with the difference between the most highly specialized African societies and developed industrial societies. By comparison, African tribal societies are relatively undifferentiated and homogenous.¹¹

⁸ I.C. Dioka, "The Evolution of Nigerian International Boundary 1961-1989," eds. A. Adefuye, B. Agiri, and J. Oshuntokun in *The History of the People of Lagos State* (Lagos, Lantern Books 1987), p. 216.

⁹ Professor Funso Akere, "Linguistic Assimilation in Socio-Historical Dimension in Urban and Sub-urban Lagos," *ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

¹¹ Darwinian theory of natural selection postulates a differential death rate between two variant sub-classes of population, where the lesser death rate characterizes the better adapted sub-class. What is being implied is the survival

Another phenomenon which might account for the interaction between different cultures in Africa is acculturation and syncretism. Acculturation is “a process of intercultural borrowing marked by the continuous transmission of traits and elements between diverse people resulting in a new and blended pattern”.¹² Zan-gbeto tradition might have acquired some degree of acculturation since its arrival to Badagry because some traits of Yoruba culture might have penetrated into it and vice-versa. It is undeniable that language is a formidable factor in the dissemination and sustaining of culture and it is probably the case that the universality of the English language is the greatest force in the process of universalization of European culture. Therefore, the extent to which Ogu people absorbed or learned Yoruba language will determine the extent to which they have absorbed Yoruba culture into their corpus of tradition. According to Professor Funso Akere:

Linguistically, the Gu language is still spoken extensively in Badagry and the surrounding villages, although a sizable proportion of Ogu people are bilingual in Gu and Yoruba. Sociolinguistically the contact between Ogu and Yoruba cannot but have some effect on the Gu language which has a minority status in comparison with Yoruba.¹³

If “Linguistic behaviour has always been taken as an index of the socio-cultural characteristics of a people”¹⁴ and some Ogu people are bilingual in the Gu and Yoruba languages, then their culture (including Zan-gbeto) may likely have some Yoruba cultural influence. It is not entirely strange to discover that a new and different culture might emerge out of the mixing of two cultures. This is called syncretism.

Another factor which might have affected African cultures is the process of transculturation. Transculturation is “the modification of a primitive culture resulting from prolonged contact with a more advanced culture”.¹⁵ There is little doubt that the Zan-Gbeto corpus of tradition might have been affected somehow by Christianity and Islam. That membership of the Zan-gbeto cult includes Christians and Moslems and, that Badagry was the gateway of Christianity into Nigeria is a fact. But whatever the extent of acculturation and transculturation that might have taken place in relation to Zan-gbeto tradition, the basic elements of the tradition are still preserved in

of the fittest when if applied to cultures would mean that a more viable or powerful culture in the midst of other cultures will survive at the expense of others.

¹² E.G. Parrinder, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹³ *Websters, Third New International Dictionary* (U.S.A., Merian-Webster Inc. 1981), p. 13.

¹⁴ Funso Akere, *op. cit.*, p.173.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

tact against the phenomenon of enculturation. Enculturation is always negative to a native culture. "It is the process by which the individual learns the traditional content of a culture and assimilates its practices and values."¹⁶ Enculturation so far in Africa is the process by which Western culture completely annihilates the indigenous cultures of the Africans with little or no room for their survival. However, the Zan-gbeto corpus of tradition consistently and tenaciously has remained immune to cultural attack.

THE ZAN-GBETO CULT

According to legends and oral tradition, Zan-Gbeto is a spirit which came out of the sea, Ohu, and settled on Ogu land, adjacent to the sea border in the Republic of Benin. According to the myth, when the spirit evolved from the sea, it brought for the people good things and omens like good health, coconuts, technology for fishing and building houses and other essentials of life. An evidence of this spirit having come from the sea is shown by clusters of coconut trees which esthetically beautified the sea beaches in Ogu land of the Republic of Benin and the Badagry area of Nigeria. It seems, therefore, that the good things in Badagry and Ogu land like the coconut, and peace, are, for the people, a sign of the ever-presence of this spirit. The Zan-gbeto spirit, now elevated to the status of a god, is sacred and esoteric, and it has mystical relations with the people. It is believed that it appears on different occasions and times as circumstances and need arise. The Zan-gbeto cult, should, therefore, be a kind of charismatic movement inspired by the spirit of the sea.

Man, from the earliest times, conceived and believed in the idea of spirit. The whole idea of belief in spirit is called spiritism. Spiritism is rooted in idealism and religion. Its frame of reference is unempirical and immaterial. Nevertheless, the Africans were so religious because they needed to be idealistic to justify their existence in the world. Spiritism has informed and engendered many movements, societies and religions in the history of mankind. It has given rise to Zan-gbeto cult just as it has occasioned Christian Pentacostal movements, and oriental cults which from the first century before Christianity spread rapidly across the Greek and Roman world. The Spirit of Zan-gbeto is believed to be as holy as the Holy Spirit that descended on the disciples of Jesus on the Pentacostal day. For according to Acts of the Apostles, "When the day of Pentacost had come, they were all gathered in one place....And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance".¹⁷ The Zan-gbeto's spirit possession is common among the people in their agricultural, cultural and craft practices.

¹⁶ *Webster Third New International Dictionary, op.cit.*, p. 2426.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 747.

The church or the movement which began in Jerusalem and spread to Samaria and Judea as a result of the outpouring of the Holy spirit is similar to the movement or cult which is now associated with Zan-gbeto, the holy spirit of the sea. "The Christian church, in the course of her long history, has witnessed outbursts of movement whose members claimed to be specially imbued with the Holy Spirit."¹⁸ Examples include the Montanist movement in the third century, Afro-Christian churches like the Aladura churches, Celestial church, Brotherhood of cross and star, and so on.

Africans hold a special belief in spiritism. According to Bolaji Idowu, "Spirits, according to African belief are ubiquitous; there is no area of the earth, no object or creature, which has not a spirit of its own or which cannot be unhabited by a spirit..."¹⁹ "All waters are places of power; wells and springs; rivers and streams."²⁰ The idea of associating some powers with rivers or seas is common to many cultures. Christians use water for baptism. The spirit of river Tano of Ghana is one of the chief spirits of that country and the people of *Songhay*, on Sundays, have popular drummings and dances where people are possessed by the river-spirit called Zin or Jinn.²¹ The great rivers of East and South Africa are also associated with spiritual beings.²² The Ogu people believe in the plurality of spirits as well as in the Supreme Being. Like many African people, they believe also in the Supreme being who controls other lesser spirits, and for that reason I described African culture as polymonotheistic. Again, since Africans believe that there is life in everything as well as that the supreme deity exists, I again described African culture as Theistic Panpsychism. Therefore, my explanation of African culture in terms of polymonotheism and theistic panpsychism is valid.

Zan-gbeto is a cultural as well as a religious institution, with an initiated community of elders at the helm of affairs. "The non-initiated cannot know anything about the esoteric activities of Zan-gbeto and cannot accompany or address Zan-gbeto anyhow."²³ Zan-gbeto usually appears to the people as masquerades. And there can be as many Zan-gbeto masquerades as possible, each and every one of them representing the spirit, Zan-gbeto. Zan-gbeto (in the masquerade form) is built of raffia leaves called zanho in order to conceal the spirit of Zan-gbeto. It should be noted that members of Zan-gbeto cult or a congregation of its followers are also known as Zan-gbetos. The cult is made-up of elderly people who inherited

¹⁸ Acts 2:1-4.

¹⁹ S.U. Eriwo "A Consideration of the Charismatic Movement among the Urhobo and Isoko Speakers: 1929 to date," in *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. XV/1 June, 1983, p. 17.

²⁰ E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion, A Definition* (London, SCM Press Ltd), p. 174.

²¹ Geoffrey Parrinder, *Religions* (London; Sheldon Press 1969), p. 56.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

this tradition from their forbears. There are various names and ranks for the elders, according to their order of importance. The overall head and leader of Zan-gbeto in Ogu land is called Azogan, who is the highest Zan-gbeto chief in his village. The next in rank and authority is Zangan who is the leader of the various Zan-gbeto. There is also the Zannukonfo who is the leader of the night groups of Zan-gbetos. The Azogan presides over Zan-gbeto meetings at night.

Like the *Misthraisf* and *Isis* of the ancient Greek and Roman world, the Zan-gbeto cult requires new members to undergo a series of initiations. All male members of the communities can be initiated. Initiated members cannot and should not divulge anything about the initiating ceremony to non-members. Failure to adhere to this rule always carries or attracts severe fines or punishment called *Ozan*. It is the process of afflicting punishment on anybody who goes contrary to the rules and regulations of the cult. The fine is normally a goat or pig as the case may be, a basketful of paps, an alcoholic drink (*Ogogoro*) and so on, depending on the weight of the offence. Failure of the defaulter to produce all these things could result in his death. One who wishes to be initiated as a member will first of all consult an initiated elderly person who will present his case before the Azogan. The person to be initiated is normally asked to provide certain initiation materials. This varies from village to village. In the Ajara community or village near Badagry town one is asked to provide the following; a bottle of gin Ahan, ₦60.00, a bundle of raffia leaves, firewood (to be burnt at night), a keg of palm-wine and so on. On being initiated, there are certain secret and esoteric rites and rituals that are performed at midnight. On being initiated, one will be given *Zanyin*, another name with which he will be called at nights to prevent non-initiated persons from identifying the person in the midnight. In the night the person being initiated will be taken to a shrine where certain rites, rituals and ceremonies will be performed. A newly initiated member may not sleep throughout the night for nine consecutive days and must always be seen at the common centre or headquarter known as *zanvari*. Initiated members have certain taboos, rules and regulation to observe in respect of the Zan-gbeto cult. Also there are various esoteric signs and languages of communication used by initiated members and which non-initiated cannot comprehend.

The Zan-gbeto cult is not only religious; it is also social. It does perform certain social actions for the benefit of the society. In this direction, its primary function is to safeguard the village against evils, armed robbers, burglars or invaders and to help create a peaceful atmosphere in Ogu land. In Ogu land, it serves as a law enforcement agent and could be referred to as the village police. Zan-gbeto could arrest any member of the community who goes contrary to the village morality and code of conduct. In the Ajara community, near Badagry town, strangers who enter into the town at certain hours between 11.00 p.m and 5 a.m. are interrogated. Such strangers are arrested by Zan-gbeto and will be taken to the *Zanvari* (headquarters of Zan-gbeto) where the culprit or wanderer is fined or punished by the Azo-

gans and Zangans. In Ajara if there are public disturbances in any form, the perpetrators are arrested by Zan-gbeto and taken to Bale (Chief) house where they are punished. For example, if a man beats his wife and his wife cries to the hearing of their neighbours, Zan-gbeto would arrest the man and impose on him a fine of ₦20.00 and a bottle of gin. This is believed to serve as a deterrent to others who might beat their wife. Also Zan-gbeto could be seen as a means of entertainment in Ogu land. Zan-gbeto appears before the people and displays or performs many actions before the people in the public place called Hunto on some occasions, like the burial ceremony of important Zan-gbeto chiefs and personalities and Zan-gbeto festival days, Hunwe.

ZAN-GBETO FESTIVAL

Zan-gbeto festival is an avenue through which the Ogu people express their religious tolerance and humanism. Africans generally believe strongly in religion. Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, the first President of Nigeria, was only affirming the African philosophy of life when he said; "I am not in a hurry to leave this world because it is the only planet I know".²⁴ And in his odyssey, he said again, "In the course of my life odyssey, I have been convinced that I must be idealistic to justify my existence as a human being, but I must also be materialistic to adapt to the concatenations of a materialistic world."²⁵ These quotations of the great Zik of Africa are an aspect of the African worldview. E.G. Parrinders also argued, "The African thinks of this world as light, warm, and living, to which the dead are only too glad to return from the underworld of darkness and cold. This is the best of all possible worlds; the African attitude is world affirming not world-renouncing. It is, therefore, a punishment to be detained in Hades, and childlessness is a curse because it blocks the channel of rebirth."²⁶ Africans believe in the celebration of life, especially in honour of the supreme being, gods and spirits who can make and unmake. They are, *ipso facto*, transcendentalists and humanists. Belief in God and Man is what I have described as Theistic Humanism. Africans are also universalists or holistic which is an affirmation of their Humanism, and which underscores their philosophy of the oneness and brotherhood of mankind. In short, Africans are cosmic optimists and not cosmic pessimists. Their cosmic optimism, humanism and celebration of life are expressed in many ways which include the festivals.

²⁴ The fact that it is only the male that is initiated into the Zan-gbeto cult shows that the Ogus, like other Africans have an esoteric conception of man. Africans have the tradition of always mystifying man to show women that they are inferior to men ontologically.

²⁵ Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, "Zik quotable quotes" in *Weekend Concord*, Vol. 1, No. 36, Saturday, November 1989, p. 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Zan-gbeto festival is an annual festival usually held in honour of Zan-gbeto, the sea god of peace and good things. The festival is usually a great occasion for the Ogu people. Because there is no fixed month or day for the festival, it varies from village to village among the Ogu people. In the past, the Zan-gbeto festival used to last for months. But nowadays the festival lasts for a week or weeks, as fixed or decided by Zan-gbeto Chiefs and the Bales. In Ajara village, the festival takes place once a year in any chosen month. However, with the emergence of modernity the festival rarely takes place in some years. On the first day of the festival, the people normally perform certain rites and rituals with perhaps strangled hens and cocks and pray to their god or spirit (who is believed to be servant of the supreme being) to give them children, safety, good-health, and so on. This attitude is what I conceptualized as Theistic Humanism. They also go to the four corners of their village and make some incantations for the security of their village. After that they go back to the Bale or the Chief to get permission for the festival to start.

The Zan-gbeto masquerades go to houses where they dance and receive gifts on the second day; the Zan-gbeto masquerades appear at the public place, Hunto, where they perform dances and music for public entertainment. During this time Zan-gbeto masquerades from all parts of Ogu land are usually in attendance. At the arena, native women, known as Yalode, normally sing and dance, following the Zan-gbeto at its back and shouting AZOO! AZOO!, while drums of different sizes and rhythms are masterfully and intricately handled by professional traditional drummers and musicians.

It is also an occasion for the Zan-gbetos to engage in competition in areas like dancing, performance of different weird and miraculous actions with their knowledge of occult and higher sciences. In the arena, Zan-gbeto could give birth to a young Zan-gbeto. Zan-gbeto's body, Zanho, could be set ablaze and could be seen to have been apparently burnt to ashes, when all of a sudden the ashes would be seen to have again regenerated into a full and physically existing Zan-gbeto. Zan-gbeto could also change into a snake, and often Zan-gbeto power was shown when about twenty people could not pull it down or out of its spot with a rope. Also Zan-gbeto's housing (that is the raffia leaves known as Zanho) could be uncovered without people seeing any human being inside, thereby confirming to the people that inside the raffia leaves is a spirit that is invisible. Many other feats are performed with rituals and rites involving the strangling of cocks, goats and, so on.

RATIONALITY OF ZAN-GBETO TRADITION

Zan-gbeto cult is a tradition and also a religion. It is religiously important to the people. Zan-gbeto god is believed to be giving meaning and direction to the life of the people. The belief is backed up by myths and rituals. Some of these rituals and cultic activities are usually displayed

during the festival. These rituals and customs generate phenomena which apparently defy common sense and scientific explanation. Take, for example, the burning of a Zan-gbeto masquerade and its eventual regeneration into a full and normal masquerade is wonderful; also the changing of the masquerade into a snake is equally perplexing, and so on. Explaining Zan-gbeto cult is just like explaining the cargo cult or Azande belief in witchcraft, because the same concepts and thought process are involved. It seems to me that similar cultic activities are involved in Melanesian and African cultural inheritance which Levi-Bruhl allegedly described as prelogical. It follows, therefore, that the criticism of the cargo cult, for example, amounts to a criticism of the Zan-gbeto cult. Critics of African and Melanesian traditions have always proceeded from the premises that they were all religious and primitive thoughts. Azande belief, the cargo cult and Zan-gbeto belief are to the white man savage ignorance, as against the white man's civilized knowledge. This savage ignorance has been variously described as "not rational" and 'other than rational' while civilized knowledge is rational. Critics of the cargo cult argue that it is irrational and magico-religious. According to Raymond Firth, it is an attempt to "create new illusions to counter disillusion and strain."²⁷ Similar cults have been described as fantasy which is a form of escapism from the reality of disillusionment. There are incompatibility of wants and the means of satisfaction of the natives. He says, "They lack the knowledge necessary to get what they want, and this impasse turned them to fantasy, that is, resorting to magic without scientific accompaniment..."²⁸ If these critical questions are applicable to African and Melanesian cultures, then what is the disillusionment which the Ogu people were under? what is the illusion they have created to solve this problem? Is the Zan-gbeto cult and festival a fantasy? is there any incompatibility between the Ogu people's wants and the means of satisfaction? And finally, are these cultic practices or magic unscientific and irrational? These questions, I do hope, will provide us with an analytical frame of reference for explaining Zan-gbeto cult. To be disillusioned is to be "set free from a mistaken belief". Then, were the Ogu people holding a mistaken belief or were they under strain?

The Ogu people, like the rest of mankind, were not holding any particular mistaken belief, but they were under the strain of doubt and wonder as to how the universe could be explained. Like the ancient Greek philosophers, they were asking, what is the fundamental stuff of the universe? Could the probable answers to this question be the illusion they have created to counter the disillusion of doubt and wonder? If yes, then all religionists throughout the world are under illusion. Christians postulate God with Jesus Christ as the guide, and Moslems postulate God with Mohammed as their guide. The Africans appreciated the beauties of nature that

²⁷ E.G. Parrinder, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

²⁸ I.C. Jarvie "Explaining the Cargo Cult," ed. Bryan R. Wilson in *Rationality* (Britain Oxford, Basil Blackwall 1977), p. 56.

gave rise to their belief in God and plurality of divinities. Consequently, they built myths and mythologies to explain nature: "It seems that poly-monotheism originated from man's wonder about what could be the best explanation of nature. Man tries and sees the universe as a religious experience. There are natural forces surrounding him which he cannot explain. Therefore he built mythologies as means of understanding the nature."²⁹ For instance, the Ogu people could have built the myth about the sea-god, Zan-gbeto, out of their appreciation of the nature of the sea and the coconut trees on the beaches. This attempt to explain nature and religion generally is an attempt to explain and rationalize nature. Lucy Mair and Raymond Firth could be wrong in describing 'religion' as irrational or 'other than rational', unless they were using Western scientific methodology as their parameter of rationality.

I find it equally disagreeable that religious explanation of the universe as the Ogu practice it or as the ancient Greek people did is irrational. What is 'rationality' precisely? Is it predicated on doctrine or belief or action? It seems that we can use rationality of an action to justify its doctrine and belief. Jarvie accepted goal-directedness of action as the criterion of the rationality of the action. The Zan-gbeto cult has a doctrine about a sea-god that emerged from the sea and landed in Ogu land bringing good omens like peace and coconuts. The rationality of this doctrine, therefore, is tied up in the goal-directedness of the people's actions. Situational logic can also explain the Zan-gbeto cult. Explaining the cargo cult, Jarvie attributed "reasonable aims to the actors in the situation and try to show that within their frame of reference their actions, if interpreted as trying to realize those aims are perfectly rational."³⁰ The Zan-gbeto cult could therefore be rational so long as the people achieve their aims by their actions. For Jarvie, if the myth of a cult embodies a coherent horizon of expectation, then the cult is rational. When we ask whether a cult or tradition is rational, we could mean whether it is integrated with the traditional worldview of the people or with the previous background of myths and ritual of the people. This is a functional way of explaining the society. Functionalism is "empirically interested in the inter-relation of roles, the inter-relation of institutions."³¹ Functionalists among social anthropologists have been interested in how primitive societies fitted together. Therefore, the rationalism of any practice is the extent to which it is inter-related into/with the whole. Because they are interested in what is observable in the ritual, not in the belief, social changes to the functionalists are the changes that have taken place in what people do, and their rationalism is the extent

²⁹ M. Dukor, "African Polymonotheism, An Existential Humanistic Culture" in *Philosophy and Social Action*, New Delhi, Vol. 15, No. 1-2, Jan-June, 1989, pp. 23-24.

³⁰ I.C. Jarvie, *op.cit.* p. 53.

³¹ *Ibid.*, sp. 57.

to which these changes are integrated into a whole.³² These canons of rationality by the functionalists can easily be met by the Zan-gbeto cult. For one thing, the cult is backed up and supported by the structure of the Ogu traditional worldview which is not fundamentally different from that of the rest of the Africans. It is also integrated with the myths and rituals of the people.

The next question is: Is there any incompatibility between the Ogu people's wants and their means of satisfaction? Do they lack the necessary knowledge for the realization of their wants? Because they live close to the sea they have a good knowledge of fishing, constructing boats, farming, as well as building houses. If this expertise is tied up with a myth (the story of the sea god that bestowed these blessings upon them), does that mean that they are giving a fantasy explanation of the means of satisfaction of their wants? The Ogu people want coconuts, fish, boats and houses, and they have and know the techniques of realizing these ends. I do not think there is any rational discontinuity between the satisfaction of their wants and their cultic religious belief. If the people's explanation of their store of knowledge is fantasy or mythology, then there is something rational in mythological fantasy.

Religion in general has been described by some scholars to be a fantasy, yet there are, in my opinion, some rational elements involved. Discussing the cargo cult, Jarvie argued, "The natives have technology. There is difference between rule-of-thumb and scientific theories. The natives' techniques do not give the natives a claim to comparison with us, and their explanatory (magical and animistic) theories can be so compared".³³ The African Ogu people have a technology which may be described as rule-of-thumb theories as distinct from Western scientific theories. They may also be described as magical and animistic theories. The history of human thought passed through mythology, religion, magic to what is now called Western science. So magic and animism are phases in the history of human thought before the emergence of science which to some is more rational. Jarvie argued that "theories of empirical sciences are testable, tested, and have survived test. But these theories are no more rational than magical ones".³⁴ Some philosophers, like Karl Popper, Watkins, and Bartley have argued that scientific theories are more rationally held. This thesis seems to me to be more acceptable than the thesis that African cultic activities are not rational at all. According to Jarvie, that they indulge in magic does not mean that they don't have science. They realize that the two go together. Malinowski perhaps rightly argued; "If by science be understood a body of rules and conceptions, based on experience and derived from it by logical inference, embodied in material achievements and in a fixed form of tradition,...then there is no doubt that even the lowest savage communities

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Footnotes, *ibid.*, p. 60.

have the beginnings of science, however rudiment-ary".³⁵ Religion and magic are, to many people, part of common sense. It is reasonable for them to hold it. The Azande, for example, believe "that certain of their members are witches exercising a malignant occult influence on the lives of their fellows. They engage in rites to counteract witchcraft; they consult oracles and use magic medicine to protect themselves from harm".³⁶ Similar cultic activities takes place in the Zan-gbeto cult. These cult activities are based on common sense, and anything that is common-sensical should be rational. Winch has argued that "intelligibility takes many and varied forms, that is, there is no norm for intelligibility in general".³⁷ Intelligibility, or rationality, is therefore contextual. This con-textuality is not necessarily relativism, for a people are said to be rational in their undertaking if they realise their aims and objectives by their practices.

PHILOSOPHY IN ZAN-GBETO

The point at issue here is the question of the philosophy in myths, folklore, proverbs and religious beliefs upon which, of course, the Zan-gbeto cult hinges. While some see philosophy from the exclusive point of view, the apostles of African philosophy as myths and religious worldviews see it from the inclusive point of view. The exclusive view is that philosophy should be critical and effective while the inclusive view is that it should be both uncritical and critical, and reflective and unreflective. While the exclusive school fails to appreciate the historical and dialectic nature of philosophy in being at a stage uncritical and at another stage critical, the inclusive school fails to appreciate the self-criticism of philosophy in a dialectic mood.

However, the points of the inclusive school are worthy of note as far as the philosophical import of myths and symbols in African philosophy is concerned. According to K.C. Anyanwu, "Philosophy should not be an academic matter but an expression of a people's culture. As a philosophy, its business is to articulate the principle by which the people can live as a whole man, and its concern is with what is meaningful and significant in experience. It is not a critical philosophy, and critical philosophy cannot start unless there is existing material for it."³⁸ He says that myths may embody ultimate insights and intuition of reality as experiences within a universe of aesthetic continuum. In African culture, myths are used to give

³⁵ Malinowski, quoted by Jarvie, *ibid.*, p. 53.

³⁶ Peter Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society" in *Rationality, ibid.*, p. 78.

³⁷ Alasdair Macintyre, "Understanding Religion and Believing," *ibid.*, p. 66.

³⁸ K.C. Abyeanywu, "Philosophical significance of Myth and Symbol in Dogon world view" in C.S. Momoh, *The substance of African Philosophy* (Auchi, Nigeria, African Philosophy Project Publications, 1989), pp. 259 and 260.

certain topics or themes the character of parable or allegory. But in reality, the parable or allegory has a direct reference to human beings, human situations or to society, and it has moral, educational and philosophical interests. That is why I have argued:

Some anthropologists and philosophers would not agree with the dictionary contention that myth only relates the ancient story of gods and heroes. The function of myths goes beyond that, some believe that it concerns legends, folktales and stories of past events not necessarily with regard to gods and heroes. In fairness to the dictionary, it could be a mythical matter, a figment, an unconsciously held belief, but one which renders explanation of social consciousness. Even if it is dreamlike, yet some dreams are reflections or replies to man's experiences in his daily life.³⁹

The philosophical dispute concerning African philosophy, *apropos* of whether it is myth or not seems to me to be a misuse of language 'philosophy' and a language game which certainly talks of one and only one thing, that is, that African philosophy exists, but that it has to start critically from the religious worldview of the African. The exclusivist school cannot deny the relevance of myths in the study of African philosophy if they are fully aware that the ancient Greek philosophy is punctuated with myths, for instance, in Plato's *Republic*, *Georgias*, *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. In these works you see allegories and prescientific explanations of the universe, and yet they are philosophies. The relevance of myth or religious worldview as a source of material for philosophic reflection is admitted by the exclusivist school or the logical neo-positivists, and philosophic criticism and reflection on the religious worldview is accepted by the inclusivist school or ethno-philosophers. So the debate is a mere language game that confuses prioritization of either criticism or myth with philosophy, when, in actual fact, philosophy demands that they be placed in dialectical and historical perspective.

Professor Peter Bodunrin argues that not all rational, logical and complicated conceptual systems are philosophical. But the goal of any philosophical enterprise (a critical philosophy in Bodunrin's sense) is rationality and, therefore, if any system rigorously strives to achieve that goal then it is philosophical. And philosophy in a dialectical and historical sense demands a movement from one stage of rationality to another in obedience to changing circumstances. What is rational today may not be rational tomorrow; since that is always the case, criticism and revision, as demanded by the logical neo-positivists, become necessary. In African philosophy, Paul Radin's 'autochthonous intellectual class' and Gordon

³⁹ M. Dukor, "African Cosmology and Ontology" in *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. XVI No. 4, October, 1989.

Horning's 'principle of synthesis' set the machinery in motion for self-criticism and revision. And William Abraham's distinction between private and public aspects of African philosophy shows that the public aspect is a criticized, revised and harmonised aspect of individual and private philosophies of the autochthonous intellectual class. Therefore, the rationality of any system in an age is the philosophy of that age.

The philosophical significance of Zangbeto belief is the rationality of the myth upon which it is erected. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, "Myth is living or dead, not true or false. You cannot refute a myth because, as soon as you treat it as refutable, you do not treat it as a myth but as a hypothesis or history,"⁴⁰ so the Ogu people are not under illusion about their belief in Zangbeto. The origin of their belief was in their wonder and curiosity about the origin of the universe. The rationality involved here is what K.C. Anyanwu calls the logic of aesthetics while formal logic deals with, and results in, abstractions; the logic of aesthetics is the unity and meaningfulness of individual and community experiences in life. Lucy Mair and Raymond Firth may, therefore, be wrong in describing religions as irrational, unless they are using Western scientific methodology as their parameter of rationality.

Universality and rationality are an important object of philosophy. So how rational and universal is 'symbol' in philosophy? Symbols in African culture have no special significance except on the basis of myths. So let us discuss the philosophical significance of symbols and vice-versa. Symbols can be simply defined as objects, words, language and sounds which, more often than not, have esoteric meanings. The symbols in the Zangbeto cult, therefore, are comprised of rituals, rites, sacred words, and names, cult and magical practices. Rituals and rites are symbols because esoteric words and language are the backbone of occult and magical practices:

All words are spiritual, nothing is more spiritual than words
....Unless we fully realise the profound influence of superstitions concerning words, we shall not understand the fixity of certain widespread linguistic habits which still vitiate even the most careful thing.⁴¹

Like Mustraisf and Isis of the ancient Greek and Roman world, the Zangbeto cult requires new members to undergo a series of initiation characterised by rituals, rites and the use of sacred words. In understanding Zangbeto belief, we cannot underestimate the power of words and language. And the history of philosophy is incomplete without the history of the argument surrounding the relationship between language and reality. In Black Africa, the power of spoken words is given a special place in the

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

⁴¹ C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd. 1972), p. 24.

magical and animistic practices. We were told that language is a duplicate, a shadow-soul of the whole structure of reality. Hence the doctrine of reality is called the supreme reality or the divine soul, substance. Heraclitus saw in language the most constant thing in a world of ceaseless change and for him the structure of human speech reflects the structure of the world. Aristotle believed that everything appeared to be modelled in its entire character on number and that numbers are the ultimate things in the universe. Pythagoreans were puzzled by number symbols. In fact, Pythagoreanism passed from a doctrine of the world as a procession of numbers out of the one to the construction of everything out of number – soul, each claiming an immortal and separate existence. “All sounds evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions in or, call down among us certain disembodied powers whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions”.⁴² Ancient beliefs may be dead, but the instinct or the hope is strong. In ancient Africa, “Man’s greatest power is the power of words. By virtue of this power, he is capable of creating meaning and value, of transforming the world and himself, and of giving meaningful directive to material events... Words have the power to define and to compel. As a result, it is the vehicle of order, the principle of creativity and destruction.”⁴³

In Zangbeto cults, the sacred names and ritualistic incantation belong to the category of powerful words. There are various esoteric signs and language of communication used by initiated members and which non-initiated cannot comprehend. These rituals and rites generate phenomena which apparently defy common sense and scientific explanation. Explaining Zangbeto cult is just like explaining the cargo cult or Azande belief in witchcraft because the same concepts and thought process are involved. Aesthetically, the Ogu universe as depicted in Zangbeto belief is meaningful, beautiful and satisfying because it unifies man’s experience into a whole. African universe enables man to see his place in the universe and his relationship to other creations. Like the Dogon universe, the Ogu people’s world is presented “as undifferentiated, and they are formless, or meaningless until the, ‘signs’ come to rest on each of the ‘things’ which they symbolize.”⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

To resume then, the African Ogu people have a technology which some have described as rule-of-thumb theory as distinct from western scientific theories; some have also described it as magical and animistic. But one of the underlying principles behind the ‘African technology’ is the power of the spoken word. There is no doubt that African science derives

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴³ K.C. Anyanwu, “Presuppositions of African Socialism” in *The Nigerian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 3, Nos. 1 and 2, 1983, p. 57.

⁴⁴ Anyanwu, *op.cit.*, p. 266.

much of its strength from the occult powers associated with the power of spoken words. The common criticism of African ritual practices is that it is not scientific, or that it does not follow the model of western science, and so it is irrational. It has been argued that the history of human thought passed through mythology, religion, magic to what is now called western science; so magic and animism could be phases in the history of human thought before the emergence of the so called western science which to some is more rational. Jarvie argued that “theories of empirical sciences are testable, tested, and have survived test. But these theories are no more rational than magical ones.”⁴⁵ Some philosophers like Karl-Popper, Watkins and Bartley have argued that scientific theories are more rationally held. If this thesis means that African science is rational but not as rational as western science then it may be arguable. Jarvie argued that the fact that Africans indulge in magic does not mean that they don’t have science. Members of the Zangbeto cult engage in rites to counteract witchcraft; they consult oracles and use magic medicine to protect themselves from harm. These cultic activities are based on common sense and anything that is commonsensical should be considered rational.

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⁴⁵ I.C. Jarvie “Explaining the Cargo Cult,” ed., Bryan R. Wilson in *Rationality* (Britain, Basil Blackwell 1977), p. 60.

***CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
AND THE CAUCASUS***

CHAPTER XIII

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SYMBOLIC TRADITION ON CONTEMPORARY UKRAINIAN TRANSFORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

YAROSLAV PASKO

INTRODUCTION

In the book *Culture and Tradition*, Y. Lotman states that, “culture is the manifestation of rational and free human spirit.”[1] In each society, values play an important role and some – the core values – are more salient than others. Core values embed the essence of a culture and foster the integration of society. Loss of core values leads to disintegration, the destruction of the creative capacity for survival, and the transmission of values to later generations. For a long time, Ukrainian society suffered the destruction of its cultural and national values. Due to Ukraine’s incorporation into the Russian empire, many Ukrainian spiritual traditions were destroyed. Russian culture also colonized the Ukrainian intellectual tradition. During the period of its degradation and alienation, Ukrainian culture became connected to a strong, symbolic, pagan tradition and collective unconsciousness.

The Ukrainian socio-cultural tradition was formed from common pagan symbols and Orthodox Christianity. This paper shows how invariant symbols, like the archetypes of Jung, help contemporary Ukrainians adapt to a difficult reality and contribute to the incorporation of Ukraine into the system of a clientele society. Today’s Ukraine is essentially based on pagan archaic phenomena. These include the occult and cosmogony – sacral myths that constitute an essential element of rural Ukrainian society. These myths are the folk, spiritual and the sacred patterns that affected the formation of the Ukrainian national identity and civil society as a whole, and have shaped the psychology of modern Ukrainians.

These patterns are expressed in symbolic form. Symbols reveal several patterns of continuity and change. Over time, symbols in songs and dances became increasingly associated with Ukrainian ethnicity. Folk music in the Ukraine reflects the gains and traditions of the Kiev State. There were many ritual songs sung *a capella*. Historical songs (*kobza-plaing*) appeared as typical Ukrainian folk genres in the 1st century. Many of the dynamic and colorful folk dancers present Cossack lifestyle – the style of Ukrainian nobility. One of the oldest dances is the round dance associated with the cult of the sun. Originally, folk music was comprised of songs with instrumental accompaniment. There were dances that were performed exclusively by

females, such as the *metylytsia*; others, exclusively by males, the *arcan*. Lately, however, males and females participate in the same dance, developing and cultivating the traditional. This development presents a new form of coexistence.

Symbolic aspects of Ukrainian identity-formation are connected to the peripheral position of Ukraine relative to Western Europe. This peculiar position resulted in the deformation of many European ideas: among others, the Renaissance as revival of the human personality (personalism), the Enlightenment with the fundamental characteristics of European civilization, and science (scientism) as the means of conquering the surrounding world. In contrast to these essentially European ideas, Ukrainian identity was formed from common pagan and romantic emotional experiences. It was an unconscious reaction to specific and complex conditions of existence. Mutual emotional experience formed the most emblematic archetype of the Ukrainian collective unconscious, namely a fertile land.

This archetype hinges upon the close links of agricultural people with the land. In this connection, it is important to stress the historically rural nature of Ukrainian society, which also formed individualistic features and an orientation to the creation of small social groups united by emotional closeness. However, close emotionality was not rational in nature. For a long time, people were not united by a general purpose or tasks. The Ukrainian peasantry valued private land ownership. For them, the private farm was not only their place of work and the source of their income; it was also invested with a highly sacred value as symbol of personal freedom and independence – the bastion or common ground of their identity. In the meantime, family life in Ukraine emphasized the solidarity of the family (in the form of bilateral or extended kinship). This Old World tradition long affected family life in Eastern and Western countries. Interest in tracing genealogical trees (common descent) derives from a sense of solidarity based on kinship.

In spite of its incorporation into the Russian Empire, modern Ukraine has maintained the strength of family ties. Because of their interest in kinship, Ukrainians are fond of tracing the kinship of this and that family, going so far as to count the relationship as far as the degree of second and third cousins. Because of the emphasis on kinship, people are quick to claim a relation, particularly if the claim would reflect a new credit on them. They are insistent on the duty of relatives to recognize the claims of blood relation and to associate with one another, rather than with outsiders. There are family reunions on holidays, and in the summer, between haying and harvesting, family reunions are held in the open, which draw relatives from far and wide. One who has been aloof – for any reason – in his association with his kin is intensely disliked.

FAMILY ABOVE CONTROVERSIES AND DIVISIONS

Ukrainians belong to one of those rare societies in Europe that did

not go through sharp religious or ideological divisions and controversies. When such controversies occur in the family, they weaken or break family ties. The sixteenth-century Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and subsequently the revolutions in England, the Netherlands, and the great French Revolution of the eighteenth century broke up families. Small families appeared in Europe as early as the time of the Reformation, above all in Germany and Denmark. Families then split and became isolated from one another because of denominational differences, and eventually, because of unforeseen social promotions or demotions.

In Ukraine ideological controversies took place, but they did not evoke family divisions as radical as those in Western Europe. Family ties turned out to be stronger than mere religious or ideological differences. For Ukrainians, however, the more important factor which could divide families was the attitude toward invaders, enemies and imposed governments. Ukrainian people avoided contact with family members, relatives or cousins who collaborated with alien forces and authorities.

It is worth mentioning that the particular character of Ukrainian family law is that it is supportive of the family. In Western countries, all family property passed into the hands of one heir, most often the first-born son. His brothers and sisters had to content themselves with some form of life endowment, and either to leave the family home or remain there and be supported by the eldest brother. Even if this law efficiently ordered matters of inheritance and was economically advantageous for many family members, it could cause a sense of injustice and distance between family members and strain close family ties. According to Ukrainian law, whose beginnings are found in pre-Christian pagan times, family property belonged to all family members, rather than to just one man. Property was divided among all the children and each had equal rights to it. A great sense of family, and its related sense of justice, predominated over property and economic calculation. The sense of justice and of equal rights of family members was very strong. Ukrainian family ties remain tight.

Ukrainian Home – the Quintessence, Common Historical Experience

The home plays a crucial role in the Ukrainian family. The Ukrainian home is connected to the circle – the great symbol of the common good, which always defends the home from invasion and unfairness. The contemporary model of home has been shaped by, and is reflected in, many Ukrainian books and records. In the meantime, the Ukrainian home has undergone changes through various stages of development. But throughout this long history, we can say that the ideal model of home – the nobleman's house or Kazak's house – has influenced the home of the intelligentsia, as well as of the peasants and workers.

In the old Ukrainian literature (e.g., S. Orihowski, P. Mogila), the home is described as “upright and strong,” ancient, god-fearing, hospitable, safe, cheerful and characterized by the presence of alleys and trees in the

yard. The home is associated with orange and yellow colors. Historically, color has symbolic meaning in Ukrainian culture, and each color conveys particular information and plays a significant role in the life at home and in the community. Yellow is symbolic of the home in almost all of Ukraine. It is the symbol of the common good, purity and enjoyment of life. It is the color that is used to adorn the table, and to get in touch with a good man. Black is a symbol of sin, darkness, and moral decline. Red stands for affection, hope of new life, or of new possibility in one's job. Blue is for common experience. It gives hope to decide on problems. During the Orange Revolution, two leaders of the president's campaign used the Ukrainian popular colors of orange-yellow and blue.

Symbols of common experience have influenced and shaped the traditional form of community – the first form of civil society. The Ukrainian researcher M. Kostomarov has pointed out that a principal discrepancy between the Russian and the Ukrainian community should be located on the collectivism-individualism continuum: it consists of the propensity of Ukrainians for an individualist style of life, as opposed to that of the predominantly collectivist-oriented Russians. The Ukrainian traditional way of life was not characterized by those forms of dwelling which were based on authoritarian discipline and indisputable suppression of the individual by community – as it was in Russia (e.g., the Russian village commune called *optima*, or *Mir*). The Ukrainian traditional form of community called “*hromada*” was based on voluntary decisions of individual proprietors of small land allotments to join their efforts, tools and capital for a certain, rather limited span of time, in order to fulfill particular economic tasks or in cases of scarcity of money, instruments, etc. Each member secured the freedom to leave the community and stop participating in its activities any time he wanted.

The quintessence and embodiment of the Ukrainian national symbolic spirit is the Cossack – a freedom-loving individualist. Despite a seemingly encouraging impact on the unfolding of the entrepreneurial spirit, the Cossack ethos is far from unequivocal in its effects. Cossacks themselves had never been systematically engaged in trade or other forms of economic activity. They were an essentially military estate whose rhythm and way of life was intrinsically connected to war. The symbol of a circle is typical for Ukrainian tradition, and Cossacks always used this symbol to defend their land from conquest. The Cossacks' economic achievements were dwarfed by their military deeds, since they regarded themselves as defenders of the Ukrainian people and the Orthodox religion.

Another essential quality of Ukrainian mentality is their high emotional level. Ukrainians are distinguished by their introversion and high spirituality. The latter is exhibited in the extraordinarily developed national folklore with its inimitable lyricism and spirituality. What it lacked in rationality it gained in high intellectual reflection. However, in the political and economic spheres Ukrainian emotionality led to negative consequences as emphasized by several Ukrainian thinkers from Vyacheslav Lipinskiy to

Dmitro Doncov [2]. Ukrainians could not create their own market environment to serve as the basis of an integrated Ukrainian nation. Politically Ukrainians lacked pragmatism, calmness and the propensity for creative and business communication. One may well posit their lack of responsibility not only for their own fate but also for the destiny of the whole community. This lack of responsibility is deeply rooted in mythological perceptions of the past. The typical example of this kind would be the great spiritual leaders of the Ukrainian people, such as Feofan Procopovich and other intellectuals, who achieved remarkable skill in the interpretation of Biblical texts, but were mostly helpless in economic and political life.

Only in the 19th century, and despite intellectual isolation from Europe, can we see the process of unifying the nation and the attempt to build up the Ukrainian state. This would not have been possible without the appearance of T. Shewchenko – a great symbol of Slavonic culture.

UKRAINIAN PROMETHEUS

The main symbol of Ukrainian national culture is T. Shewchenko (1814-1861). He is the Ukrainians' Prometheus, punished and chained to the rock by Russian power. The mythological face of T. Shewchenko holds an esteemed place in Ukrainian folklore and literature. According to Ukrainians researching on the character of a national Prometheus, the ancient mythological type of hero wins political freedom and happiness for the people. T. Shewchenko is an ancient archetype – the symbol of death, resurrection and eternal renovation. This is the main cultural symbol of Ukrainians, and it influences the social-political and cultural history of Ukraine. The ancient Greek mythology of death and resurrection, of eternally returning heroes, has become for Ukrainians a great symbol of the struggle for human dignity and liberation from slavery.

Taras Shewchenko's work historically developed old conceptions of the Ukrainian home. He based his theory on the conviction that in the situation of restricted Ukrainian culture (due to its incorporation by Russia) and the division of culture into official and hidden forms, the earliest ways of life and customs undergo important transformations. The Ukrainian home absorbed what had been destroyed or oppressed in the Ukrainian public sphere. Home is cherished as a special place in the heritage of T. Shewchenko. Homes preserved traditions, memory and faith – forces that, according to great genius, are most powerful in the process of developing national feelings. According to T. Shewchenko, home is a symbol of tradition, and it preserves the national memory. In addition, language has a very important role for the content of historical and family life. Ukrainian language creates a unique social climate and is closely linked to the nation. Oral heritage, songs, legends, and the poems of T. Shewchenko have preserved the Ukrainian collective memory (its collective unconsciousness), carried forward its living truth, and constructed a moral spirit of a free people.

S. Groh divided national self-consciousness into three different levels of evolution: folk spirit, theoretical spirit, and political spirit of freedom. T. Shewchenko criticized Hegel (who divided cultures into historical and unhistorical, into non-political subjects and natural cyclical processes). Historically, a national hero was connected with romantic symbols and European patterns. But, step by step, Shewchenko came to the conviction that freedom must be reached in the political and public spheres. In October 1847 a national uprising burst out. After its suppression, his property was confiscated, and he was exiled to Siberia. The Russian empire attempted to destroy any memory of Ukraine's national hero. Furthermore the communist regime sought to appropriate the Ukrainian symbol to further its own interests. Nevertheless, the image of T. Shewchenko survived and it continues to live in the Ukrainian historical memory as a symbol of national dignity and freedom.

UKRAINIAN NATIONAL CODE UNDER GLOBALIZATION

Since the middle of the 19th century, a national self-consciousness in Ukraine has been awakening. National self-consciousness has historically been based on the symbol of a circle. The sacred circle is filled with a cross pointing from the center – to the spirits of wisdom and freedom: spirits who will liberate people from slavery. We should bear in mind that the main part of Ukraine was incorporated into the Russian Empire. Since the beginning of the 19th century, the main principles of the empire consisted of autocracy, orthodoxy and nationality; society was dominated by the state, which mandated the priority of Russian culture over the colonial peoples, of which Ukrainians were one. The Ukrainian nationality has been progressing simultaneously with civil society. But the creation of a Ukrainian national identity was rather complex and dramatic. Because of the incorporation into Russia and the constant clashing among Ukrainians, the formation of a Ukrainian nation was not finished in the 19th century nor, as we shall see, in the 20th century. Even after a decade of independence, the Ukrainian national identity has not been realized by the majority of Ukrainian society. At the same time, political leaders very frequently used Ukrainian symbols for specific manipulation (e.g., the great symbol of justice, the yellow belt, was used by V. Yuchenko in the last political company; his opponent used the saber, which symbolizes bravery).

Can we regard the Orange Revolution as the people's manifestation of their civic and national position? Is the indication of a national identity a common symbol for all Ukrainians? Is it a symbol of freedom, a symbol of the struggle for human dignity? Is there a symbol and common ground for unifying European values, such as respect for the law, private property, morality, and the separation of business and power?

Evidently, the answer to this question cannot be unambiguous. There are too many problems in contemporary Ukrainian society. It is too hard to overcome the clientele regime – the regime of oppressions, alienation of

society from the state, hostility between different regions and groups, a society of non-freedom. Historically, the clientele regime was based on the idea of a vertical correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm, the sacred and the profane, the state and society. As one scholar of Ukrainian mentality argues: freedom and power are antipodes for Ukrainians. Hence each power as given by God is not seen as justified in the Ukrainian spiritual tradition. The archetype of popular consciousness holds that supreme power belongs to God, not to human beings. In this context, the power was historically very strong and based on Ukrainian heritage. St. Orihowski, much like Plato, divides the soul into three parts that correspond to the three orders of the state. The clientele regime presents an exclusive role of the state in social life and the concentration of huge resources in the hands of the Soviet state. The vertical static model of social development suppressed the people's initiative and their independent social and economic activities. Processes of post-communist transformation connected with the major concept of clientelism. Sociologists studying social changes in the post-communist world, particularly in its Ukrainian part, postulate the formation of a neo-patrimonial regime in which a clientele relationship between workers and management, common under state socialism, is retained and combined with individual private property. A neo-patrimonial regime operates within the political system with authoritarian and paternalistic components. In spite of its declared Western values and its wish to be integrated in the European Union, the Ukrainian government is still afraid to take active steps towards democracy. On the other side, we can observe the idea of local self-government. Horizontal communication is revived by non-governmental organizations, which use sacred Ukrainian symbols.

Today Ukrainian society represents a clash of discourses, between ideas of freedom and non-freedom, paternalism and civic initiative. The national development of Ukraine in the future depends on how Ukraine will be able to transform its best symbolic traditions to adapt to the demands of globalization. Symbols can serve as agents of change, whether political or social-cultural. At the same time, we must try to restrict the fascist tendency in Ukrainian society, and specifically, to minimize the use of fascist symbolism in political life.

The Historical Background of Fascist Symbolism and its Influence on Ukrainian Political Life

The clientele system of power, which originated in ancient Rome, is connected with fascist symbolism. The word "*fasces*" means bundle and refers to a bundle of rods surrounding an ax. In ancient Rome, the lectors carried *fasces* before consul, praetors, dictators, governors, and the commanders of legions. On festive occasions (e.g., a military victory), *fasces* would be crowned with laurel. When the city was in mourning, *fasces* were sometimes cloaked. The *fasces* were a symbol of authority, but the precise meaning is unknown. It is often claimed that the rods could be used to lash

people. This may have been true in the days of the monarchy, but not during the republic. After the Law of the Twelve Tables, no Roman magistrate could summarily execute a Roman citizen.

The Romans believed that the *fasces* were introduced in Rome from Etruria. According to historical traditions, *fasces* have been found in Etruria, in the so-called “Tomba del Lettore” near Vetulonia in the 1890s. This finding has been hailed as confirmation of the tradition, but archaeologists only found a lot of small rusty flakes, which were interpreted as Etruscan *fasces*. They were entirely made of metal and had two blades. Historically, the *fasces* symbolized power and authority in Rome. The symbolism of the *fasces* at one level suggested strength through unity. The rods symbolized the state’s power to punish delinquents. In the 1920s, Italy, eager to portray itself as a revival of the glorious Roman imperial past, adopted the *fasces* for its symbol. In 1921, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini called his political movement *Fascia di combattimento*, *fascia* being the Italian word for peasant organizations and labor unions. Symbols of *fasces* were used in Spain, Portugal, Germany and other countries.

In Ukraine symbols of fascism were used in the 1930s national liberation movement and in the famous politics of D. Doncov and N. Sciborski. In the last elections the national movements that were based on *fasces* symbols took 3 percent. Fascist symbols and rhetoric are very popular in west Ukraine. In the future, Ukrainians must minimize fascist tendencies and create a stable political system and civil society. Ukraine must retain its national symbols but adapt them to the contemporary global reality.

National Symbols in Ukraine

National symbols are symbols of the country as a unified unit. They express the pride and uniqueness of the nation. Many national symbols of Ukraine were created during the time after Independence. Basic national symbols such as the national flag, the national emblem, the national bird, and the national anthem were adopted as national symbols after independence. Other national symbols such as the Palm of Mercalov, yellow trees, specific Ukrainian clothes (*vishivanca*) constituted national symbols before Independence. National symbols are usually taken from tradition to represent Ukrainian unity. They are common to all groups. Ukrainian national symbols – as symbols of a whole – are subject to change when the public and the political unity of the people change. National symbols must be confirmed by the political elite of Ukraine. In this context, the role of political symbols is very important. Political symbols are the symbols of the national political parties. These symbols represent the tradition and ideology of political parties. The existing party system of Ukraine, at both the national and the regional level, engages in elaborate modification of symbols. I include below some examples of the symbols used by Ukrainian political parties:

Our Ukraine Party. The roots of the Our Ukraine party are based in the freedom movement for an independent Ukraine. The party was started by I. Drach and Pavlichko in 1987. This party plays a great role in the Ukrainian political arena as a symbol of national dignity and national freedom. It was transformed after Independence into a strong political party based on political support from western and central Ukraine. The present brand of “Our Ukraine” is named by V. Chernovol and V. Yuchenko. The yellow piece of flag, orange trees, and the Motherland are the symbols of the party. The great symbol of the Motherland signifies readiness to take care of the rural population, to give help and patronage.

Party of Regions. The roots of this party are found in a shadow economy of Independent Ukraine. The history of this party is connected with Donetsk regions as enclaves of non-legal business. Ideologically, the party tries to represent itself as the symbol of all Ukrainian territories. A blue-colored flag is the symbol of PR. *Sable* is another important symbol of PR. Sable has a significant place in Ukrainian history. It is connected with the brave period of Cossack history, with great victories in the Middle Ages.

Communist Party of Ukraine-Leninist. The influence of communism is very strong in Ukraine. Though there was only one political party with a communist ideology, different versions of communism were developed. The symbols of Ukrainian communism are the red star and the red flag. The color red continues to symbolize revolution because of the strength of communist ideas in the 20th century.

Socialist Party. Ukraine’s socialist party is a new version of the old communist party, which came into parliament through symbols of justice connected to the memory of T. Shewchenko. The ideology of socialists is a mixture of communist and national memory. The leaders of all political parties use political rhetoric that is connected to Ukrainian symbols.

The Problem of Moral Decline in Post-Soviet Ukraine

The past few years there has been a remarkable interest in moral and human dignity. This field, which was thought to have been all but exhausted two decades ago in the European tradition, has become the focus of great intellectual ferment in view of the post-Soviet decline of moral standards.

Moral crisis is closely connected with the collapse of the Soviet ideological system and the decline of traditional pre-conventional morality. In conditions of chaotic changes one can observe a rise of inequality, limitation of human freedom, lack of access to goods and resources, and the formation of corporate ownership that serve as an important factor of alienation. In contrast to East European countries, the preconditions for the emergence of civil society were not created in Ukraine. It is the legitimization of civil society which serves as the prerequisite of the formation of post-

conventional morality of principles which is the basis of modern pragmatism. Ukrainian reality does not correspond with such fundamental values as morals and law, equity and freedom, differentiation between the public and the private, solidarity and confidence, inclusion and human rights.

UKRAINIAN LEBENSWELT IN DANGER

This moral crisis is worsening because of the rising vector of neo-corporativism that results in the degradation of legal and family institutions, nay, of the *Lebenswelt* constituted of culture, persons, and society. This brings about the reduction of the public and private sphere of civil society and of civil, political, and social rights. In Ukraine we can observe the shaping of the neo-corporativist state contributing to social exclusion, anthropological and spiritual crisis, and infringement of universal citizenship rights. Not only economic inequality but also the continual traditions of exclusion from political, civil, and social membership in the community, are what stand at the root of injustice and lack of trust and solidarity. The neo-corporativist state is based on feudal remnants that serve as a serious obstacle to the full implementation of citizenship and thereby hinder the formation of close ties and organic solidarity. The corporate and group-based terms of feudal political culture preclude the full institutionalization of a civil society in Ukraine, and the autonomy of the subjects of political processes.

In this context I would like to cite Habermas' position, where he makes good use of the Kohlberg's concept of moral consciousness. He draws attention to links between principles of universal ethics and systems of social relationship as a whole [3]. But the ideas of Habermas confront the real practice of post-communist societies, including Ukraine. We can observe serious obstacles for transcendental communication which is based on authentic and democratic solidarity, the practice of partnership and mutual recognition. Instead of this there are morally distorted forms of communications which are determined by the dismantling of horizontal ties in civil society; by the priority of hierarchy forms – violence based on power – over persons, by the prevalence of a corporative ethos over the common good, moral virtues and justice. One can talk about a total annihilation of European forms of privacy and publicity, and a transformation of the citizen into a subservient client of the state, or a primitivization of the forms of publicity in the mass media (advertisements, which were presented in Marcuse's works) [4]. Reality of this sort leads to the restriction of the right of citizenship in the Ukrainian corporate state and to the simplification of the *Lebenswelt*.

In our country none of the complex rights of citizenship is protected, and different forms of rights confront each other. The distinction between the organs of state rule and the representations of functional interest in Western democracies is critical to the understanding of the difference between these polities and post-Soviet countries. In the latter case, the

historical legacy of the relatively unmodernized and corporate state never accepted the principle of individual autonomy and equality as the basis of the polity upon which this type of organizations of corporative interest rests – and, more importantly, the autonomy of the democratic state would not be founded on the said polity.

In contrast to the 19th century when the group that was prominently excluded was the working class, now in the 21st century the problem of citizenship in Ukraine is connected with moral, ethnic, economic, religious, gender problems. One can talk of the burning problems of inequality and injustice in society, where relationships of submission have become a factor of alienation and non-freedom. The state became the embodiment of irresponsible private interests which are incompatible with the public good. Unfortunately, the absence of civil society institutions inhibits the integration of various social groups in political, civil, and social life. One of the authors of the citizenship concept, T. Marshall, more than fifty years ago, characterized interrelationships between political, civil, and social aspects of citizenship as follows:

The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom – liberty of persons, freedom of speech, thought and faith; the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice....The political element comprises the right to participate in the exercise of political power....And the social element includes the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security...[5]

One may assert that, in Ukraine, none of the above aspects is realized to the full. We have typical patron-client relationships, a hierarchy system which leads to social-cultural and political alienation. Ukrainian clientelism contradicts Putnam's treatment of this phenomenon. The latter sees the source of clientelist hierarchy in agrarian ties of obedience, while in Ukraine the hierarchical model of power was incorporated from the eastern, highly industrialized region. This region has never had traditions of social and citizenship inclusion, the Magdeburg law, civil contract, natural law, civil society, and the freedom of horizontal ties typical of European tradition. The discourse of non-freedom and clientelism still predominates and makes any form of solidarity and social trust impossible. That is why we can observe: 1) the invasion by the state into the private and intimate realms; 2) the transformation of state property into a corporate one; 3) highly important, the mental alienation from any form of political participation: social indifference as a result of the domination of distorted forms of pragmatism and immorality and 4) finally, and most important, the mental alienation from European moral patterns as a result of the domination of distorted forms of pragmatism. In Ukrainian society, social exclusion is particularly strong, manifesting itself in the lack of quality medical service, education, and the burden of poverty. Changing the situation is possible

only by securing civil, political, and social rights. The absence of any of these components makes the civilized development of civil society impossible.

The development of solidarity in Ukrainian society is possible not so much on the basis of distorted forms of liberalism concerned with economic determinism as by means of unifying traditional culture and a post-conventional ethics of principles, i.e. the ethics of responsibility not only for one's own fate but also for the destiny of humankind. It is also important to combine private interests with the public good, traditions of republicanism, communitarianism and social democracy.

Ukrainian society inherited the twin legacy of communism and colonialism – a legacy not easy to overcome. Despite promising declarations voiced by politicians, bureaucrats, and higher intellectuals about an orientation toward Western values – such as freedom, democracy, civil rights, human dignity – it is evident that our society is far from seriously progressing in the economic, social, political, and humanitarian spheres. Post-Soviet Ukraine remains a typical neo-corporatist state with patron-client relationships that are based on shadow economy, servility, and a criminal type of sociality.

Ukraine's corporate state destroys the symbolic network of *Lebenswelt*. The role of symbolic codes in Ukrainian cities plays a dominant role in spiritual adaptations to the pragmatic world. But now in the historical context of globalization, in Ukraine we can observe a clash between two controversial traditions: on the one hand, increased symbolic traditions in different spheres of culture, politics and city life as a whole; and on the other, persons, societies or communities in cities are less prone to adhere to the traditional symbolic code, but rather share in some sort of an ill-defined mass culture, so that one may also speak of social and cultural disintegration. According to the last tendency, the more established symbols and rituals of public life and religion during periods of cultural and social change seem to fail or lose their persuasive power. The diminishing participation in religious rituals in some churches reflects either disaffection for what is ritualized, or the failure of the ritual to persuade, or of the parent community to hold the people's allegiance. Civil rituals connected with the tradition of Magdeburg lower, Cossack's self-government, corporative rituals also decline in importance, including the rituals of casting votes in elections – with many not considering the great import of this matter.

At the same time, in spite of the oppression by the corporate state, new kinds of ritual activity of a more open and fluid character emerge in Ukrainian cities. Various forms of Pentacostalism are on the upsurge not only in western cities but also in eastern Ukraine (the latter is most seriously affected by clientelism). A symbolic code, with rituals playing a key part in the life of different social groups, is a complex of significant things, gestures, sounds, images and words that invite participation in the reality that is represented and expressed. In other terms, the symbolic universe itself – the symbolic code as it may be called – is quite complex. But it is to

be seen as the language given to a speaking subject – not seen “in itself”. As it is inherited and transmitted across time, we are attentive to what a subject can do with the symbolic code. From this perspective, it becomes apparent that, as the common language of any human grouping, symbolic codes are constantly changing, both in their functioning and in the intuitive meanings assigned to them.

Historically, the symbolic code of Ukrainian traditions represents a clash of discourses. On the one hand, are the discourses of freedom, Christian narratives of tolerance and recognition, and civil horizontal ties; on the other are the postcolonial traditions and soviet narratives which contradict not only the narratives of Slavonic Christian culture, but also Christian culture as a whole. The break between the symbolic and the historical ties and the space of the modern city in the age of globalization lead to the degradation of civil relationships, the annihilation of civil society, and the reinforcement of a clientele system in Ukraine – clientelism being incompatible with freedom and solidarity[6].

The development of democracy and relationships in civil society is fostered not so much by a mass consumer culture that is concerned with economic determinism as by the traditions of civil society, horizontal national practices, and positive symbolic narratives and symbols which reveal new possibilities of cultural interaction in the age of globalization (as is emphasized in the communitarian tradition).

For Ukrainian society it is very important to preserve a balance between dimensions of consumer civilization and high culture with moral standards, and to ensure a differentiation between the private and the public, as well a differentiation between the normative and the actual. Ukraine lacks the moral pivot of a practical life typical of a country with features of modernization. That is why the Orange Revolution could not bring about global changes in the economic, political, and social spheres.

In Ukraine, one can observe ethnic and regional solidarity based on corporative relationships rather than on horizontal ties contributing to the formation of social capital (social trust). The corporativism in post-Soviet countries is different from that in the West. It is, in fact – especially where the Russian Orthodox Church is concerned – much more akin to the original corporate ideology originating within the Russian Orthodox Church with its claims to social hegemony. Cooperation in Ukraine is a matter not only of different interests but different metaphysical universes.

A civilized future in the Ukraine is possible under the following conditions: a separation between the public and the private, the extension of human rights, and the establishment of practical life upon moral foundations. This is what can contribute to the development of civil society in Ukraine, shaping a society of justice with high moral and legal standards.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE ETHNIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE KALMYKS

LIUBOV CHETYROVA

Oh, West is West, East is East, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the
ends of the earth!

(Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West")

"The Kalmyks are the youngest of the European nations," joked the Secretary of the Communist party in Kalmykia, the General Basang Gorodovokov. The anecdote has a piece of truth. It does not mean that the Republic of Kalmykia sits in the territory of Europe. The Kalmyk's culture was a nomadic culture and was transformed by the widespread influence of Russia and the Soviet Union. In this case, we have a question about the belonging of Kalmyks to Russia and to Europe. After World War II Russian emigrants helped the Kalmyk emigrants to move from Europe to the United States and to obtain citizenship here. The Tolstoy Foundation and the daughter of the writer, Alexandra L'vovna, helped them to succeed despite many obstacles. One was a prohibition on obtaining American citizenship that extended to people who came from Asia. Russian compatriots were able to prove that Kalmyks are associated with Asia only by their historical origin. They have been living in Europe for over four hundred years, and in this regard can be compared with the Finno-Ugrian peoples, including Hungarians, whose ethnogenesis, likewise, began in the East¹.

I would like to discuss now a question on the belonging of Kalmyks to Russian culture: my purpose is to analyze the question on the cultural and ethnic identity of the Kalmyks, a small ethnic group living in Russia. When the Kalmyks try to define their identity in the context of Russian culture they begin by quoting Alexander Pushkin's words on the pedestal of his monument in Moscow – "the friend of the steppes, Kalmyk." The field of my interest is the relationship between East and West and the different ethnic identities of each. My purpose is to consider the problem of Kalmyk identity in the context of East and West. The life of the Kalmyk people developed on a boundary of two cultures – Russian and Kalmyk, which

¹ Elsa-Bair Guchinova, "Kalmyks in the United States", *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, vol. 41, no. 2 (Fall 2002), p. 9.

existed in the context of the Soviet, and, nowadays, the Russian culture. Kalmykia is a place where East and West stand face to face.

Rudyard Kipling's statement about the incompatibility of West and East, about the impossibility of understanding each other, is one of the widespread clichés of mass consciousness. I believe that the famous writer and poet meant an absolutely different thing. If the epigraph to the *Ballad* and the *Ballad* itself is read up to the end, it is clear that the position of Kipling is opposite. He wrote how they can understand each other in interpersonal dialogue, how the twain shall meet in understanding such values as honor, dignity, boldness, friendship, life.

Kalmykia has had a difficult history. After the October revolution of 1917 the Kalmyks received national autonomy (1920, 1935) which was liquidated in 1943 and restored in 1958. Today the Republic of Kalmykia is a part of the Russian Federation. (Kalmyk President Iliumzinov is also President of the International Chess Federation.)

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KALMYK ODYSSEY

The Kalmyks-Oyrats came to Russia twice. At first the Oyrats, a west Mongolian nation, came with Genghis Khan. One of my colleagues says that Genghis Khan was the first Russian Emperor because the territory of his Empire was enormous – it spread from Japan up to Hungary. The influence of one culture on another culture is estimated differently and is dependent on the point of view. This question is a difficult and debatable problem. The influence of the Mongols on Russian culture is estimated in Russian historiography negatively. On the contrary, the Eurasian theory estimates the influence of the Mongols on the culture of Russia positively, opposite to official Russian historiography². In this case we have a question pertaining to the belonging of Russia to Europe. According to the founders of Eurasianism Russian culture was a non-European phenomenon, presenting an original combination of Western and Eastern features. Russian culture belongs to both East and West, and, at the same time, can be reduced neither to the former nor to the latter. Russian culture is a unique civilization summarizing the experience of the West and also of the East. The Russian people must be viewed as a fully original Eurasian, ethnic community. The Eurasian concept was used for ideological goals by Russian emigrants after October revolution. By the end of the last century, non-Russian ethnic nationalist movements paid attention to the Eurasian theory

² N.S. Trubetskoy, P.N. Savitsky, G.V. Florovsky, G.V. Vernadsky, N.N. Alekseev, V.N. Ilin.

in emigration. The Fate of Eurasian theory and ideology in the last century and today is described by V.Shnirelman³.

The second time the Kalmyks came to Russia was in the 17th century. They were separated from the Oyrats of Jungaria at the beginning of the 17th century. They moved into the area between the Volga and Don rivers to the North Caspian Sea region. From this moment began the experience of a collision of two cultures⁴. The Kalmyks established their own state, the Kalmyk Khanate, that was part of the Russian Empire. The Empire used Kalmyks to protect the eastern boundary of the Empire in the Volga region. They were born soldiers. The Kalmyks agreed to be a boundary army *saha ulus*. The Kalmyks had a large influence on political processes occurring in the area of the Caspian Sea and Northern Caucasus. The southern border of the Russian state (A. Solzenicyn called it the “soft underbelly”) was defenseless. The Kalmyks were useful to the Russian state because they were a strategic ally on this major direction of geopolitical interests. It was important for the Russian government that the Kalmyks were Buddhist instead of Muslims, as were the other peoples surrounding Russia. The Kalmyks had a national sovereign – the Kalmyk Khanate. It was liquidated in the end of the 18th century when two thirds of the Kalmyks and the Kalmyk Khan Ubushi migrated to Jungaria.

During World War II, the Soviets and the Germans both tried to enlist the support of the Kalmyk people. Although the majority of Kalmyks battled for the motherland, the Germans also tried to organize the Kalmyk horse corps⁵. The Kalmyks were accused of collaborating with Nazi Germany. Because of their questionable loyalty, the Soviets deported the entire Kalmyk population to Siberia on December 28, 1943. Half of the people died on the way or upon arrival in Siberia. All Kalmyk soldiers were removed from the front and were sent to camps of the gulag. The problem of collaboration against the Soviet Union was traumatic, for Kalmyks had raised a question about Kalmyk identity. The Kalmyks had considered themselves Soviet citizens and fighters with the Soviet authority and were confused by their apparent rejection. The Kalmyks lived in Siberia for 13 years. Thanks to Nikita Khrushchev, Kalmyks returned to Kalmykia in 1956. The trauma of deportation was ignored for a long time. The Kalmyks did

³ Victor Shnirelman, “The Fate of Empire and Eurasian Federalism: A Discussion between the Eurasianists and their Opponents in the 1920s”, *Inner Asia*, 3, (2001), p. 153-173.

⁴ M. Chodarkovsky. *Where Two Worlds Met. The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads, 1600-1771*. Cornell University Press, 1992; M. Chodarkovsky. *Russia's Steppe Frontier. The making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800*. Indiana University press, 2002; P.Rubel. *The Kalmyk Mongols. A study in Continuity and Change*. Indiana University, Bloomington, 1967. Fred Edelman. *Kalmyk cultural renewal*. F.Edelman. Dissertation on Antropology. 1960.

⁵ J.Otto Pohl, “Stalin’s Genocide against the Repressed Peoples,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, (2000), 2 (2), 267-293.

not discuss this painful theme, even though during the deportation Kalmyks lost half of their population.

VARIETY OF IMAGES OF THE KALMYKS IN RUSSIAN CULTURE

The Russian Empire carried out colonization using different methods than the British. The Russian Empire has never been a metropolis with colonies. Russia was made up of, or to use the terms of Russian philosophers and historians, was a collection (S. Solovjev) of different peoples. The phenomenon of voluntary collection was rather widespread in the experience of Russian colonization. Voluntariness wasn't a "vegetarian dish" (E. Gellner), because the minority was forced into action by the powerful states. Images of Kalmyks depend on who is creating the image and what they want to show. There were the ethnographers, members of the missionary and also "the State people", who collected and described the facts about other cultures. One of them was G.F. Miller. The collision between Russian and Kalmyk cultures during the shaping of the Russian Empire is suggested for analyzing the methodology of social constructivism (P. Berger, T. Luckmann), revealing social construction and poststructuralism (P. Bourdieu). These were created by professionals of representations (P. Bourdieu). Such created semantic constructions are real only if accepted by the majority ethnicity (P. Bourdieu); the reception is successful if the construction corresponds to the spontaneous images of other people.

The interaction of settled and nomadic cultures came into conflict by reason of land resources, because settled people need development tillage and nomadic people need pastures. The historical sources of the period of the Russian empire evidence conflicts caused by the robberies and ruin of Russian settlements.⁶ This is the description of the Siberian archives collected by Miller during his ten years' travel in Siberia. The Miller documents described the conflicting relationship between the settled and nomadic peoples, who robbed and ruined the Russian settlements. The description is not true to the reality carried out by the professionals of representations. It is based on the image of nomads as enemies. In this case a construction of the first order exists. The Russian peasants used various indicators to distinguish ethnicity among the nomads. They recognized a nomadic ethnicity not according to external shape or clothes but according to territorial habits, attitude to murders during attacks and capture in captivity⁷. The Kalmyks stole cattle but never killed and did not take other ethnicities into captivity. This fact can be explained from distinctions in religion that legitimized

⁶ *Act sources of History of Siberia* in the G.F. Miller's Foundation. Novosibirsk, 1993; *Samarskij Region s drevnosti do XIX veka*. Samara: Samara State University, 2000.

⁷ The Russian Archive of the ancient acts. F. 248. D. 8. D. 478, p.134.

murder. As Buddhists the Kalmyks considered that murder is possible only during wars.

The attitude of the Russian administration towards the nomads is expressed through the documents described by Miller. The administration was guided by a task of expansion of imperial influence. The selection of the facts in the written documents is based on this intention and testifies to construction of a reality which satisfies the purpose of Empire. The Miller documents express at first, an aspiration of the Kalmyks to establish diplomatic relations with Russia, secondly, the attitude of the Russian administration to the Kalmyks, thirdly, connecting the Kalmyks with other peoples of Siberia.

The creation of the construction, in this case, was carried out to realize a task, namely to establish the Empire's acceptable relations with Non-Russian peoples. The mutual interest of the Russian government and the Kalmyk elite was congruent in this case. The Russian state got the Kalmyk's soldiers who carried out boundary service and participated in the military campaigns of Russia. The Kalmyks received the possibility of moving, beginning from Samara up to Astrakhan. Later the professionals of representations created the Kalmyk's image of a fighter defending the frontiers of Empire. The Russian state got the Kalmyk's soldiers who carried out boundary service and participated in the military campaigns of Russia. It was a positive image. This positive construction was submitted in the book *The Military Past of Our Kalmyks* by G.N. Prozritelev. He was a historian and public figure. Prozritelev reconstructed an image of the soldier defending the frontiers of the Empire and tried to comprehend the reasons which resulted in the transformation of this image to the image of the ingenuous cattle-stealer and the drunkard⁸. The ethnologic field has various positions where images of other peoples are 'designed'.

A completely different position was held by the Russian Orthodox clergy. They created semantic constructions of the other sort, which were submitted in the reports of Russian Orthodox Church missions and also in the bishopric sheets. The trip into the other religion was a question concerning an orthodox faith for missionaries. The conversion of Kalmyks to the Russian Orthodox Church was some measure of their civilization and was used in designing an image of the Kalmyk. So The Astrakhan bishopric's papers describe an image of the Kalmyks before their entry into the Russian Empire. The Kalmyks knew neither honour, nor morals, but only spoilage in their opinion⁹. The mass communications proved the importance of Christianity as a process of the Kalmyk's civilization. For another thing, the *Don* newspaper (1876) recommended the founding of a special administration, development of industry, irrigation, etc.

The semantic constructions of travel articles were formed by travelers in a context of transformation of the nomadic Kalmyks' culture into a

⁸ G.N. Prozritelev. *Voennoje proshloe naschikh Kalmyk*. Stavropol, 1912.

⁹ The Astrakhan bishopric sheets. 1881, № 10.

settled culture. N. Nefedov, in the early days, drew an image of the Kalmyk after the watering of their cattle as remaining the rest of the day in perfect idleness: "Smoking tobacco and wandering to neighbors' tents in hope of finding somewhere meat or vodka...So passes the life of these people, all raised alien."¹⁰ Later, a positive image was formed by writers in a context of transformation of the nomadic Kalmyks' culture into a settled culture. Prince Serbejab Tiumen and his brother, heroes of the War of 1812, were the ideal positive images of the civilized Kalmyk¹¹. They had a beautiful European house, an orchestra of good musicians and a kitchen of excellent cooks. Their lifestyle was like that of a rich Russian landowner. They encouraged the Kalmyks to keep their national identity by accepting the achievements of the European and Russian cultures. They understood that in conditions of expansion of economic activity and the Russian practice of cattle breeding, the nomadic ways were doomed, and they tried to teach the Kalmyks other forms of managing – agriculture, fishing, crafts and so forth.

The strongest symbol of the Kalmyks' activities in multicultural space was the Buddhist temple. It was dedicated to the victory of the War of 1812. Unique in its appearance, Tiumen wanted to connect the European, Russian and Kalmyk cultures in architecture. The temple was constructed according to canons of Buddhist architecture. At the same time it had some of the elements of the Russian Orthodox Church architecture such as the Kazansky Cathedral. The Russian architect, Voronochin, also borrowed some elements of the Catholic Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome.

Later the ethnographic experience of the cultures' collision found very different images of the Kalmyks – "The Kalmyks are people tall and beautiful...it is necessary to look at the son of steppes in his original costume, on national games, at struggle...to admire the excellently outlined forms of the fighter and his body"¹². Ethnographic-made constructions were based on a principle of values of the other's culture and, whenever possible, tried to avoid the kind of imaginary construction which the Christian missionaries often undertook. Thus the images of the Kalmyks differ depending on the purposes of the professional representations and are formed with the images which have spontaneously formed in the area of cultural collision.

THE SOVIET PERIOD OF KALMYK DEVELOPMENT

The problem of the Soviet culture and Soviet people is very interesting to study in this context. The classics of Greek antiquity spoke of the past as not present, no less than future: there is only the present concerning which they exist. History is made by the people in the present and

¹⁰ N. Nefed'ev. *Podrobnia svedeniia o Volzhskikh Kalmykakh*, St. Petersburg, 1834, № 5, 6, pp. 311-312.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

¹² Pavel I.Nebol'sin. *Ocherki byta Kalmykov Khoscheutovskogo Ulusa*. St. Petersburg, Karla Kraiia, 1853.

grows out of designing events, facts, which were projected back into the past. Is it possible to trust in such a case to ‘memoirs’? It is more important for our present, than for the description, and can be the justification of the past. I suggest calling it ‘*aoristodicy*’¹³ – justifying the past. I believe that it is necessary for the definition of identity of the human person, group, and people in modern Russia. As far as the theology of the 12th century was concerned, it was urgent in the justification of God (“theodicy”). An explanation of the presence of evil in the world is also urgent, I suppose, nowadays for Russians, and for the intellectual elite, a justification of the Soviet past.

Modern Russia is the successor to Soviet Modern society. Soviet Modern was a great social project. The purpose of this project was to create a society without social distinctions, including ethnicity. One of the goals was the creation of a united international community – the Soviet people – which was to be a multicultural community. The phenomenon of the Soviet people cannot be estimated unequivocally, positively or negatively. The purpose of ethnic politics of the Russian Empire was assimilation of the ethnics and finally ‘russification’. The purpose of the ethnic policy of the Soviet State was the creation of such a community which would have multicultural aspects. That was coordinated with the tendency of the globalisation of the contemporary world. Unfortunately, construction of the modern society was carried out through the oppression of minorities in the Soviet Union. Although the project of modern Soviet society was formulated by the so-called Enlightenment, in the end it was carried out by a totalitarian State. M. Foucault had described a process of creation of modern society in Europe in the period of the classical epoch. This process was carried out through repressive practices. This process was finished by the creation of a disciplinary society. It was a prerequisite for a grounded, responsible civil society.

The Kalmyks have felt the full effect of the repressive practices of the Soviet state. The Kalmyk culture has endured large losses as a result of reprisals – in the arts, sciences and Buddhist religion. Buddhism carried out ontological functions and ensured maintenance of the common life of the Kalmyks. They have seen their population cut in half by the liquidation of the Kalmykia and the deportation of its people to Siberia. The administrative/territorial division of the Soviet State changed after the deportation of the Kalmyks and other nations: this became one of the reasons for inter-ethnic tension in contemporary Russia. Russia has inherited this unsolved national problem from the Soviet Union. The formation of tolerance in the inter-ethnic relations is one of important tasks of Russian society. The experience of racial and ethnic problems in the USA and the policies developed to solve them would be helpful for Russia.

¹³ ‘ἀορίστος’ in Ancient Greek signifies an occurrence which happened in the past; accordingly ‘*aoristodicy*’ means *justification of the past*.

On the other hand, there are some positive aspects of the construction of a modern society. The creation of national cultural elite, the formation of institutes of science and a strong educational system are all successes of modern Soviet society. Minority groups developed a culture, art, literature, and its children were well-educated. Thus is realized the inclusion of Russia's ethnics in the process of world history. By the way the official of the doctrine, Narkompros (Ministry of Education), was an adaptation of methods propagandized by philosopher, John Dewey. For the period from 1917 until 1927, five of his books were translated into Russian¹⁴.

KALMYK RELIGION

The culture of the Kalmyks is Buddhist by origin¹⁵. Western Mongols – Oyrats accepted the Karma Kagyu tradition in the 13th century. The Kalmyks accepted the tradition Gelug (yellow hat order) in the 16th century, brought by the mission of Zaja Pandita who created Kalmyk literature. Despite a dominance of the Gelugpa school among Kalmyks, they have accepted also some ceremonies of traditions Karma-Kagyu, Nyingma[pa], and Sakya[pa]. So since the 17th century Buddhism has existed in Russia. Buddhism had a significant influence on the traditional culture of the Buryats, Kalmyks, Altai, Tuvans, on the folk rituals of the life cycle (weddings, births, funerals), on calendrical holidays, and on folk medicine. It has influenced the formation and development of philosophical thought, the norms of moral behavior, medicine, and chrono-biology.¹⁶ The Russian researcher, N.L. Zhukovskaia, wrote that Tibetan Buddhism, like the other forms of Buddhism, features fundamental concepts: *samsara[sansara]* and *nirvana* (their opposition and identity); life as a form of suffering, the path to salvation and enlightenment, *kalachakra*, *bhava-chakra* (“Wheel of Life”), *mandala*, psychological training according to the yoga system, the practice of meditation. It is predicated on the transfer of esoteric knowledge directly from teacher to student by way of personal transmission. At the same time, some aspects are accented in their own particular way¹⁷.

According to Tibetan Buddhism, the path to enlightenment is offered by the *tantra*. The esoteric religious practice of monks includes the methods of tantra. The Gelugpa school specifies a distinction of the rituality of ordinary people and the esoteric practice of monks. “Salvation” from the suffering of *sansara* is guided by a *lama* for believers. Personal moral-psychological self-perfection is most importance for believers. It is accomp-

¹⁴ Alexander Etkind, *Interpretation of the travel. Russia and America in travels and contexts*. Moscow, 2001.

¹⁵ Walther Heissig, *The Religions of Mongolia*. London: Kegan Paul, 2000.

¹⁶ L.L. Abaeva, “Lamaism in Buryatia,” *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, vol. 39, no. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 20–22.

¹⁷ N.L. Zhukovskaia, “Lamaism,” *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, vol. 39, no. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 10–14.

lished through tantric practice, yoga meditation, and other methods. The teacher-*lama* is able to indicate what appropriate practice should be followed. Tantric esoteric technique and practice were passed on primarily in oral form from teacher to student. The philosophy and moral teachings of Tibetan Buddhism in particular is emphasized by way of the “Wheel of Life” (the *bhava-chakra*). This practice of meditation emphasizes the role of the *mandala*. Specifically Tibetan Buddhism gave rise to the institution of “living gods,” a formula that does not exist in other forms of Buddhism. The concept emphasizes the rebirth and incarnation of the gods’ pantheon into the bodies of real human persons (Tulku, Khubilgan, Gegen, and Khutukhta).

The head of Kalmyk Buddhism was chosen by the Russian Emperor and was called the *Lama* of the Kalmyk people. His residence was in the city of Astrakhan. He was absolutely independent from the Mongol Bandido Hambo-Lama. Before the October revolution in Kalmykia, there were 105 temples and monasteries (*khuruls*), with 5200 monks.¹⁸ All of them were destroyed during the Soviet era. There remain only the ruins of Khoscheutov *churul* near Astrakhan¹⁹. Today the head of the Buddhists of Gelugpa in Kalmykia is the Shadzhin-Lama, Telo Tulku Rinpoche, who was elected to this position in 1991. Incidentally, he came from the ranks of the American Kalmyks. His residence is the Geden Sheddup Choi Corling Monastery in Elista, capital of the Republic of Kalmykia.

Religious Identity

R. Schreiter²⁰ examines three types of formation of religious identity of Christians: through resistance, through hybridity, through hierarchy. What type of religious identity have traditional Buddhists in Russia? I suppose the Buddhist identity of the traditional Buddhist in Russia was formed with different factors and according to these factors, has belonged to one or another type of identity. The Buddhist identity of traditional Buddhists should be considered influenced by Marxist, Christian and Shamanist factors. Marxism, the pillar of Soviet ideology, was ingrained into the Soviet mentality for 70 years. It carried out the same ideological functions as did religion. It was religion without the idea of God. Marxism had the doctrinal system, some rituals and ceremonies, for example, the ritual of the Communist party meetings. The disruption of Marxism has led to disruption of the main values of the Russian society. Certainly the resultant lacunae were immediately filled in by the various religions. The early 1990s was a period of religious boom in Russia. To Russia came members of missionary groups from many different denominations.

¹⁸ Alexander Bersin. *History of Buddhism in Russia*. Moscow, 1991.

¹⁹ E.Bakaeva. *Buddhism in Kalmykia*. Elista, 1994.

²⁰ Robert Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: theology between the global and the local*, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997, 62-83.

Christianity and Buddhism

Russian orthodox culture has strongly influenced people traditionally adhering to Buddhism. For more than four centuries the traditional Buddhists of Russia lived inside Russian orthodox culture. Close contacts to Russians changed the traditional Buddhists habitués, and their categories of perception (Bourdieu). This influence can be seen in funeral rites of the traditional Buddhists. According to Buddhist representations, the consciousness is reborn according to its karma within 49 days after death. “Everyone dies, but no one is dead” (Tibetan saying). In centuries past, it wasn’t accepted for Buddhists to go to a cemetery in order to care for the graves of passed loved ones. Today traditional Buddhists borrow Orthodox customs to remember the dead in cemeteries, and share the custom of eating and drinking near a family member’s grave during celebration times.

Before the October revolution traditional Buddhists never celebrated birthdays. For example, they celebrated Zul (the Buddhist sage Tsonkapha’s festival day) as the official birth date for every person born in the same year. The Buddhist view of the Ultimate, its view of the nothingness, the idea of the emptiness of the consciousness, are super-rational doctrines in the eyes of ordinary people. Buddhists’ statements about absolute nothingness should be interpreted existentially²¹. Unfortunately, this doctrine is inaccessible for ordinary people. It is unlikely that they mention the Four Noble Truths in daily practice and prayers. However they are guided by ethical norms of the Eightfold Path: right knowledge, aspiration, speech, behavior, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and absorption.

Values of the common life of the traditional Buddhists (Russian, too) are centered on individual benefits, such as health and wealth. Desire for personal gain is at the center of an individual’s life-world. People rarely consider the transience of personal goods. The idea of nirvana as the highest destiny of the human spirit is too abstract for ordinary people. The idea about the Ultimate in the consciousness of traditional uneducated Buddhists is similar to the Christian idea of God.

The relationship between Orthodoxy and Buddhism had two periods. The first is before the October revolution. For centuries the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state tried to convert *inorodzev* (ethnic minorities). The attempt to convert the Kalmyks had some features which were determined by the political independence of Kalmyks.²² Christianization of nomads was carried out by the Russian government for their transformation into loyal citizens and reliable defenders of the Empire’s boundaries. In accepting Christianity, Kalmyks pursued also a political purpose. Kalmyk

²¹ M. John Farelly, *Belief in God in Our Time* (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota), 1992, p. 283.

²² Mikhael Khodarkovsky, “The Orthodox Church, Lamaism, and Shamanism”, *Of Religion and Empire: missions, conversion, and tolerance in Tsarist Russia*. Cornell University Press, 2001, pp. 215-218.

nobles used this resource for a personal eminence in order to separate themselves from the authority of the Kalmyk Khan. One of the grandsons of Ayuki Khan was baptized by Peter the First and his wife baptized by Empress Anna.²³ The fortress of Stavropol on the Volga (today Tol'iatti) was established for baptizing Kalmyks. The plebians were sometimes led into Christianity by the prince. And sometimes runaway Kalmyk vassals escaped thus from their princes. The Russian Orthodox could not execute those Kalmyks who practiced Buddhism.

The culture of ethnic minorities like Kalmyks was influenced by the Russian culture.

The second period was after the October Revolution. During the Soviet era the situation changed. Both religions were destroyed. However, part of the Orthodox churches was kept. Buddhist temples in Kalmykia, Tuva and on Altai were destroyed. Only in Buryatiya were two monasteries preserved. After Kalmyk deportation the Kalmyk officials and scientists were afraid to recognize Buddhism in Kalmykia. They declared that Buddhism had not existed in Kalmykia.

Shamanism and Buddhism

The characteristic feature of Tibetan Buddhism is its syncretism with shamanism and earlier forms of religious concepts among Kalmyks, Buryats, Tuvans. Tibetan Buddhism in Russia interacted historically with an older folk religion like shamanism. The Buddhist notions coexisted and coexist peacefully with them. The Buddhist dogmas combine often with the shamanist cults.²⁴ The modern Buddhist identity is influenced by shamanism. The strong shaman tradition for a long time existed in Buryatiya, Altai, Tuva. Today shamanism is admitted by officials affiliated with religions in these republics and there are associations of shamans²⁵.

The situation in Kalmykia is different. Shamanism isn't an officially recognized religion. There is only the shaman tradition of the treatment of ill people, the people who treat sick people are called *boe*. New *boes* are named by old, skilled *boes*. They often have a gift of prophecy. The ability to treat arises in them spontaneously. As a rule, *boe* are ill or have had health problems previously.

Their methods of treatment are associated with the application of herbs, acupuncture and so forth. They associate the appearance of sickness in people with the actions of evil beings. Methods of treatment are based on notions of the soul, the causes of illnesses. Some illness is conceptualized

²³ Yuri Smirnov. *Orenburgskaja expeditija i prisoedinenie Volzskogo regiona k Rossii*. Samara, 1997. P.78-80.

²⁴ Vladimir Basilov, N.L. Zhukovskaia, "Religious Beliefs," *Nomads of Eurasia*, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 1989, p.175.

²⁵ Sergey Filatov, "Altai Burkhanism," *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, vol. 39, no. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 85-86.

by them as a result of the soul's leaving the body. Shamans are able to determine this and to see it happening. Shamans can return a soul that has left (or been stolen). Another method of treating an ill person is the replacement of a person by an effigy. It helps to destroy an evil spirit's designs. In treatment they use the mantras adapted for the Kalmyk language. They also have a Buddhist altar including some Orthodox icons. Shamans use Orthodox icons and prayers for treatment of Russian sick people. Buddhist lamas do not approve of *boes* taking money for their treatment. Lamas think that *boe* were lamas in their last life, and therefore they recognize the mantras.

The specific features of the Kalmyk Buddhism were shaped by contact with pre-Buddhist religious practice. This was manifested in nature and ancestor cults, and in shamanism. The Buddhist pantheon, in its national-local variants, was completed by personages of the Kalmyk mythology. The Kalmyk Tsagan Ebugen (Ava) is the White Old Man, who is a deity in the pan-Mongol pantheon²⁶. Tsagan Ebugen is the "patron saint" of longevity, wealth, and fertility. Now Tsagan Ebugen has his own icon, made in the style of the traditional Buddhist iconography.

Thus religious identity of traditional Buddhist in Russia could be defined by different types of identity and is a mixed identity today.

Buddhist Practice. At the present time only six great khurals [services] are celebrated in Buddhist monasteries in Russia: Saagalgan, Tsagan Sar (the New Year), Duinkhor (the turning of the Wheel of Dharma, the Buddha begins the preaching of his teachings), the birth, enlightenment, and Parinirvana of the Buddha, Maidari (the awaiting of the coming of Maitreya, the Buddha of the next world age), Lhabab-Duisen (the descent of the Buddha from the Tushita Heaven), and Zul (the day in memory of Tsongkhapa). During the morning service there are some rites. Usually people put in a request for a prayer to overcome evil spirits, for commemoration, for the prolongation of life every 12 years, for protection against envy, evil tongue, for prayer of prosperity and happiness. "*nasn utlkh*" – the life prolongation, "*khar kel utkh*" – against bad words, "*zydnya chyary*" – against bad dreams, "*serzm*" – to get over any obstacles, "*ioryal*" – a 'light' memorial for the dead people and certainly there are some "*mazk*" days: they are special days when everything (bad and good thoughts and actions) multiply thousands of times. On these days there are some special ceremonies.

An adult has a set of prayer beads (*erkh*). The texts of the prayers are not long and of various content. "*Om mani padme hum.*" Ordinary Buddhists think that if they recite 100 prayers during the day no evil will touch them. The old people prepare thus an easy death for themselves. The fundamental ideas of Lamaism are kept in special religious literature. The principal canonic literature among Lamaists is the *Ganjur* ("Translation of Ordinances") and the *Danjur* ("Translation of Teachings"). Ordinary people

²⁶ N.L. Zhukovskaia, *ibid.*, p.13.

don't know the canonical and religious literature. They do not have any canon such as the Bible for Christians. The Kalmyks have a "family altar" with a wide selection of ceremonial objects. Such items are often used to invoke various protectors, and domestic deities. Obligatory in this respect is invocation of the White Old Man – *Tsagan Ebugen*.

ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE FORMER SOVIET SOCIETY

The problems of ethnic existence in the context of globalization are urgent not only in respect to political interests, but also because of the pertinence for personal identity. Will globalization lead to a new cosmopolitanism? Shall ethics survive in this new world? Identity and ethnic identity, in particular, are not reduced to verbal designations and mean several practices – bodily, behavior practice, etc. Identity is manifested not so much in saying "I am Kalmyk" but through work, leisure, eating, dwelling, choosing the wife or husband, organizing a wedding... (N. Kozlova). Ethnic history is incorporated in the human person who preserves his ethnic identity. His ethnic belonging predetermines his manner of thinking and speaking. Bodily practices, concerning which M. Moss wrote, continue to play an important role in cultural identity. Enforcement of social structures is defined in sociology by the concept of '*habitués*' (P. Bourdieu) which at the same time designate a system of organizing principles of action inducing different practices.

Today minorities have lost their ethnic languages. Language is a very important way of retaining ethnic identity. There is a point of view that loss of a language means disappearance of ethnos. My point of view is that preservation of ethnics is possible. Ethnic identity can be analyzed from the position – concept of habitués. In this case the situation of loss by the ethnics of their native language is not dramatic for preservation of the Kalmyks' ethnicity. Already at least a third of the Kalmyks do not use their native language but instead the Russian language. But the Kalmyks have their identity and Kalmyk is Kalmyk in America, also. Ethnic identity is proclaimed among young Kalmyks so actively that it leads to funny things. For example, when a young Kalmyk is in a multicultural environment, to show his native language he will say that at least he remembers how to count in Kalmyk.

Another way to perpetuate ethnic identity is the preservation and reproduction of a national cultural elite carrying out the function of 'professional' representations. Besides the preservation of the typical categories of perception, the behavior scheme will allow the Kalmyks to exist as an ethnicity.

Language as Symbol: Ethnic Identity and Russian Language

Kalmyks personify themselves as an intercultural interaction of Russian and Kalmyk culture. For many Kalmyks the Russian language is

the native language. The Russian culture existed as a galaxy of cultures of hundreds of ethnicities for centuries, living side by side in the Eurasian space. One part of Russian culture is a culture of Russian-speaking peoples which are heterogeneous, (*tchusekrovzi*) non-Russian, culture of other peoples, lands, cosmos and ethnics²⁷. The Russian-speaking civilization is obliged to profess a utopian brotherhood of nations. It was the great social engineering project of a new society. The role of the phenomenon of a Russian-speaking civilization is not realized by the researchers in Russia to the full. This civilization has appeared with meanings formed in the dialogue of Russian culture and ethnic cultures. V. Tischkov, Director of Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology, holds that “the Russian language is the cultural property and capital of not only Russians but also the Mordovians, Udmurts, Chuvash, Buryat and many others”²⁸.

At the same time ethnic language is a very important resource for ethnic identity. The language is changing the performance of this role. It would seem that ethnic culture cannot exist beyond the language environment, and that the preservation of culture requires preservation of language. The native language can be used as a symbolic resource of ethnic identity even under the conditions of losing it. It is revealed due to language loyalty. By recognizing the native language of one's ethnic, one asserts ethnic identity. Thus speaking ethnic language is not obligatory. Social linguists say the Kalmyks' level of language loyalty exceeds 90 percent. Actually, Kalmyk language is spoken sometimes less. The comparison of results of the two last census-periods shows that speaking Kalmyk language has decreased by more than seven percent from 1989 through 2002, and, on the contrary, speaking Russian has grown almost by six percent.

Biculturalism which is peculiar to the minor ethnics of the former Soviet Union, is a special case of the bilingualism which was a consequence of the national policy of the State. Accordingly members of ethnic groups were compelled to develop appropriate strategy and the practice to survive. Since the 1920s the Soviet authority pursued the policy national-cultural autonomy which provided creation of the culture that is national in its form and socialist in its content. In Kalmykia newspapers, magazines and books were issued in ethnic language and teaching the native language in elementary schools. However this policy was dual in the same period (in the 20s-30s), and the process of replacement of Kalmyk language by Russian began in earnest²⁹.

The deportation and repression which destroyed the national elite played a role in the replacement of Kalmyk language from the culture and common life of the Kalmyks. I would like to disagree with the opinion that

²⁷ G. Gatchev. *Russkaja mysl'. Portraity Russkikh myslitelej*. Moscow, 1991, p.145.

²⁸ V. Tischkov. *Language, alphabet, and policy*. Moscow, 2005, p.224.

²⁹ E. Gutchinova. *Kalmyk Republic: the Model of ethnology monitoring*. Moscow, 1997.

it is unjustified to plead the influence of the thirteen-year exile of the Kalmyks in Siberia as the principal cause for the sorry state of the Kalmyk language today³⁰. Deported people tried to adapt to severe constraints and to keep themselves as ethnic. One of the ways of adaptation was speaking Russian, the knowledge of which was considered prestigious among the Kalmyks. The tragic experience of a survival of the Kalmyks under extreme conditions is embodied in names and patronymics of children now in their 40s and 50s, many of whom have two names – Russian and Kalmyk and a patronymic written with the Russian name of the father. There were cases when children born in deportation carried the Russian name of the father, and children born after the Decree of 1956 were already called by the Kalmyk name of the father. The ignorant people believed that children were born from different marriages of the mother. Thus, the replacement of the Kalmyk language was predetermined by various reasons, both objective, and subjective.

Ethnicity is real as far as it is admitted as ‘objective’ in the consciousness of the people belonging to the ethnic group. When B. Anderson writes about imagined communities, he means symbolical resources allowing community to exist. Community is imagined as the members, even of the minor nation, will never know the majority of the nation members, meet them, or even hear about them, while in the minds of each of them the image of their commonality exists³¹. The language loyalty is an expression of recognition by the community members of such a ‘commonality’ image. Anderson means the imagined community supported by symbolical resources but not imagined as falsified as it is understood by E. Gellner. B. Anderson specifies that Gellner is too anxious to show that nationalism is covered with a mask of false claims instead of a movement from imagination to creation³². The essential distinction between Anderson and Gellner consists in that for Gellner nations are artificially created formations which do not have connection to the reality of daily experience, while Anderson emphasizes only the moment of creative unity of the people incorporated in community (which each time proves to be true in their experience of daily communication).

From my point of view an ethnic aspiring for self-preservation and development of ethnic culture in fact forms other mechanisms replacing the real function of ethnic language, for example, symbolic use of ethnic language in theatrical performances intended for people not knowing their native ethnic language. The question is how to produce and in what language to perform the plays of European playwrights at national theatres, in this case the play “Scopin’s Tricks” by Moliere is referred to the category of

³⁰ Elena Remilev, “Why the Kalmyks Do Not Speak Their Own Language”, *Mongolian Studies*, vol. 37 for 2, 3-2004, p. 29.

³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983, p. 31.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

questions about an establishment of sense, about a system of interpretation and a revealing of motives offering to us this or that interpretation. Russian oriental theatres use the device of wearing national clothes to create national environment in the performance of the European classical plays. Theatrical criticism has reacted to such liberties ambiguously, part of them categorically insisting on the necessity of preserving authenticity in the production of the plays of the European playwrights. Russian producers explain similar “changing clothes” in the play, firstly, by the weakness of national dramatic art, absence of worthy plays; and secondly, that it is easier for national actors to play in conditions of native environment. The practice of adapting the plays by European playwrights to realities of ethnic cultures is widespread today.

However this problem has deeper roots than the national producers think. They intuitively understand the impossibility of adequately expressing senses of the West-European theatrical classics by means of national oriental theatre. At the national theatre of Kalmykia, director B. Manjev produced the play by Moliere written in the genre of a *commedia del'arte*, in which the action was transferred by the director to oriental culture. The actors played in Kalmyk. Thus the director intentionally represented oriental culture as some cultural cocktail whipped from components of the Chinese, Japanese, Mongolian, Kalmyk cultures. What was such a cultural monster as oriental culture for him? What did he want to achieve? Probably, due to this plan the director had an opportunity to create an interpretation system of play senses which actually occurred in Naples. The translation of the play into Kalmyk language meant the change of language alongside with change of senses incorporated in the play as languages of traditional cultures have no sufficient resources for expressing senses of the European culture. To whom is the play by Moliere when performed in Kalmyk language addressed? Who is its recipient? Is it addressed to the spectator speaking only Russian, or, to the spectator personifying intercultural interaction itself, speaking two languages and thus on the boundary of two cultures? How and what do these spectators perceive during the performance? One thing is: if the spectator speaks only one language, then those senses, which are designed in the translation of universal notions in the European culture into national culture, are unambiguously interpreted due to the existing cultural background. The interpreter of the play and the director, establishing the sense-bases of the play, recognize that there is a uniform basis for unambiguously establishing senses. The right of interpretation in this case is given to the interpreter at the beginning, then to the director of the play. If the spectator did not speak Russian he simply would not know other senses and could not make a reduction of senses to the authentic senses given by cultural universal notions.

The other point is that the bicultural spectator, speaking two languages, becomes familiar with universal notions of the European culture and this creates an opportunity and gives him the right to interpret himself the senses incorporated into the performance. Thus it is important that the

spectator actually perceive cultural universal notions transferred into Russian culture and presented no longer in French but rather in a Russian ambience. Another matter concerns the Russian-speaking Kalmyk not speaking his ethnic language; for him such a performance is a symbolical act of confidence in his ethnic identity. Thus the loss or change of language does not necessarily mean the loss of ethnic identity and the disappearance of his ethnicity.

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CHAPTER XV

CULTURE AND DEMOCRACY IN GEORGIA

PAATA CHKHEIDZE

INTRODUCTION

It is possible to imagine the whole and its parts separately, but it is unimaginable not to feel regret were they to be forever separated. For the whole feels its parts and the parts sense the whole.

To break a rock or cut down a tree with its branches not only causes sorrow in the heart of an observer, but leaves an internal aspiration to return to the initial state. Every broken or separated whole seeks to be united, to be the whole, consisting of parts.

Spontaneously or artificially separated parts of the whole will never become the same whole it was before. To become the whole a thing or event loses its essence and quality and appears as an essentially new creature. That is why the part insists on returning to the whole or becoming part of the unity.

In our case, the whole and its parts are a firm historical and traditional union. If something threatens it, if the whole cannot stand its parts any more, or if the parts lose the feeling of wholeness or some other forces from outside destroy it, then everything is ruined and vanished. There is no whole and no parts, there is no essence and form, what is, lacks form and meaning.¹

Georgia regained independence in the end of the twentieth century, but it still has very serious problems in founding a free, united and strong state. The reasons which cause these problems are deeply rooted in the political history of Georgia and the recent political or geopolitical process in Caucasia and the Near East. The territorial disintegration of Georgia is one of the issues of these processes. This is one of the curious cases of the modern history of the region when everybody knows where the key for this political crises lies and that it can be and should be solved, but resolution is permanently delayed. Also the internal political and cultural disintegration of the nation prevents its unification and causes the crises of its parts.

Georgian writers and philosophers often compare the Georgian nation to a castle or temple situated on the top of a hill. God will settle there, the temple will be continuously open to the divine world due to its

¹ Geronti Kikodze, a Georgian philosopher of the first part of 20th century, wrote interesting essays about "National Energy" where he claims importance of Holism for the survival and future development of the Georgian nation and culture. *Letters, Essays, Sketches*, Tbilisi, 1985, (in Georgian)

position, beauty and value, and invite God in.² But, unfortunately, the Georgian nation is compared to a destroyed temple, whose dome has crumbled and whose walls are cracked. Such a temple cannot open its divine world and invite God to come and settle there.

The aim of Georgians today is to revive and consolidate the temple. Georgia has been trying to revolt for two hundred years and today, revolted and independent, it wants to become whole. Any means is good that raises up the nation to achieve its aim of freedom, but even in these conditions there exist ways or rules for playing the game.³ Today, with different rules from Machiavelli's time, there is international cooperation and therefore changed international rules of play. So in the process of the unification of the nation, and the building of the state, there emerges the eternal question of being in a certain and acknowledged way of not being.

AMIRAN

The main symbol of Georgian national culture is Amiran, Amiran is the name of the Georgian, Caucasian Prometheus⁴ punished and chained to a rock by the pagan idol. But the Georgian Prometheus (Amiran) had not stolen fire from Zeus and had never appealed to people to rebel; he and his two brothers are personal fighters against evil, dragons and giants and helpers of the oppressed people. The mythological image of Amiran has figured in Georgian folklore and literature since ancient times and has changed many times. In the medieval 12th century it became a chivalric novel. In the 19th century, as in European literature, Georgian poets gave Amiran the function of liberation from slavery.

According to Georgian research on Amiran,⁵ there is preserved an ancient mythological type: a dragon swallows Amiran, who cuts his stomach and comes out, thereby opening a way for the sun to come out. Thus Amiran is the ancient archetype, or symbol of death, resurrection and eternal renovation. This is the main cultural symbol of the Georgians, which influences their socio-political and cultural history.

The ancient Greek-Caucasian mythology of death and resurrection, sunrise and sunset, change of summer into winter, has become for Georgia the symbol of everlasting endurance, revival and liberation from slavery.

² Martin Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des kunstwerkes*, Tbilisi, 1992 (in Georgian).

³ The Machiavellian idea, that every means is good for achieving the goal. In this case the freedom of the nation still remains the powerful weapon in the hands of cunning politicians, in Georgia, even after achieving independence. *The Prince*, Tbilisi, 1984 (in Georgian).

⁴ Lossef A.F. in his book, *The Problem of a symbol and the Realistic Art*, Moscow 1976 (in Russian), writes about the types of ancient heroes, similar to Prometheus, in Caucasian and neighbouring regions.

⁵ Rostom Chkheidze, *The tale of Amiran*, Tbilisi, 1972 (in Georgian).

THIRST FOR FREEDOM

In Georgian writings there have been Biblical allusions from the time Christianity was pronounced the state religion, (IV c.) and the first Georgian hagiological (V c.) and literary works till today, as is natural for Christian literature. But most frequent is the allusion of the deer drinking water from the spring. Its deeply religious and spiritual meaning is often changed and generally is compared to the thirst for freedom and release from conquest. Besides, there is another popular allusion of a shepherd who abandons his flock and goes to rescue the lost lamb.

So, for the Georgian people the feeling of freedom is as precious as is water for a tired deer, that is, faith in God for humanity. Each, even very small, part of Georgia or Georgian culture is as precious as the whole physical or spiritual being of the nation, its past, present and future, its traditions and hope of survival.

The above-mentioned symbols or moral suggestions are very familiar and native to Georgians as Christians, for whom Christianity was the salvation not only of the souls of the Georgian people but of their physical existence and identity. This moral view was followed by the Georgian thought or social life until the end of the 19th or the beginning of 20th century, and even later.

Thus, since the pagan period the symbol of the Georgian culture and of Georgian Christian ideology in search of its goal reflects personal effort, personal devotion and morality. Georgian history contains multiple examples, when the national identity was rescued due to the moral commitment of individual martyrs or heroes. Even during national uprisings the moral spirit was considered more valuable than a win in battle. Georgian poetry does not often praise the greatest victories of the nation, but on the contrary praises defeated and perished heroes, who fought selflessly and became the moral examples for future generation.

Tradition versus Change

One of the main features of Georgian character is adherence to traditional values and doubt or distrust of frequent changes or innovations. Traditionalism and faithfulness to the ancestral prescriptions is not only common among Georgians, but is also the subject of pride. Vivid examples of this issue follow.

The 19th century Georgian aristocrat, Alexander Chavchavadze⁶ was a poet of the Romantic school, singing and adoring the past, love, women and wine. This man was really great, a prince and wealthy land owner, godson of the Russian Queen Ekaterina II, raised and educated in St. Petersburg.

⁶ Alexander Chavchavadze, *Poems*, Tbilisi, 1972 (in Georgian).

In 1904 at 16 years of age he was in Georgia, taking part in the Georgians' uprising against Russian conquerors. The uprising was defeated, he was captured and brought to St. Petersburg. As years passed, he became an officer in the Russian army, took part in the war against Napoleon, crossed Europe, saw Paris, and returned with the Russian troops.

After retirement he lived in Georgia, wealthy, famous and respected from all sides. The Russian poet and diplomat Griboedov was his son in law.

But suddenly, this general of the Russian army appears among the Georgian nobility who are preparing the conspiracy against Russia in 1932. All of them are arrested for treason, and all are punished, sent to Siberia and other remote parts of the empire. When the banishment was over and all the exiles (with a few exceptions) returned to Georgia, Alexander Chavchava-dze continued to live as a loyal subject of the Russian Emperor.

This permanently changing man, at the end of his life wrote in a poem:

I am not pursuing the changes of the time,
I am the same forever...

It is not only the love of his country, in which he remained unchanged; it is the regret that he had to change several times during his life. He or the imaginary lyrical hero is ensuring readers to leave, if not everything at least something, maybe a very small part of their lives, untouched and unchanged.

However, the present, frequently changing life of the Georgian people needs something very valuable, which will remain unchanged for a while. It may be a durable State system protecting prescriptive values in political and personal life.

Hospitality

During its long history, surrounded with the natural walls of the mountains, Georgia was safer than its neighboring countries, populated in open valleys. One of the branches of the Great Silk Road passed through Georgia. This was due to the relative safety of its roads, a factor which still holds Georgia as the key country of the Caucasian region. Marco Polo traveled to China by this Road. That is why different people, tribes and refugees from ancient times came to stay and live there: Jews, Syrians, Greeks, Arabs, Armenians, Osetians, Azerbaijanians, Chechens, Kurds, Iranians, and so forth.

Georgians thought, and hopefully still think, that a guest is a messenger of God. Guaranteed by traditional hospitality and Christian tolerance, settlers of various kinds never felt oppressed by the Georgian people or authorities. Some of these ethnicities assimilated with the Georgian

people, but others who had their homeland near the borders of Georgia preserved their national identities.

While Georgia was independent and strong, guests respected the authority of the host, but, when Georgia became a region of Russia settlers of different nations and tribes, especially those who were from the neighbouring countries or tribes, felt that the host was changed and accordingly they changed the direction of their respect and loyalty.

A clever conqueror always studies the culture of the conquered countries not only because he is willing to enrich his own culture, but also to understand the hidden feelings of a subdued people, in order to avoid the discontent which results in uprisings. Corresponding institutions of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union studied the Caucasian nations and tribes from the second part of the 18th century. During Soviet times the huge Institute of Ethnography was under the supervision of the KGB. They were not only studying Caucasian ethnic life, looking for and collecting breeds of Caucasian horses and sheep dogs, bees and fruit and wheat, recording the original arts of fighting, wrestling and horsemanship, but, first of all they were studying the character of the Caucasian people.

Vazha Pshavela, 19th century Georgian poet,⁷ analyses the personal effort of an individual to maintain moral face and features in tragic and complicated cases. In one of his epics, "Guest and Host," summarized here, he penetrates the depths of the tradition of hospitality:

Chechen Jokola, while hunting, meets Georgian Zviadauri whom he invites to his house. There Zviadauri is recognized by a neighbor and denounced as the worst enemy of Chechens, killer of many warriors and even of Jokola's brother. Chechens capture Zviadauri in Jokola's house, who is deeply offended by the act. He tries to free his guest arguing that a guest is inviolable by the tradition. He asks them to let his guest go and then chase him or expel him from his house and village, but he fails: the community is strong, severe and merciless. They drag Zviadauri to the cemetery, up to the grave of the newly perished Chechen hero and try to sacrifice him. If the victim is scared during this cruel and violent ritual, he will become the servant of the dead hero and comfort his life in the other world; but Zviadauri never surrenders; he is not frightened and Chechens cannot fulfill their goal. Offended and humiliated that he couldn't defend his guest, Jokola separates himself from the community. Tradition is violated, the community is split. When the Georgians come for revenge, the Chechens and Jokola fight separately and are defeated.

⁷ Vaja Pshavela, *Epics*, Tbilisi, 1985 (in Georgian)

In Georgian literary and cultural criticism and philosophic thinking, this problem is analyzed as the opposition and clash of individual and community. Obviously, this is an intrusion in a personal life and the oppression of a person, humiliating him and destroying his safety. The intruder, the executor of the inhuman act, is the community or villagers, who declare to the offended host that the community will follow its own rules and decisions. On the one hand, it is clear, that the community, in capturing and killing the enemy, is defending its safety and carrying out the prescription of revenge. But, on the other hand, the community abrogates the prescription of inviolability of the home/family and the tradition of hospitality. We seem to have a problem of two vectors stemming from one and the same traditional ground, but actually we observe the collision of the human, personal, traditional life with, no longer a community as it itself violates its laws, but a cruel, ruthless and revengeful mass.

Among other significant loses, this detraction and degeneration of the traditions was crucial for 19th century Georgian life, and it is still emerging from the past; this influences and damages the prospects of the newly revived state.

CONFUSING NATIONAL INTERESTS

I am not going to argue that the tradition of hospitality was the salvation of the Georgian people and that the prescription of revenge was the destruction of the national mentality. I am trying to show how the clever conqueror uses them to fulfill his interests, intensifying the one and weakening the other, and vice-versa.

Eighteenth century Georgia was a small state, divided into two parts, but not weak and subdued. On the contrary, it controlled the entrances to the country and dominated parts of Armenia and Azeribaijan.

The Georgian king was aware of the increasing strength of his northern neighbor, Russia, but could not grasp clearly its actual interests. Tired of the complicated relations with his southern neighbors, the Georgian king was looking for, and was happy to have as a Christian ally the mighty State of Russia. Russia was also looking, not for an ally, but for a way through the Caucasian gorges, in order to find the shortest way to India. It used the hospitality of the Christian king and founded a military base within Georgia. On the other hand, this created tensions in Georgian relations with Iran, but Russia did not interfere in the resulting war. In the last battle with Iran, Georgia was defeated and weakened. After the death of the king of Georgia, Russia took advantage of the disagreement among the King's Heirs, violated the Treaty of 1783, abolished the kingdom of Georgia and declared its connection to the Russian Empire.

Thus, together with social, political and military means, the tradition of hospitality appeared as a crafty weapon in the hands of a clever conqueror.

After the connection or conquer, Russia waged several wars with Turkey and Iran. In these wars the Georgian people, and especially the nobility, were encouraged to fight selflessly in order to revenge and regain the occupied Georgian territories, but the territories became part of Russian empire. In this case, Russian authorities used the prescription of revenge to raise the courage of Georgian soldiers. When the Russian general and Georgian poet, Grigol Orbeliani, was chasing Shamil and the Chechen rebels in the Caucasian gorges, he thought, that he was fulfilling the act of revenge for the oppression of his ancestors. These are only a few examples of how the traditional feelings and even traditional symbols can be used for the destruction of the nation, which claims to maintain these traditions but forgets how to take care of them and lets somebody use them against him.

When you forget the deep essence of its most valuable and precious symbols and traditions, when you abandon this, give up looking or caring for it, a stranger will come and use it against you. He will destroy your unique being, damage and destroy your traditions and prescriptions, repeatedly assuring you that they have no value at all and should be forgotten or radically changed.

Mixed Ideologies

Since the middle of the 19th century the national culture began to awake and develop in Georgia. This was in rough reaction against Russia's chauvinistic but skillfully disguised policy. Georgian writers and one part of the public evoked the myth of the hero fighting for freedom from ancient times and, at the same time, used the slogan of Western liberalism, "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality". The meaning of such a mixture was that the aim of the XIXth century Georgian nation, freedom, brotherhood and equality, should be achieved by personal effort and moral stamina. This was the first attempt to mix the traditional faith with liberal ideas. By accepting liberal ideas, Georgian intellectuals were trying to show the Georgian orientation to the West and its will to adopt Western values.

Soon, from the 1870s the socialist and social-democratic organizations, introduced into Georgia from Russia, seized the slogan, which was more familiar to them, depicted it on their red flag, raised the question of conflict of classes and began to prepare for the revolution and liberation of the proletariat by means of mass rebellion.

The reaction of Georgian culture against revolutionary progress and mass subculture was a new national idea in opposition to the revolutionary, mass way of thinking.⁸

The leader of the national movement, writer Ilia Chavchavadze, offered a new slogan, "Motherland, Language, Faith". At the same time, he

⁸ Nikolai Berdiaev, in his *Human Fate in the Modern World*, Tbilisi, 2001 (in Georgian) reflects and warns about the loss of Christian, traditional values, and the emerging ignorant and ruthless masses.

advanced against class conflict an ideology of class equality and mutual support. That was not the theory of revolution and conflict, but of the creation and development of the national state. A hero fighting for freedom, together with his followers, had to liberate their land, Georgia, by means of creativity, personal effort and moral example, the development of the Georgian language, and culture, and fidelity to Christian religious belief and morality. This theory spread very quickly in Georgia, in spite of restricted resources and bilateral attacks, from the government and socialist movements. It is significant that this movement did not grow into nationalism, despite the existing real conditions, or reinforce nationalistic ideologies on the international field.

BROKEN BRIDGES

Several countries consider themselves to be the bridge between Europe and Asia, between West and East. The notion that this question of “the bridge” is still unsettled, shows that there is the need for the bridge, and not for a single one but for many bridges, to be built on a vast territory, beginning from Ukraine to the south, in Caucasia, Turkey and countries of the, so called, Near East. Georgia also claims itself, and has the ambition from ancient times, to be the bridge between West and East, to be the place where these two civilizations can meet.⁹ The problem of the bridge between two civilizations remains unsolved for many reasons, one of which is the weakness of the countries willing to become the bridge, for they do not have the strength to bear the heavy burden. Another question is that no one, either from the West, or from the East, sees the need to help and strengthen these countries and to have the strong mediating bridge.

The weakness of the state prevents fulfilling its will to play its role in the world politics and regional affairs. But, for the remedy of this weakness or illness, we often do not look in the proper place. The idea of a “broken bridge” was born in Georgian literature and philosophy in the 19th century. It was Ilia Chavchavadze who raised the question and brought the term of “broken bridge” into Georgian thinking. A bridge was broken between the nobility and peasantry, between the aristocrats and the common people, and there was urgent need to rebuild the bridge. This I call the crises of the parts; one of the major problems of the Georgian nation which still remains unsolved. In controversy with Marxists, Ilia Chvachavadze saw rebuilding the bridge not in the revolution and radical change of the national life, but in regaining and reviving national traditions and values. In the 20th century the bridge remained broken and the gap between the common people and the

⁹ Georgia considers itself not to be the servant of The White Queen, as Rudyard Kipling imagines the meeting of East and West (*The Ballad of East and West*), but the revival of ancient ties with the Western civilization and culture.

communist party elite, the so-called “nomenklatura“, increased to an immense degree. After destroying the Soviet Union and establishing the independent Georgian State, the bridge remains broken. The reason is the so-called majoritarian system of democracy and the radically centralized administration of the country.

Assassination of Ilia Chavchavadze (1907)

The Georgian poet, Galaktion Tabidze, writes in his poem that after the assassination of Ilia Chavchavadze a great epoch ended in Georgia. The moral and cultural age ended, and there began a revolutionary, anti-cultural, immoral age. Idealistic philosophy changed into materialistic ideology. The nation disappeared along with its constituent parts and moral heroes; there appeared class conflict, revolution and anti-heroes. The leader of the Georgian social-democratic party, Noe Jordania, declared after Ilia Chavchavadze’s death: “When you cut a tree, chips fall all over.” Thus the humane was neglected and a new idol was adored.¹⁰

The new revolutionary mass ideology, the new pagan idol did not chain Amiran to the Caucasian mountains; it killed him and almost ended the Georgian culture and the nation, as well.

During the three thousand years of the existence of the Georgian nation, out of three parts (Land, Language, Faith) most frequently two (Language, Faith) or one (Faith or Language) were survivors of the Georgian nation and culture and have tried to restore the lost parts.

The Communists decided to destroy the three, the whole or, in other words, the nation, and to eliminate its parts. In exchange there emerged a formless, groundless weapon for the realization of organized chaos: the masses and their anti-human expression, revolution. The 20th century proceeded on the opposition of these two: the national, idealistic, moral philosophy vs the class, materialistic ideology.

Throughout its existence, the Georgian nation had never been so depressed as in the 20th century. The Communists literally destroyed the Georgian Christian Church, so that it could not arise until the end of the century; they destroyed anything connected with national public life, killed the best part of the Georgian thinkers and tried to change the Georgian aristocratic culture into a mass culture. Instead of a hero thirsting for freedom, they proposed an anti-hero fighting for world revolution, ready to betray or kill his parents or relatives,¹¹ at the first order of the revolution. He

¹⁰ Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, Tbilisi 1993 (in Georgian).

¹¹ The authorities of the Communist Party were practicing to plant the kind of unreliability and hate among the people and were praising the type of a man, who was ready to denounce or even kill his relatives, in the name of revolution. In the 1930s a Georgian communist poet Pridon Narousvili wrote in his poem: “I will hang my mother and shoot my father if the revolution orders...”

is ready to become a screw in the state machine and ignore his divine value, the soul.

In the early 20th century Georgian literature, this killing of the soul is described by G. Robakidze and K. Gamsakhurdia, the physical and moral degradation of Georgian intellectuals, the degradation of the working man, and the destruction of traditions (M. Javakhishvili). Historical novels describe the character of ancient heroes with nostalgia and thirst for a moral hero (Vasil Barnovi). The Georgian theatre and cinema follow the same path. Everything is happening in Georgian culture, which had been hidden from the ever-watchful eye of the communist party. That, of course, was incredible for the communist regime tried to command and control the whole of culture. This was achieved in every branch of social and economic life, but never totally achieved in culture. In spite of good finances for each facet of mass culture for those adhering to the communist way of life, and in spite of its repression and destruction of those who thought differently, they were not able to suppress the intellectual reaction in literature, cinema and theatre. Not only did the intellectual section of the Georgian people, but ordinary people, as well, object. Though weak, unorganized and inert, this opposition, with the help of moral and traditional culture, managed to assume the function of the Georgian mythological archetype; it did rescue the moral stamina for the people by the hero who strove for freedom.

In the second half of the 20th century, during the warming of Khrushchev's time and later, it became easier for the national-cultural reaction in Georgia. Writers, such as O. Chkheidze, J. Karchkhadze, G. Gegeshidze, G. Dochanashvili, T. Bibiluri, T. Chanturia and others, whose creations were neither familiar nor understandable, but hateful for the followers of the communist regime, with great difficulty, were able to publish their books. Thus they could expose vividly the faulty, anti-human aspects of the regime.

Singing Together vs. Working Together

With the exception of some traditional habits, or prescriptions no conqueror was able to use Georgian culture, or some aspects of the culture, for the humiliation of the Georgian people, though huge efforts and resources have been spent in this direction. In spite of the great influence of old Greek, Byzantine, Persian, Arabian, Turkish, Russian cultures, Georgian culture remains extraordinary, different, and unique and still has the potential to develop and conserve its originality. The most extraordinary aspects of Georgian culture are the Georgian national song and dance. The Western world is more or less acquainted with this part of Georgian culture, due to the fact that they do not need to be translated.

The Georgian national song is choral and poliphonic. It has its roots in Georgian folk music and religious hymns. In these songs "the musical

idea is presented with melody layers, which are deft, nimble, expressive and, more important, sounding in three or four voices simultaneously.”¹²

While Georgians can sing together and achieve fantastic results, this same people cannot work together in the political and economic field and achieve more or less satisfactory results. We can surely find numerous reasons and arguments, and name internal and external obstacles, in order to vindicate ourselves, but it would be difficult or, for some political circles, undesirable to find the remedy for our failure in our own traditions, e.g. in traditional song.

It is easier to mimic so-called “majoritarian” democracy, which is now more northern than western, and remain unaware and insensitive not only to our cultural and political roots, but to the traditional development of democracy and the state system in the West.

Revolutions

At the end of the 20th century, when the Soviet Union was destroyed and Georgia become an independent country, there was some hope of overcoming the crises of the parts, but, unfortunately, the new government appeared very weak; it lost power over the economy and over order within the country. The split between the government and the culture, the authorities and the people did not diminish; rather antagonisms and mutual rejection increased.

The last ten years of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century should be called the period of “revolutions”. However, there is question whether even one real revolution took place.

The results of the revolution of 1917 must have been so inspiring and for some people even pleasant, that the notion and the event are still popular and accepted among Georgian politicians.

Revolution means:

1. a complete and forcible overthrow of an established government or political system
2. a radical and pervasive change in society and the social structure, especially
3. one made suddenly and often accompanied by violence, but it also means also
4. a procedure or course as if in a circuit returning back to a starting point in time, and
5. a single turn of this kind.¹³

¹² Evsevi Chokhnelidze, *Folklore, Georgian Culture*, Tbilisi 1999, p. 25.

¹³ *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, New York: Gramercy Books, 1983, p.1227.

Taking these definitions into consideration, we can call only the first 1990 events in Georgia a “revolution” in its American sense. It was a national reaction against conquerors, a complete overthrow of the Communist regime, and a striving for the creation of a new independent country. The next two revolutions were only “single turns” of some kind.

But the term “revolution” in Georgia, among the common people and even in academic circles, was, and is used in the sense of the Russian, proletarian revolution.

The Georgian national-liberation movement could not love, and on the contrary hated, the proletarian revolution, as it cost Georgia its independence. However, the leader of national-liberation movement and the first president of the independent Georgian state, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, on quite vague grounds, perhaps in the joy of victory after the democratic elections of 1990, called the victory of democratic political forces and the defeat of the communist regime in Georgia, “The Bloodless Revolution“. Thus, unconsciously, he pushed the rise of illegality and violence in Georgia, which was fatal for himself as well, and in 1991-1992 there was a bloody *coup d’etat* in Georgia.

After some months, of the coup, Edward Shevardnadze arrived, who called these events “The Democratic Revolution“. By this he paid tribute to its organizers and encouraged their illegal actions. There were no changes in political and administrative systems.

In November of 2003 the leading personalities of the Georgian government organized mass actions to express their protest against the fraudulent elections and forced the President of Georgia to resign. This was *coup d’etat* inside the palace again the background of mass rallies, but its organizer, the new president of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili, called it the “Velvet”, or “Rose Revolution“. Though there was no blood in this “revolution”, it started a series of law-breaking activities which continued in the name of the “revolution“. Still there were no changes: roses bloom in Georgia the same way as before. The worst fault of the “Rose Revolution” was that the newly elected president restricted the parliament, changed the constitution, increased the centralization of the government, assumed great power, and factually and formally suppressed the court. Thus he actually abolished the division of government in Georgia and established despotism.¹⁴

R.W. Emerson was inspired by how the major British universities – Oxford and Cambridge – raised the British statesmen.¹⁵ At that time, American universities were raising their own statesmen. In Georgia and the post-

¹⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville warns about the danger of centralization and standardization, in his *Democracy in America*, edited by J.P. Mayer, translated by George Lawrence, Anchor Press, II volume, book 4.

¹⁵ *The Essential Writings of Ralf Waldo Emerson*, The Modern Library Classics.

Soviet countries, statesmen are raised in the streets, during rallies and mass demonstrations.

Most active peoples who were taking part in rallies outside of the Parliament, rushed in to push out elected members – even if elected through fraudulent elections – and resided in the House. This is not an exaggeration, because elections conducted immediately after the “revolution” could be regarded as occupying the seats in the house by a despotic majority.

At the end of 20th century, with the help of international organizations, which brought grants, many NGOs were founded in Georgia. Their aim was to support civil society and strengthen liberal democracy. Instead, they took part in the overthrow of the existent corrupt regime and helped establish a new radical regime. With some exceptions there emerged cold, calculating technocrats or ignorant, irritable and ruthless executors, who only obey the orders of their bosses.

Liberalism nowadays is extremely popular in Georgia, but the positive changes are not yet visible. The creation of civil society and the establishment of classical liberal-democratic principles is an honorable duty of intellectual personalities. Revolution, in its classic sense, is the field of the revolutionary masses, of ignorant non-persons. Hence, we should not expect, in the near future, people with a cultural education and traditional values to emerge legally in the government.

The new government actually abolished elected local government, discharged the elected mayors and, instead, appointed its own people. On the whole, the fact is, that, if before democratic institutions in Georgia were at least simulated, the new government has abolished all democratic institutions except the President and the already simulated parliament.

Fear of local government and the elected regional leaders arose at the very moment when it became necessary to elect them. Local elections had not been wanted by the first president of Georgia. This was not surprising because he feared what he did not know. The same was true with the second president, who had broad political experience, but had no knowledge of the principles of democracy. The third president of Georgia who was educated in the United States of America, is still afraid of the appearance of regional leaders. Alexis de Tocqueville, affirms in his book, *Democracy in America*, that the absence of administrative centralization tempers the tyranny of the majority in the United States.¹⁶ Nothing can temper the tyranny of the majority in Georgia, in the presence of administrative centralization.

In brief, Georgian politics is experiencing the rainy weather of absolute centralization and despotism, with no sign of clearing.

The panic for centralization has very serious grounds, which is the result of the double policy of Russia. Georgia has two large regions separated; regions with puppet governments and Russian “Peacekeepers”. The government with its lost territories has to prove at home and abroad that

¹⁶ Alexis De Toqueville, *Democracy in America*, edited by J.P. Mayer, Translated by George Lawrence, Anchor Press, p. 262.

Georgia is one integral country, which must never be divided, and that the separatist movement has no legal or ethnic basis. This is, indeed, the crucial and tragic truth about these “ethnic conflicts,” but it is still one of the aspects of the crises of the parts.

Immediately after the “Rose Revolution” the future president of Georgia divided the population into two parts: those who “got on his train” and those who did not wish to do so. The latter were declared as not reliable. One of his most active followers did not delay to call political opposition “lepers“. In a traditionally democratic country this could have remained a crude declaration, but in Georgia, where physical annihilation of political opponents has been normal in the recent past, such declarations do not disappear without traces. Georgia has just emerged from a totalitarian regime, with people of destroyed consciences and sick with Soviet individualism; they are marginal. The ill-prepared effort to awaken in them civil responsibility evoked the past disease of “denouncing”. The people do not unite to expose criminals, but report on each other due to jealousy and personal conflicts.

This is the result of the, so-called, “New Coloured Revolutions“. These are qualitatively different from the old, bloody revolutions, but act in the same spirit. They threaten one as a person, they forget the moral hero fighting for freedom and instead worship the masses. Unfortunately, we have no guarantee, that the danger of a new mass revolt is not now emerging.¹⁷

Obviously, because of new revolutions the development of real democracy will be delayed for some years in Georgia.

Economic Fetters

The present economic problems in the post-Soviet countries are the result of the centralized Soviet state economic system. The economic relations of the Russian empire towards conquered countries were much more human, clever and more or less based on human principles, having private property as its basis.

After defeating Trotsky and driving him out of the country, Stalin began and, after World War II, finished the foundation of an absolutely centralized, planned economy. This kind of system firmly chained the “Soviet Republics“¹⁸ to each other and all of them to Moscow.

¹⁷ Elias Canetty, in his book *Crowds and Power*, Moscow, 1990 (in Russian), analyzes gaining and losing the victory by the crowd.

¹⁸ The favourite of the Russian Queen Ekaterine, Potomkin, had built villages for show during the Queen’s travel in the south of the Russian Empire; the houses were nice from the outside and empty inside. The so-called “Soviet Republics” had such kind of self-government.

To analyze the whole system is too difficult and needs special knowledge and more space.¹⁹ We can only remark briefly that the business plans of each, even very small, enterprise were designed and approved in Moscow. This kind of economic despotism not only destroyed the Soviet Union, but made difficult the development of a market economy in newly independent countries. Their industry is crushed, and it is nearly impossible for them to find new markets despite their willingness to break the old Soviet fetters. To this must be added the mentality of post-Soviet governments inclined to centralize and hold the reins of the economies of their countries. As a result, changing the economic system itself could be easier than changing the mentality of authorities, the result of which is the high level of corruption in all post-Soviet countries.

One of the main features of the Georgian people was the personal independence and respect of family values and life. These features were oppressed and destroyed during the Communist regime.

I have already mentioned that international organizations, in order to develop civil society in Georgia, helped to found many NGOs. But civil society was not developed, because there is no basis for it in Georgia; there are no cities with independent local administrations.

Private property makes people free; people who are not free will execute the desires of the agents who are directly paying them money. Obviously, the functioning of some international organizations helped the revival of a kind of neo-Soviet communities or neo-communist party, which willingly interferes not only in the affairs of corrupted State administrations, but also in the scarcely returned private life.

In Georgia the priority should be the safety of private property as the basis of the freedom of the Georgian people and legal support of the inviolability of personal life. This will help the establishment of classes and interest groups in the country. They will have common interests and, on this basis, will themselves found various associations.

What is now done in Georgia is a simulated "Liberal Democracy" but an actual economic and political despotism of the majority.

PROGNOSIS

A man released from the Soviet collective farms, or "animal farms", was introduced to the new associations and made a member of a new social union. He has neither time nor right to reflect, but becomes a slave of pseudo or simulated liberalism. Personal morality clashes with collective morality once again and is defeated in the post-Soviet period. Liberalism is the idea of liberation of a man, but pseudo liberalism is now a weapon for strengthening the authority.

¹⁹ The former Minister of Economy of Georgia, Vladimer Papava, wrote of the FSU economic issues in *Necroeconomiks*, Iuniverse inc. 2005

In spite of many faults in the present policy of the Georgian government, there are notable positive tendencies. First of all, there is no lack of will and courage in these young people. They want to succeed mainly in restoring the territorial integrity of Georgia and to create an economically powerful state. This, they say, is the reason they centralize governmental forces and speak of radical etatism. Let us assume, that of the three main Georgian principles (Motherland, Language, Faith), the main point for them is "Motherland" or territories and the economic aspect of the country, which is the focal part of today's Georgian crisis. The government takes upon itself the task of resolving this crisis. At present the government will not have enough resources for anything else. Saving "Language and Faith" is left to Georgian culture and the Church. This is the traditional division and may be the way out of the crisis. Unfortunately, post-Soviet democratic countries seem to have a very difficult, not only economic, but also mental inheritance. The governments of the post Soviet countries are jealous and try to guard against culture and Church. This was inevitable for the Soviet system, but under this mental inheritance, the government of democratic Georgia still tries to control and oppress the media, culture, the universities and the Church.

Hence, the government of independent Georgia could not manage to win even a little trust from Georgian writers and intellectuals over the last fifteen years. This, probably, was the reason that the joy due to independence gradually vanished, and national nihilism became dominant. Georgian authors continue to criticize the government and depict it as problematic. At the same time, there is an ongoing search for a hero fighting for the freedom which is depressed and chained by the authority (O. Chkheidze, "The Obedient")

Finally, it should be said that in Georgia, in the process of fighting for national union, the crisis of the parts is strained and one remarkable tendency is noticeable at the dawn of the 21st century. The Georgian government in spite of a declared Western orientation and desire to be integrated into global processes, still refuses to take active steps. They argue continuously that the transitional period in Georgia is not yet finished. They think that they will be able to save themselves and make the country whole again by means of strengthening their power. Having come to the government in the name of liberal democracy, they did not want to hear anything about democratic reforms.

Georgian writers and the intellectual part of the nation doubt the progress of globalization, but do not fear it. They look forward/backward to preparing a mythical hero/Georgian man, who will work and create. During this expectation there are many personal moral deeds, heroes and martyrs in the cultural, public and political life of 20th century Georgian history.

This perhaps naïve expectation will come true rather than the pragmatic political calculations for it is a process which has been going on for more than two thousand years.

POSTSCRIPT

In discussing whether there is hope for cultures in a time of globalization, there arises the question: where is the hope for the cultures of small nations, e.g., for Georgian culture? The answer is that actually there is no hope!

But if we take into consideration not only hopes, but also the ambitions of the so called small cultures, the discourse changes direction and another question arises: Where is hidden the spiritual power which helped Georgian culture survive for thousands of years, not only as an ethnicity, but as a national culture?

First, Georgia is the ancient country where the Argonauts came in search of the Golden Fleece; this symbol surely stimulates thought.

Second, it is written in the oldest Georgian annals that the Georgian historians and writers believed, and the modern Georgian author Rostom Chkheidze, in his recent book "Missing Chaldea,"²⁰ still believes, that this power dwells in memory. The ancient Georgian tribes came to the Caucasus and settled (or perhaps were stuck) between the two seas and two mountain ridges of the ancient Chaldea. This suggests that this national culture should be rediscovered, reestablished and reaffirmed in the national memory as a symbol of endurance and a hope for a better future; but that is another symbol and another story...

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²⁰ Rostom Chkheidze, *Missing Chaldea*, Tbilisi, 2002 (in Georgian).

ASIA

CHAPTER XVI

THE RICHNESS OF INDIAN SYMBOLISM AND CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

D. BALAGANAPATHI

It was the exercise of the symbolic faculty that brought culture into existence and it is the use of symbols that makes the perpetuation of culture possible. Without the symbol there would be no culture and man would be merely an animal, not a human being.

Leslie A. White (1995: 38)

The above quote from Leslie White (1995) puts the significance of the symbolic faculty of man at the centre of the cultural process *in toto* and makes it a differentiating mark between human and animal. 'Symbol' as a sign or an identifying mark, typifies, represents or recalls something 'by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought'. It is a sign for expressing the invisible by means of visible or sensuous representations. Our contact with the world outside is based on symbols. Our language is nothing but symbols. The scripts are still more so. Our art, our poetry, in fact, every aspect of life is based on symbols:

We think in symbols, we act in symbols
We live in symbols, we learn in symbols

Though man and his life ultimately are symbolic, there are more evident symbols in man's creation. These symbols are the substitutes or suggestions of abstract things. They are more concrete in nature. Thus, superimposing an idea on a thing or invoking a deity in an image is symbolisation. Symbols are used for both concealment and revelation. They conceal partly the essential content from an ordinary person and partly reveal it by suggesting it.

Leslie White (1995) defines a symbol as a thing whose value is bestowed upon it by those who use it. This implies that meaning of the symbols is derived from and determined by the individuals who use them. The creative faculty of human beings makes them bestow values upon things freely, actively and arbitrarily, driving them towards symbolization. This symbol-making tendency is innate in man. Psychoanalysts argue that it is by the symbolization process that an infant apprehends reality and endows it with value. Further, they add that, failure of symbolic substitution leads to a state of autism in which the external world is lacking in interest. This implies that symbolization is innate to humans, and this nature keeps their

interest and involvement in the external world alive. Devereux (1979:28) stressing this fact mentioned that 'symbolization helps to hold man's segmental capacities together and fosters a broader direct involvement with the situation'.

A symbol reduces the enormous complexity of communication by using a concrete sign as a kind of shorthand for a complex of interrelated concepts, ideas, and values systems. The larger the collective to be held together by the symbol, the more complex is the signification process, that is, the process of attaching a meaning to a symbol to which all members or subsets of the group can subscribe. Because of this, symbols make the easy transmission of culture possible. Stressing the significance of symbols in the cultural life of human beings, Clifford Geertz (1973:89) stated that culture is "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about the attitude towards life". For Geertz symbols not only make a transition of cultures possible but also make possible the communication, perpetuation and development of knowledge and attitude of human beings towards life. The meanings that these symbolic forms transmit are complex. Instead of standing for a single referent, they evoke a variety of meanings, some of which may be ambiguous. At times they evoke powerful emotions and can often both unite and disrupt social groups. Unraveling the tangled webs of meaning or analyzing the relationship between symbols and things exactly as they are is needed minds to understand the cultures.

Hofstede Geert (2001:10) in his *Culture's Consequences* argued that symbols appear at the outermost superficial layer of the culture. The reason behind his argument is the dynamism of the symbolic mode which negotiates and renegotiates with its own cultural group in preserving the identity and with the other cultural groups in communicating and influencing the meanings of identity. In contrast to the argument of Geert, symbols should be seen as the core of the culture groups. They are the keys in preserving the identity of the group by negotiating change.

Change is natural to all phenomenon, symbols and symbolization being no exception. Though some of the symbols ascertain their place for a longer time, no particular symbol can be said to be either permanent or eternal. A particular symbol may continue to be in the culture, without being used or without being replaced by another. In this case it continues its place in the culture but loses its relevance. Some symbols may in course of time change their original referent and start referring to something else without losing their place in the culture. In this case the referents may lose their relevance but not the symbol. Sometimes a particular symbol may in due course of time give place to a new one. In this case the referent may be the same but the symbol changes.

My aim in this paper is to explicate the diversity of Indian symbolism and to show the changing patterns of symbols. The first part is mostly descriptive and interpretative and tries to bring out the many different forms

of Indian symbolism in order to appreciate the enriched and ultimately religious meaning of all of reality for Indian awareness. The second part tries to bring out the different kinds of changes that are possible with regard to symbols.

TYPES OF SYMBOLS

Given that cultural identities are mostly expressed in the form of symbols and that symbolic expression of cultural identity is primitive and very much akin to the specifically human, now let us see the place of symbols in a country like India, where there is immense diversity in every aspect of life. The basis of every culture and every identity is determined by its own established common symbolic expression. India, which is a land of diverse religious, linguistic, social, cultural and racial groups, is very rich in its symbolism. Each of these groups – be it religious or racial, cultural or linguistic – has its own set of symbolic forms to maintain its identity. These different sets of symbols exhibit the rich diversity of symbology of India. This diversity should not be mistaken to be complete divergence or lack of unity. In fact, cutting across all these different cultural, religious, linguistic and political groups, there runs a pan-Indian identity and symbolism which proves the unity of the country. The greatness of Indian culture is that it leaves space for various groups to preserve and practice their own culture and at the same time accommodates them under one pan-Indian culture.

Let us look at the rich diversity of symbolism available in India. For the sake of convenience I have divided them under six heads viz., national symbols, political symbols, social symbols, objects as symbol, nature symbols and religious symbols. It must be noted that this distinction is neither exclusive nor exhaustive. There may be a few overlappings in between. Since it is very difficult to include all the available symbols in each of the selected spheres, I am here providing only a representative sample of each sphere. Mostly I have taken the symbols of Hindu culture with which I am familiar. Here it should be noted that by Hindu culture I mean the native culture of India, excluding the foreign religious cultures that have established themselves in India.

National Symbols

National symbols, stated Michael Geisler (2005), serve as a markers for the collective memory of the nation and thus represent the power of the state to define a nation. National symbols of India are deeply rooted in historical antiquity and the Nationalist movement.

National Flag: India's National flag is a horizontal tri-colored one with deep saffron at the top, white in the middle and dark green at the bottom in equal proportions. The ratio of the width of the flag to its length is two to three. In the centre of the white band is a wheel, in navy blue, which represents the *chakra*, wheel of *dharma*. Its design is also that of the wheel

which appears on the abacus of the Saranath lion capital of King Asoka. The wheel has 24 spokes.

The saffron of the national flag stands for courage, sacrifice and renunciation, while white stands for truth and purity: truth in words and actions and purity in thoughts. Green is the symbol of life, abundance and prosperity. *Charka* is the symbol of progress and of movement and its 24 spokes symbolize division of time, i.e., 24 hours of the day. The cloth used for the flag should be homespun and handwoven *khadi* representing the nationalist feeling.

National Emblem: The State Emblem of India is an adoption from the Saranath Lion Capital of King Ashoka which was designed to mark the place where Buddha first initiated his disciples in the eight fold path of salvation.

In the State emblem adopted by the government of India, out of four lions only three lions are visible, the fourth being hidden from view. The wheel appears in relief in the centre of the abacus with a bull on right and a horse on left and the outline of the other wheels on extreme right and left.

The lion is a symbol of majesty and disciplined strength; the bull of steadfastness and hard work and the horse of energy, loyalty and speed. Four lions symbolize the four feet of Dharma, whereas the wheel symbolizes the circular movement of time.

National Bird: The Indian peacock, the national bird of India, is a colorful bird, with a fan-shaped crest of feathers, a white patch under the eye and a long, slender neck. The elaborate courtship dance of the male, fanning out the tail and preening its feathers, is a gorgeous sight. The peacock is taken as the National Bird as a symbol of Indian tradition, because of its place in Indian tradition and art. It has found its place in Indian art from ancient times. It has a place in most of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina paintings and other art forms.

National Animal: The magnificent tiger is a striped animal. It has a thick yellow coat of fur with dark stripes. Because of the combination of grace, strength, agility and enormous power it has become the symbol of pride of the nation. Out of eight races of the species known, the Indian race, the Royal Bengal Tiger, is found throughout the country except in the north-western region.

National Flower: Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) is the national flower of India. It is a sacred flower and occupies a unique position in the art and mythology of ancient India and has been an auspicious symbol of Indian culture since time immemorial.

National Anthem: The song '*Janaganamana*', composed by Rabindranath Tagore is the national anthem of India. The national anthem like the National flag is the sacred symbol of India as a free nation. It is a call to all our countrymen to be united and strong.

National Song: The national song of India, '*Vandemataram*', is taken from Bakim Chandra Chatterji's novel *Ananda Math* published in 1882. The

song Vandemataram is a symbol of nationalism and was a source of inspiration to the Indian people in their struggle for freedom.

Political Symbols

Along with the national symbols, we can find in India a variety of political symbols which are the symbols of political parties. These symbols mostly represent the spirit and the ideology of the parties. The existent multi-party system of India gives scope for the existence of a number of parties at both national and regional level with rich variety of symbols. Let us look at the symbols of the political parties and how the symbols communicate their ideologies and spirit.

Congress I: The roots of the Congress party are based in the freedom movement of India. The Indian National Congress, which was started by A.O. Hume and S.N. Benerji in the year 1885 and which played a major role in the freedom movement as a symbol of national movement, was transformed after the independence of India into a political party,

The present brand of the Congress party is the Indira Congress party named after Indira Gandhi, the first and only woman Prime Minister of India until now. Open palm and tri-color flag comprising saffron, white and green with charka (spinning wheel) in the middle are the symbols of the party. Open palm in Indian tradition symbolizes 'readiness to help or save'. This is adopted by the Congress party from the Hindu theism where most of the Gods are picturised with open palm representing their readiness to help or save the good. The Congress party through this symbol tried to convey that it is the only party which can save the nation.

The tri-colored flag is adopted from the national flag, with the only change being the charka instead of *Ashoka Chakra* in the middle. The *Charka* again symbolizes the spirit of nationalism. It was used by Gandhi as a symbol of nationalism which defied the intrusion of foreign machine-made cloth into India. Thus, the flag of Congress is a symbol of the nationalist spirit.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP): Bharatiya Janata Party, which means party of the Indian masses, always tried to locate its roots in Indian tradition. The party always tried to represent itself as the symbol of Hinduism.

The symbol of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) is a flag of green and saffron, with the lotus flower in blue on the saffron portion. Lotus has a significant place in the Indian theology. It is the seat of Brahman, the creator God and the preserver of Vedas, which stands for knowledge. This way the lotus, for BJP, symbolizes the seat of Indian tradition. Saffron, which is the color of ascetics, represents their disinterestedness in family affairs, both material and sexual. These ascetics, since they practice celibacy, would become the symbols of masculinity. In this way saffron, for BJP, symbolizes masculinity.

Communist Party of India – Marxist (CPI-M): The influence of Communism is very strong on India. Though initially there was only one poli-

tical party with communist ideology, there developed different varieties of communist parties on the basis of diverse ideological distinctions. The symbols of Marxist Communist party are hammer, sickle and star, and a red flag. Hammer and sickle symbolize industrial and agrarian means of production to which the laborers belong as they are the instruments of laborers of industries and agriculture respectively. The star is a symbol of their ideal or the goal which is bright and shining. The red color symbolizes revolution through which alone communists believe that the proletariat can gain power. Red also symbolizes the blood through which laborers of different forms of means of production and laborers of all the countries can be united.

Telugu Desam Party (TDP): TDP is a regional party of Andhra Pradesh, which came into power as a symbol of the greatness of Telugu people and culture. The party chose common people's symbols such as bicycle and yellow flag. Bicycle is the common man's vehicle of transport, and yellow is the color of turmeric which symbolizes the purity of the women in Indian tradition. The name given to the party as 'the party of the Telugu country' projects it as a symbol of the pride of the people.

Social Symbols

Social symbols, which are peculiar to different societies, are the constructs of socialization process over a period of time. India has a variety of social symbols which are mostly rooted in the tradition.

Caste: Caste, though originated as a symbol of profession, froze its domain and has become a symbol of class in a social hierarchy. Traditionally there are four castes: the Brahmin (priestly class), the Kshatriyas (ruling class), the Vaisyas (traders) and the Sudras (labor class). Brahmin class is believed to be a symbol of learning and priesthood; Kshatriya caste is a symbol of valor and strength; Vaisya caste is a symbol of trade and commerce, and Sudra caste is a symbol of labor. Though all four castes are equally important for a society, class hierarchy is induced into it, placing Brahmins at the top and Sudras at the bottom, with Kshatriyas and Vaisyas respectively in the middle of the social order.

This inducement can be understood from the symbolic representation that is available in the *Purusha Sukta* of the Rigveda. According to it, the Brahmins were created from the mouth, Kshatriyas from the arms, Vaisyas from the thighs and the Sudras from the feet of the Supreme Being called Purusha. This is an example of religious symbolism of a social hierarchy. It exhibits how social hierarchy or the caste hierarchy is legalized through the help of religion and made natural to all classes of people. It states that people of all castes have come from the divine, but they have different social positions and roles to perform according to the place from which they have come. In other words it gives place in the divine to all the castes, so that none of them would rebel, and, at the same time, their place in society is fixed, based on the place of origin of the divine. This mystic representation forms an explicit example of ideological practice through symbols.

Suffix names: Certain names are suffixed to the given names which symbolize the caste into which a person is born. Names such as Sastry, Raju, Chetty, etc., which symbolize the caste Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaisya are suffixed to the given names in Andhra Pradesh. It is interesting to note that there are no specific suffix names for Sudras.

Caste	Suffix names
Brahmin	Sastry, Sarma, Rao etc.
Kshatriyas	Raju
Vaisyas	Setty, Chettiar, Seth, etc.
Sudras	No Suffix names

Because of this particular way of naming, even the names symbolize the caste and place of a person in the social hierarchy.

Family Names: Along with suffix names, family names are prefixed to the given names. The family names or the surnames come from the male member of the family and continues down the generations. Though there are different criterion based on which the family names are derived, mostly these family names also symbolize the caste to which the person belongs. There are certain family names which are specific to a few castes on the basis of which people understand the caste of a person.

Also, there are certain family names which have come from the totems to which they originally belong. For instance, family names such as *puli* (tiger), *meka* (goat), *pilli* (cat) are common in Andhra Pradesh.

House names: There is a peculiar tradition in Kerala, in which house names change according to the caste. The house name is the word by which the house is referred. For instance, if a person, say 'x', says that he is coming from etam, by the use of the term *etam* through which x is referring his house, the caste of x is understood to be the Achan of Palghat region. By the word referring to his house the caste of that person also can be understood. House names are thus the symbols of the caste in this particular tradition. Some of the house names, along with their referring caste, are given below.

Thus, the referring names of the houses symbolize the caste of the people in this particular tradition of Kerala.

Festivals: Festival¹ is a social congregation where the Gods are worshipped with intense contemplation by giving respite to the everyday

¹ The Hindu festivals are spread over all the months of a year. Some festivals are seasonal, some celebrate the fecundity of the earth, some are dedicated in honor of deities, some are devoted to important events, some are dedicated to nature, animals, plants etc., some take the form of purificatory fasts, and so on. The one common thread that runs through all the festivals is that they create a spiritual climate for the people and renew their contact with God.

activities of life. It is a collective ritual of rites and a public religious observance. N.B. Ghodke (1995:187), after analyzing the essence of the festival, stated that ‘Symbolically it (festival) means the overcoming of all that is base in us by the higher or real self’. The expressed purpose of these rites is to recall the past, and in a way, make it present by means of variable dramatic representations. Though the primary theme of most of the festivals is religious, they have their social and psychological ends as well. Festival is essentially social in nature and symbolizes the feeling of a whole community, which promotes a ‘we’ feeling and group or cultural identity among the members.

<i>House name</i>	<i>Caste to which it refers</i>
Kottaram	(Kavalappara) Nair (a sect of Nair community in Palghat)
Mana	Nambortiri
Illam	Elayathu, moothathu
Matam	Atikal or Brahmins from outside
Pushpakam	Nambeesan
Pisharam	Pisharati
Variyam	Varrier
Puthuvat	Puthuval
Pusa	Izhava and other lower castes
Kuti / Chala / Cherra/ Pati	Dalits (pulaya, pariah, kurava, Nayati etc.)

Objects as Symbol

It is common to use different material objects as symbols. Sometimes even living beings are objectified and used as symbols. Indian tradition is specialized in this form of object symbols. It uses the human body, different animals and birds, colors, etc., as objectified symbols.

The human body as Symbol: The human body, depending on the context, symbolizes various levels of social status and social addressing.

Body marks: Body marks are common to most of the popular and ethnic traditions of the world. Forehead marks are a special form of symbols used in Indian tradition to symbolize the caste, religion and marital status in the case of the women.

Some of the forehead marks such as *vibhuti* (ash) and *bottu* are specific to men of Brahmin caste, especially in Andhra Pradesh. Among these Brahmins a particular variety of forehead marks with ash symbolize the religious sects, Saivism and Vaishnavism. The followers of Saivism put

the forehead marks ≡ horizontally with ash and the followers of Vaishnavism put the forehead mark ≡ vertically with ash. Thus, these two varieties of forehead marks not only symbolize the caste, but also symbolize the religious sect to which they belong.

With regard to the women, *bottu*, the red, round forehead mark, represents the marital status of the women in Indian tradition. Use of this *bottu* in the beginning of the parting of the hair along with its usual place in between the eyebrows symbolizes the married status of the women. If the mark is not there in the parting of the hair and is there in between the eyebrows then it symbolizes the unmarried status of the women. Non-existence of the *bottu* on the forehead symbolizes the widowhood of the women.²

Tattoos: Tattoos are the common ethnic symbols that are variously available in India. Tattoos are the symbolic representations used by different ethnic communities or social groups to represent their belief system. Tattooing is of various forms in India. In some of the tribes such as Chenchus,³ Kanikkar⁴, Mannan,⁵ etc., tattooing is common to the people of both sexes, but in some of the tribes such as Toda tattooing is only for women. Though it is common to use the pictures of Gods as tattoos in some of the tribes like Chenchus and Mannan, some of the tribes such as Kanikkar, Toda etc., use circular, semi-circular forms with dots as tattoos. In the case of Kanikkar, tattoos differ on the basis of gender: for men circular forms and for women half-moons with dots. Though tattooing is usually done on the foreheads and forearms among many tribes but among certain tribes such as Toda⁶, where it is specific only to women, it is drawn on the chin,

Wishing: Wishing each other, when people meet, is a common phenomenon in everyday life. This wishing is of two kinds, based on the status of the other person in Indian tradition. They are *namaste* and prostration. *Namaste* is a common way of wishing and it is used irrespective of

² It must be noted that sometimes the black *bottu* is preferred by the widows instead of leaving the forehead blank.

³ Among Chenchus, tattooing is common to both male and female. It is usually done on their forehead and forearms. They draw the pictures of their gods, which includes the Gods of Hindu pantheon (*Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes* Vol 2. (EDT: 2) 1996:90).

⁴ Among Kanikkar, a tribe of Kerala, tattooing is common to both the male and female. For men circular forms are used and for women half-moons with dots are used as tattoos (EDT: 2: 1996:98).

⁵ Among Mannan, a tribe of Nilgiri hills of south India, tattooing is done on the arms and forehead. Usually, along with various forms of Gods, Sun, Moon, Fish etc., were also tattooed (EDT: 2: 1996:256).

⁶ Among Toda, a tribe of Nilgiri hills of South India, tattooing is a ritual decoration for women only. It is to be done at different ages on different occasions after attaining puberty. It is done on chin, chest, breasts, back, outer side of upper arms, back of left hand, above ankles and across the dorsum of feet in patterns of dots and rings.

age and social status. It is a combination of two Sanskrit words 'namah' and 'te' which means 'salutes to you'. Along with the utterance of these words, both the palms are joined as a physical gesture. *Namaste* symbolizes the recognition of God in all human beings and by saluting the other person we are actually saluting the God in them.

Prostration, which is very unique to Indian tradition, is a form of showing respect in which the person lies on the stomach on the floor and, by joining both the palms, offers his salutations. This form of salutation is usually done to the God, to the parents and to the teachers and to other elders who are considered equal to the above three. This salutation is a symbol of a complete surrender of oneself, one's ego, to the other person. It expresses one's subordination and honor paid by placing the purest part of one's own body, the head, below the most impure part of the other person's body, his feet. Since this salutation is done only to the elders, when a person prostrates, it is obligatory for the other person to bless him with good things. Blessings of the elders are the symbols of the goodwill which are believed to cause good happenings in life.

Creatures as symbols: Indian tradition gives equal status along with the God to different animals and birds by objectifying them as the symbols of the vehicles of God⁷. Animals such as Lion (vehicle of Parvati), Bull (vehicle of Shiva), Mouse (vehicle of Ganesh), Elephant (vehicle of Indra) etc., and birds such as Eagle (vehicle of Vishnu), Peacock (vehicle of Kartikeya), Swan (vehicle of Brahma), etc., are represented as the carriers or the vehicles of the Gods. Among these animals and birds, Lion is a symbol of power and greatness, Bull is a symbol of majesty, Mouse⁸ is a symbol of the fickle-mindedness of the individual, which is to be controlled and brought to the service of God, Elephant is a symbol of royalty, power, wisdom, fertility and longevity, Eagle is a symbol of speed, Peacock is a symbol of royalty (an appropriate emblem for the general of the army of the gods [O'Flaherty; 1995:183]) and Swan is a symbol of the transmigrating soul. Along with these, Stallion which is a symbol of royal, martial and fertility functions, Mare which is a symbol of voracious female who must be tamed, Cow which is a symbol of all values of the society representing motherhood, nourishment, chastity and non-injury (O'Flaherty:1995:183), Dog which as Bhairava (Keith: 1998:237) is considered to be a form of Shiva

⁷ This association, says Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1995:183), means not only that the god is literally carried about on such a animal (for the elephant-headed Ganesa is awkwardly mounted on a bandicoot, or a large rat) but also (and most importantly) that the animal "carries" the god in the way that a breeze "carries" perfume, that the god is always present in that animal, in all its manifestations (the bandicoot, for example, shares Ganesa's nimbleness of wit and ability to get past anything and so is, indeed, an appropriate vehicle for the god).

⁸ The mouse – Ganesa's vehicle – which is the smallest of animals – and elephant which is the biggest of animals on the earth are regarded as symbols of his mastery over everything from the lowest to the highest.

and Snakes which slough their skin to become the symbol of rebirth have significant place in Indian symbolism.

Color: Color symbolization is observable in many traditions and the Indian tradition is one among them. Along with many other traditions of the world, Indian tradition also symbolizes the opposites; black and white with good and bad; true and false; desirable and undesirable. There are a few exceptions to this symbolization. For instance, though white is used as a symbol of peace, its opposite, violence, is always depicted with the color red. The opposite of red is not white all the time. For instance, in the folk tradition of Kerala, the opposite of red is black. In Mudi yettu, a folk performance in Southern Kerala, the two characters *kali* (mother goddess) and *kooli* (evil) are colored with red and black respectively. *Kali* which is in red color is a desirable, loved and auspicious deity, whereas *kooli* which is in black color and is most undesirable, ugly and evil. Thus, good and bad in this tradition are symbolized by red and black colors respectively.

The color red symbolizes not only violence but also fertility in Indian tradition. For instance, in the above referred folk tradition of Southern Kerala Mudi yettu, two pots of water, one with red color and one with black color, are prepared during the performance. The red colored water is poured towards the North and the black colored water is poured towards the South. In this particular context, North and red are the symbols of fertility and prosperity, whereas South and black are the symbol of barrenness and death. This aspect of attributing qualities to directions may have its own affinity with the Vedic tradition where North is said to be ruled by Kubera, the God of prosperity, and South is said to be ruled by Yama, the God of death. On the basis of the qualities of the rulers, even the directions are attributed with the qualities. Further, red color is a symbol of beauty, and black is a symbol of ugliness in South Indian tradition. For instance, in Kathakkali, a traditional art form of Kerala, red color is applied to the lips and ear or the outer corner of the eye to symbolize beauty. It is common to name people as *manikyam* which means sapphire, a red colored precious stone, in South India. Though black is always a symbol of ugliness and evil, it is interesting to note that a black forehead mark is being put on the infants to save them from the eyes of the evil or to save them from the evil effects of the eyes of the people. Thus, the color-trinity black, white and red determine their connotation based on the context in Indian traditions.

The color yellow has a significant place in the Indian tradition, as it is the color of the turmeric which is a part of the everyday life of Indians. Interestingly, the word for both turmeric and yellow is the same in Telugu. Both are referred by the term *pasupu*. The turmeric has a close affinity with women as it is applied to the body; it is used in the preparation of food and also in rituals. Yellow is the symbol of sanctity and purity. The color green, as India is an agriculture-based country, is very closely related to the life of the people. It symbolizes abundance and prosperity.

Nature Symbols

One unique feature of Indian tradition is that it perceives divinity in every aspect of nature. Different aspects of nature, such as rivers, oceans, mountains, earth, trees, ant-hills, air, sun and moon, etc., are used as symbols in Indian tradition. Rivers symbolize purity and femininity, whereas oceans symbolize masculinity. *Sagarasangamam*, the meeting place of a river and the ocean, is considered to be a place of sanctity. In the same way, earth is the symbol of femininity and mountains the symbol of strength and masculinity.

Trees,⁹ such as the banyan tree, *tulasi-holy basil* (*ocymum sanctum*) and *bel* (*aegle marmelos*) which are used to refresh the symbol of Shiva are worshipped as the symbols of divinity¹⁰ along with ant-hills which are the hiding places of snakes. Air is a symbol of strength and masculinity and is worshipped in the form of Vayudeva. Sun and Moon, though they are the representatives of opposites, light and darkness, are worshipped equally as symbols of heat and cold, both of which are necessary for human existence.

Religious Symbols

Of all the religions of the world, the religions of Indian origin have consciously and boldly accepted symbolism. However, I confine this work to Hindu religious symbols with which I am well-acquainted. Two types of symbolism are available in Hinduism. First, the verbal or the sound symbols

⁹ The belief in the tree-spirit which is found in the Rigveda is prominent throughout the popular religion. The Maghs of Bengal would fell trees only at the instigation of Europeans and in their presence: on cutting down any large tree one of the party used to place a sprig in the centre of the stump when the tree fell as a propitiation to the spirit which had been displaced...The *pippala* or *asvattha* (*Ficus religiosa*) is said to be the abode of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, but the cotton-tree is the home of the local gods, who can more affectively watch the affairs of the village, since they are less occupied than these great deities. The *nim*-tree harbors the demons of disease, but its leaves serve to drive away serpents....The *tulsi*-plant or holy *basil* (*Ocymum sanctum*) has aromatic and healing properties....The *bel* (*Aegle marmelos*) is used to refresh the symbol of Siva, and its fruit is fabled to be produced from the milk of the Goddess Sri. The *Palasa*, (*Butea frondosa*), bamboo, sandal, and many other trees are more or less sacred and are applied to specific ceremonial use or avoided as dangerous (Keith: 1998:238-9).

¹⁰ Gautam Chatterjee (2001:83) cites the *Brihatsamhita* in which it is mentioned that before taking wood from a particular tree which must be used for making Gods, the people of four *varnas* should invoke those trees after the worship at night with a prayer in these words: 'O Tree! We are interested in making an image of a deity. I salute you. Please accept my worship offered according to injunctions, may those beings who reside here arrange for their residence elsewhere after accepting the injunctions. Let them forgive me.'

found in mantras, and second, the visual or the form symbols of different types of figures revealed by conceptions of deities, the anthropomorphic forms of which are often worshipped as aspects and instruments of God. The images are built according to the *dhyana-slokas* (meditation verses) of the particular deities. The images of the deities, as well as the mantras referring to them, are the embodiments of consciousness, through which God may be contacted. They are based upon the idea that every form has a corresponding sound at the back of it and every sound must have a form.

Verbal symbols: Verbal or sound symbols are helpful in visualizing the images of the deities while in meditation. *Aum* and *Bija-Aksharas* are a few examples of verbal symbols.

*Aum*¹¹: *Aum* is considered to be, in Hinduism, the first sound, the most elementary sound, the undifferentiated natural sound, and the most spontaneous self-expression of energy or power in audible form. *Aum* is a universal continuous sound behind all broken sounds. Regular repetition of *Aum* with steady and lengthened utterance is prescribed. *Aum* represents the undifferentiated Brahman. Its three letters A U M represent His three aspects viz., Brahman, Vishnu and Siva; creation, maintenance and destruction. Out of *Aum* everything else has evolved. So *Aum* is understood to be a symbol of universality.

Bija Aksharas: *Bija* is the seed and *akshara* is the imperishable. *Bijaksharas* means seeds of imperishable. *Aim*, *klim* and *hrim* etc., are a few such *bijaksharas*. These sound vibrations have great mystical significance. By vocal pronunciation or mental thinking they give illumination.

Visual symbols: Fundamentally, a symbol is necessary to conceive and meditate on the Lord who in essence is beyond the ken of thought and mind. So each system develops through centuries of spiritual practice certain symbols, representations and diagrams in accordance with the genius of the people. *Yantra*, God, Worship and Temple are a few of such visual symbols of Indian tradition.

Yantra: *Yantra* is a diagrammatic representation of reality in lines. The *yantra* with its lines, circles and triangles is a better symbol of reality. For instance, the well-known *Srichakra*, which is a *yantra*, represents elements, elementals, the various presiding deities, the complete phonetic system, *charkas* as well as union of *Siva-sakti* in the centre. Such a comprehensive unity can be conceived only in a *yantra* which, with its endless lines and circles, can encompass the whole universe. There is an intimate relationship between *yantra* and *mantra* and the deity dwells in *yantra* when real potency is given through invocation.

¹¹ According to Atharva Veda "The Super being, having begun to think by which single syllable one may be able to enjoy one's desires, all the worlds, all the Gods, all the Vedas, all the sacrifices, all the sounds, all the beings stationary and moving, saw OM, the all pervading, omnipotent, the eternally potent of Brahman, the Brahman's own symbolic syllable of which the presiding divinity is Brahman itself (Atharva Veda, Gopatha Brahmana I, 6-22).

God: According to Hindu philosophy, the divine has both personal and impersonal aspects. Symbols of the personal aspects satisfy the philosophic sense of the devotee, yet make easy the grasping of the absolute. The higher reality is Brahman which is indefinable. So, symbols are used as intermediaries between the inadequate and limited capacity of man and the created language and incommunicable nature and fullness of Brahman. But symbols of Brahman are not false. They are a portion or aspect of the truth. For worship, various substitutes of Brahman have been accepted. Some of the symbols such as *Satchitananda* (existence-knowledge-bliss) and *Svayambhu* (the self-created and self-existent one) etc., are quite comprehensive and suggestive but Brahman transcends them all. The Vedic saying 'Truth is one, sages call it variously' reflects that Hinduism uses the symbols knowing them as partial manifestations of the higher reality.

Hinduism has profusely made use of symbolism in religious worship with a definite purpose. Its main aim is to set forth something which cannot be really or fully expressed or conceived in visible or audible forms. The image or symbol of God serves the purpose of providing in material and suitable form a convenient object of reverence. But Hinduism never considered them as ultimate. They were the stepping stones to a higher conception, something like the signposts or guides to better and higher thoughts. That is why Hinduism does not look suspiciously at the so-called idols, totems or fetishes. It considers them as symbols, for they remind of the reality and that is their function, for the highest reality cannot be approached through the senses.

Indian theism gives way to two varieties of Godhood; one representing the pan-Indian theism and the other representing the region or place or community specific local theism. The term local here is used not in a denigrated sense but rather to represent its limited prevalence. Pan-Indian theism or popular theism is said to have three *crores* of Gods in its fold. These include innumerable nature Gods¹² such as *Vayu* (air), *Varuna* (rain), *Surya* (sun), *Megha* (cloud), etc., which represent the various aspects of the nature, along with the Creator God, Brahma (who is different from Absolute Brahman), Preserver God Vishnu (who is worshipped in 10 different forms which are said to be his incarnations) and Destroyer God Shiva (who is worshipped with the symbol *linga* along with the given physical form). The wives and children of these Gods are again given the status of God.

Along with these popular Gods, there are certain local Gods and Goddesses such as Gangamma, Maridemma, Poleramma, etc., who are worshipped by different local communities in South India. These are the village

¹² Some of these nature Gods are also the guardian deities of the different directions. There are ten such deities guarding ten directions such as East, West, North, South, North East, North West, South East, South West, Up and Down. They are *Indra*, *Varuna*, *Kubera*, *Yama*, *Isana*, *Vayur*, *Agni*, *Nairuti*, *Dyaus* and *Prithvi* respectively (Ghodke: 1995:284-293).

Gods and Goddesses who are believed to be the protectors of the village from natural calamities and endemic diseases, such as cholera, measles, etc.

Along with the Gods who are the symbols of the Absolute, there exist a few symbols of the Gods. Linga and Salagrama are a few of such symbolic representations of Siva and Vishnu. *Linga* means symbol, sign. It also means the place of mergence, in which all manifestations are dissolved and unified. Some have tried to trace its origin to phallus worship. Some have endeavored to identify the conceptions of Linga and Yoni as fatherhood and motherhood.

The *salagrama* of Vishnu represents the absolute with attributes. It is black and egg-shaped and represents *Hiranyagarbha* or the primordial golden egg, the undifferentiated totality. It is out of *Hiranyagarbha* that the whole universe becomes differentiated in course of time.

Worship: There is much of symbolism in ceremonial rituals and worship in India. There are two major strands of worship that are now visible only in a mixed form; they are fire worship called *archana* and idol worship called *puja*. Though these two represent two different strands of belief systems, these have mixed, adopted each other and gave place to a mixed form of worship where both worshipping through fire and worshipping the idols by offering flowers and food are done. The present form of this mixed worship has following forms each of which has a distinct symbolic representation of God.

- Puja or Idol worship: in this form of worship, a physical object is worshipped as a symbol of God.

- Prayer or Prarthana: it is supplication of God for his mercy and grace. It symbolizes God verbally and mentally (inwardly) and aspires for his union.

- Recitation of Mantra or Japa: Mantra is a compact symbol of the deity as the object of contemplation or worship. Japa is the recitation of this mantra. Since mantra is believed to be the compact symbol of God, by constant recitation of this it is believed that the God can be invoked.

- Meditation or *Dhyana*: In this form of worship the worshipper himself becomes the symbol of the deity and finally gets united with Him.

Among the four forms, puja or idol worship is said to be for the laymen and meditation is considered to be the highest form. Whatever may be the form, the chief function of this ritualism is determined by its symbolism. S.D. Sarma (1971:23) while bringing out the symbolism in worship states that most of the rites performed are intended for visualizing belief. The gratitude to God is visualized by the offering of grain and fruit on the altar. In the temple worship, god is treated as an earthly king and royal honors are paid to him. The ritual acts of cleaning and washing, purificatory baths and ceremonies etc., are nothing but the external marks suggesting purity of mind and the spirit.

Temple: The temple is an outward symbolic representation of the existence of God in the heart of human body. The heart is a cave and the king of the dark chamber is the God; hence the *sanctum sanctorum* is purposely kept dark without any windows or ventilators; except for a small lamp in front burning day and night. The light represents the lamp of wisdom that would be lit in the heart and keeps burning constantly. Lights in the temple represent the light of the soul, the ever resplendent *atmajyoti*. The *ghee* often supplied to the lamp stands for regular spiritual practice. The system of burning camphor before the deity means that our ego etc., are to be set on fire with the flame of divinity. When all desires etc., are consumed in the flame, the *jiva* becomes one with the Lord. The *suprabhata* song sung early in the morning for the purpose of waking up the Lord is really the waking up of sleeping divinity in man. Generally, every temple has three *prakaras* or rounds representing the three bodies, gross, subtle and causal. Every temple has a *Balipitha* in front, which suggests to the devotee to sacrifice his entire ego and desires before he enters the temple.

To sum up, there are two basic and major strands of culture that are available, sometimes moving parallel sometimes intermingling, in the above represented symbolism of India. One of the major strands is local culture which is region specific and folk in nature and the other is popular culture which is followed by almost all the sub-cultures of India with minor modifications. Ethnic symbols are more primary in nature and represent the emotion or feeling of the people towards that symbol, whereas popular symbols are secondary in nature and represent the rationale and the intellect of the people, along with emotion and feeling. Both these symbols are mixed in the above discussion. No attempt has been made to explicate the distinction between the two, as much field study is needed to understand the background of folk symbolism.

CHANGES OF SYMBOLS

Change is universal and natural to all objects of the world and aspects of life as well. Symbol being a bridge between empirical and metaphysical is no exception to this change. The causes of this change in symbols are internal in a few instances and external in a few others. If the cause of the change is internal, it is natural, if the cause is the external then it is the artificial and imposed.

At least three aspects of change can be viewed with regard to symbolism. Given that through the signifier we understand that which it connotes, we can have change of the sign but not the symbolic purport or we can have change of symbolic purport but not the same sign or we can also have change of both sign and symbolic purport. In the first instance, the sign or signifier changes and the symbolic content or signified continues to stay in the tradition, but only as an attachment to another sign. For instance, in Hinduism, Vedic texts are the sacred works that were read and worshipped as the symbol of holiness. The symbolic content of holiness and

sacredness is, now attached to epics such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, where you will find a close link between the empirical and the metaphysical. In this way the Vedas give their symbolic purport to the epics which are read and worshipped in almost every Hindu household. Now though many Hindus know about the Vedas, they no longer read or worship them. In the second instance, although sign continues to retain its place in the symbolic structure, it loses its control over the symbolic content that it carries and eventually purports another meaning. This is often seen in different cultures, especially in languages, when a word changes its meaning over a period of time. For instance in Hindu caste system, 'Brahmin' used to be symbol of chastity, purity and knowledge; now the term is still in use losing its symbolic purport and merely becoming a sign. In the third instance, where both sign and symbolic purport change, the result could be either the disappearance of both from the symbolic order or the adoption of another sign or symbolic content, about which we have already noted above.

Accommodation and adjustments of different aspects of life in response to the dispositions of nature can be understood as natural change. Responses and reactions of a particular culture or society to the dispositions of other cultures and societies would lead to an artificial change. Natural change is slow when compared to the artificial. Since changes in nature move at a slower pace, the reactions of humans can be slow also. Accommodation and adjustments are characteristics of natural change, but forcefulness and compulsiveness are often added in artificial change.

Keeping these aspects of change in the mind, let me try to look at change as it is available in different aspects of symbolism of India. A cursory look at the history of India would reveal that, although it has a strong and rigid metaphysical structure around which all the cultural aspects are woven; its character is also open to the interactions, adaptations and offerings with, and to other cultures. This is evident from the numerous foreign cultures, which have invaded the country starting from the Aryans who came around 600 BC to the most recent British who came around 18th century AD. In between, Kushans, Muslims, Dutch, Portuguese etc., have come to India. These external impositions interacted with the material culture of India, but not with the metaphysical – except that of the Aryans. Only the Aryans have interacted, modified and contributed to the metaphysical dimension of India. Since, in India the symbolic is always seen with a metaphysical purport, symbolism in India – in many contexts – has been untouched by external influences.

However, when the material culture changes the non-material culture or metaphysical culture which includes practices, beliefs, folkways etc., also would change in response. Since the pace of changes in the material culture is relatively faster than that of the changes in the non-material culture, there would be a gap, which William Ogburn (1922, 86) terms as 'cultural lag'. Cultural lag can be seen even in the symbolic order. This 'cultural lag', which I would call 'symbolic lag' – whether or not its application to the symbolic order is evident in the Indian culture – is an interesting issue to

pursue. Let us look at the change that is visible in various types of symbolism in India.

National symbols are the symbols of the country as a unified unit. They express the greatness, pride, uniqueness, or emotion of the nation. The national symbols of India were created mostly during the freedom movement. Symbolizing the country as mother (chained all over) and the adoption of the national flag with three colors and a wheel in the middle were the pre-independence Indian symbols which were retained even after independence – with a few modifications. Other national symbols such as the national emblem, national bird, national animal, national flower, national anthem and national song were adopted as national symbols after independence. National symbols are usually taken from tradition to represent the unity. They are mostly secular or common to all groups. These national symbols are subject to change when the public consensus or their ability to hold the collective memory of the people changes. Since the national symbols are conventional, they need to be constantly recycled, actualized, challenged, renegotiated and reconfirmed. This brings the need to create space for these national symbols in the public sphere. However, this raises an interesting problem: restricting the use of these national symbols so that they are not used in an improper way.

Political symbols are the symbols of the parties. They are subject to change depending on the ideology of the parties. These symbols are subject to restrictions that may be imposed by the election commission. A party may like to adopt a particular symbol as representing its ideology, but the adoption has to be approved by the election commission before it can be used. In countries like India, where a multi-party system is existent, allotting the symbols to parties is a difficult task, especially when two or more parties want to adopt the same symbol. Other problems arise when a party divides into two or more parties on the basis of ideological differences.

The role played by social symbols is not only that of unifying and regulating the social order, but also that of making communications within the social group possible. In India most of the social symbols take the source of their authenticity from religion. Change in the source of authenticity often leads to change in symbols. But change within religion is often very slow and it needs to be natural. This makes rapid change in the social sphere difficult. To cope with this, changes in the social sphere are forced by the states. This shift in the source of authenticity of social symbols from religious to political often creates a symbolic lag or a crisis in the social order of the country. This is the present situation of India, where the ‘marginalized social groups’, under the protection of state law, oppose the hegemony of the class hierarchy and try to create their own symbolism – actions that make their communication with other groups sometimes very difficult.

Every culture symbolizes certain objects and communicates different meanings within and across cultures through these objects. These meanings can be social, political, or religious. These object-symbols change according

to the change in the corresponding sphere. As mentioned earlier, the religious sphere in India is the source of authenticity for most of the social symbols, if not the political ones. Thus, most of the object symbols resist change. Although symbols, such as body marks and *wishing*, have undergone change; they did not completely lose their symbolic meaning. Since symbolisms of creatures and color have their roots in tradition and ethnicity, they resisted change and still continue to preserve their place as they are. In the same way nature symbolism that is found in India is rooted in either religion or ethnicity, and thereby changes in this symbolic order are not visible.

Religious symbolism, as mentioned earlier, is the most important and stable form of symbolism in any culture. There was a major shift in the Hindu Pantheon in the later Vedic period, during which the Puranic gods came into prominence without completely rejecting the place of Vedic gods. This change is an internal one and it took a lot of time for this change to come about. This change was occasioned by the synthesis of the Vedic culture with a non-Vedic culture. There were no modifications after the synthesis, and it is interesting to note that Hinduism is still adding to the list of its deities, even as it does not deny a place to the current deities. With regard to worship, since tradition has advocated different forms of worship for different people who are in different stages of life, people have adopted the mode of worship that suits them most. Some of the modes of worship which include a rigid ritualistic form are restricted to only a few contexts. Thus, though there is a shift in the concentration of different aspects of religious symbolism, in India there is no real modification or denial of a particular religious symbol.

The above discussion brings to the fore the dynamism of change in different symbolic spheres. The point here is that a natural change occasioned by its own internal mechanism – after negotiations within its particular group – is more peaceful and welcoming. Whereas the change occasioned by external or alien forces – be it the State, an organ of State, or any other – leads to a crisis (For instance, political symbols and social symbols – as discussed above). Due to the changes occasioned by external causes, some of the aspects of material culture – such as national, political and social life – may lose their metaphysical connections, and thus, may lose their symbolic value and become mere ‘indexes’ of Peirce (1955,102).¹³ Affinity to the metaphysical and at the same time attraction to the material culture are creating a ‘symbolic lag’ in some spheres of life. Symbolic lag would not be found where the affinity to the metaphysical is very strong. This metaphysical affinity is strong in the religious sphere. So in aspects which draw authority from the religious sphere, symbolic lag is less evident.

¹³ For Peirce, indexes are the causes or consequences or co-currents of their referents.

THE SYMBOLIC AND THE GLOBAL

The two most debated issues of contemporary times – the symbolic and the global – are brought together in the theme of this volume. Interest in the global was initiated by the move of Capitalism of the West, whereas interest in the symbol, as discovered by Mircea Eliade in his book *Images and Symbols* (1961), was initiated by Europe's interest in so called 'historic, archaic and primitive' non-European cultures as alternative instruments of cognition.¹⁴ This brings us to an interesting debate – the global versus the symbolic: the global as a move towards universalisation and the symbolic as the core of cultural identity. One advocates change – a rapid change – the other insists on stability and resists change. One is for homogenization and universalisation; the other for heterogeneity and diversity. This does not mean that they are opposites; in fact they interpolate each other. There is symbolization within globalization and there is generalization involved in the process of symbolization. Understanding the relation between the two and placing them appropriately in discussions is a major task of contemporary times.

Let me try to bring out the distinction between global symbols and cultural symbols by taking hints from Perry (1998). Cultural symbols are based on a long history and tradition; whereas global symbols are mainly constructs that are driven by the economy or the media. Symbols of local and national cultures have strong emotional connotations for a large number of people, but global symbols are bereft of such an 'ethnic-based' appeal. While global symbols can certainly draw upon symbols of folk and national cultures, they are not based on shared global stories and memories. In this sense they are 'memory-less': syncretic and dependent upon the profit-seeking production of mass-mediated signs. Lastly, cultural symbols are closely tied to place and time. In contrast, global symbols free themselves from these constraints, and, as such, they are 'disconnected, disembodied and deterritorialized' – they exist outside the usual reference to geographical territory.

It is precisely because of these reasons that globalization is often understood as a euphemism of domination. It suggests something entirely different from what it actually attempts to achieve. It seems to be representing an ideal process of equal sharing and voluntary participation. But in actuality – in the contemporary global order of uneven development – relationship can only be unequal. As argued by K.N. Panikkar (2002), when post-colonial societies without 'post-coloniality' are re-integrated into a global order, one can be sure of the subordination of the economically weaker countries. For

¹⁴ Mircea Eliade in the book *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism* (tr. Philip Mairet, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1961) states that the invasion of Western Europe by Symbolism coincides with the arrival of Asia on the horizon of History. Study of Symbolism, he adds, gained prominence when the Westerners understood that they are no longer the only people to 'make history', and that there are other ways of knowing the other scales of values than their own.

countries like India, globalization only heralds subjection, argued Panikkar, because it does not augur freedom and progress: rather it would ensure the climate necessary for domination and hegemonisation by the world capitalist countries.

Keeping aside the evaluation of globalization, let us come back to the change in symbols in aglobal time. As mentioned earlier, symbols in the process of preserving identity negotiate and renegotiate with the community. Thus, they resist rapid change. Globalization, in the process of compressing and annihilating the temporal accessibility of space – with the aid of high-speed technological growth – attempts to accelerate the pace of change in all spheres of human activity. This accelerated pace of change poses formidable challenges to the symbolic mode of different cultures. Only cultures with a rich variety of symbolism can contest the rapidity of change. In India, the richness and diversity of symbolism that was discussed, above, show how globalization can be hindered from overpowering or homogenizing the Indian culture. Because symbol is, resists change, the richness and diversity of symbols help the culture to be stable in resisting the rapid moves of globalization.

Globalization has to enter the cultures either by modifying or by destroying the symbols. Although essentially symbols resist change, some of the symbols, such as social and political, accommodate change with less resistance. In contrast with these, the ethnic, religious and cultural symbols appeal strongly to the emotions of the people and they cannot be modified or destroyed easily. In India, since all the spheres of human activity are influenced by religion, resistance to change is stronger in all spheres.

It is difficult to intrude into a unified structure; but once broken into at a particular point, the whole structure would become vulnerable. In contrast, it may look easy to intrude into a diversified structure, but such a structure needs maximum strength and time, and is less vulnerable. India is a country of diverse cultures, religions, languages, ethnic groups and practices which are unified with a sense of oneness. It is difficult for any particular alien power to easily intrude and overpower the diverse unification of Indian culture, which is rooted in a long historical tradition. The very fact that Indian tradition continued to exist until today, unlike the other ancient civilizations of the world, is the surest proof of its great power of assimilation. Indian tradition has been invaded by many cultures since the pre-Aryan times dating back at least to the sixth century BC. Each fresh incursion of culture and ideas found the Indian temperament more malleable than before and it accelerated the processes of assimilation and synthesis. These new ingredients continually added to the richness and complexity of Indian life and brought to birth a new organic way of life. Today, whatever is Indian, whether it is an idea, a form of art, a political institution or a social custom, is a blend of many different strains and elements. In spite of this derivation from many sources and the consequent variety of forms and types, we find a remarkable unity of spirit. Unity and uniformity serve as the basis of the continuity of Indian tradition. It is only in India that the old

civilization and culture have grown and changed, but not at the expense of an underlying unity. This has been possible only through the capacity for readjustment and elasticity that has rarely been equaled. One ground of this adjustment is found in the spirit of tolerance that has characterized Indian history throughout the ages. As noted by Humayun Kabir (1946) 'Live and Let Live' has been the policy of India in all spheres of life. Thus, the unity that is found in India was never a dead uniformity; rather it carried with it the demand for variety and particularity. This variety and particularity with an underlying unity gave rise to the rich and varied symbolism that is available now, which is difficult to modify or to easily destroy.

To sum up, by following the discussion on the symbolic as a faculty that distinguishes the human from the animal, I explicated the richness of Indian symbolism. This was followed by a brief discussion on the possibility of change in the different symbolic orders. Thus placed, the symbol against the global, and argued that the richness and variety of symbolism of India will resist the rapid pace of change that globalization is striving to bring forth.

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CHAPTER XVII

DECODING THE PHILOSOPHICAL DNA OF THE YINYANG SYMBOL

ROBIN R. WANG

DNA as the code of life defines all living structures and functions. Chinese culture, like all the myriad things, has its own distinctive code, or memes as Richard Dawkins describes,¹ by which it is transmitted and evolving from generation to generation. Uncannily parallel to the DNA in all living things, the philosophical DNA of *yinyang*, as a basic building block of the tradition, is embedded in all aspects of Chinese culture throughout history. It thus makes sense to decode this double helix of *yinyang* in order to interpret the genetic structure of Chinese philosophy and culture. While the double helix structure was, of course, unknown to ancient Chinese thinkers, nonetheless there is a striking analogy between DNA, as we now understand it, and the structure of the *yinyang* symbol. This essay embarks on this effort by offering a discernment of the popular *yinyang*

symbol. First, it will focus on when and how the *yinyang* symbol came about. Through a historical and textual investigation, this essay shows that, stemming from a rich history of visual images, the *yinyang* symbol is but one member of a far-flung family of symbols that have evolved through time. Recognizing this context must suggest how this symbol gives rise to emergent meanings in the process of developing Chinese cosmology and ontology.

Second, this essay will attempt to discuss what the *yinyang* symbol is meant to represent. Through a philosophical analysis, this essay argues for a thinking model, namely trinary thinking. The Chinese way of thinking is often defined as a form of “correlative thinking” which sees the world as a correlation between heaven, earth and human being.² This essay contends

¹ The term ‘meme’ first appeared in 1976, in Richard Dawkins’ *The Selfish Gene*. Meme refers to “an element of a culture that may be considered to be passed on by non-genetic means, esp. imitation.” Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. viii. Thanks to Dr. Brad Stone who brought this theory to my attention.

² See the following essays: Benjamin I. Schwartz, “Correlative Cosmology, The School of Yin and Yang” in his book, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp.351-382. Alison Black, “Gender and Cosmology in Chinese Correlative Thinking,” in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*. Ed. C.W. Bynum, S. Harrell, and P. Richman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989). John B. Henderson, *The Development*

that correlative thinking is only the beginning of understanding Chinese thinking because the correlative structures, as identified, remain abstractions of human cognitive construction. Trinary thinking seeks to include a full living reality in its dynamic patterns of ever-changing configurations.

GENEALOGY OF THE YINYANG SYMBOL

There is no clear and definite way to determine the exact date of origin or the person who created the *yinyang* symbol. No one has ever claimed specific ownership of this popular image. However, there is a rich textual and visual history leading to its creation. Inspired by a primeval vision of cosmic harmony, Chinese thinkers have been seeking to codify this order in various intellectual constructs. Whether to formulate this underlying pattern through words and concepts or numbers and visual images has been debated since the Han dynasty. The question first surfaced in the interpretation of *The Yijing (Book of Changes)*. The *Yijing*, the earliest text, is considered a temple and repository of knowledge. There is little doubt that, for many Chinese, knowledge is equated with the study of the *Yijing*. The *Yijing* is constructed around sixty-four hexagrams 卦 (*gua*), each of which is made of six parallel broken or unbroken line segments 爻 (*yao*). Each of the 64 hexagrams has a unique designation, its “*xiang*,” 象 (images) which in reference to a particular natural object convey the meaning of human events and activities. The *Yijing* thus has generated a special way to figure out the universe. It mainly incorporates three elements: *xiang* 象 (images), *shu* 數 (numbers), and *li* 理 (meanings). They act as the mediators between heavenly cosmic phenomena and earthly human everyday life.

The term “*xiang*” 象 is of special philosophical interest, for it affords us an appreciation of the distinctive features of Chinese epistemology.³ *Xiang* has perhaps two basic meanings: 1) On the one hand, it is an image resulting from observation 觀 (*guan*), that is, a subjective act of perception. In making a snapshot of the world, or an image of the object, the subject, as knower, attempts to grasp the *xiang* of the known object. Yet seizing the *xiang* involves an engagement of knower and the object being known. It is a construction resulting from some special knowing activity, such as divination. 2) On the other hand, the *xiang* also exist independently of human perception. It is a form or shape, a pattern or configuration. It can be translated as “figure”: “To figure is to represent as a symbol or image, but also to give or bring into shape....*Hsiang* [*xiang*] is used of classes of physical

and Decline of Chinese Cosmology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p.1.

³ Hu shi has given the explanation for the etymological origin of the word. Shu-Hsien Liu, “The Use of Analogy and Symbolism in Traditional Chinese Philosophy”, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 1 (1974), 316.

objects as well as particular physical objects, often with an implication of ‘that which is tangible.’⁴ Yet this figure is not to be confused with *xing* 形 (form). *Xing* is more concrete and is evident in a particular structure. But *xiang* is more subtle and demands a special way of knowing, if it is to be recognized. For example, *Qian* 乾 is the *xiang* of all things that are *yang* in the cosmos, and *kun* 坤 is the *xiang* of all things that are *yin*. Given this context then, to know is to figure out the *xiang* of how a thing is to be known. Physicians look for the *xiang* of their patients (*kanxiang*) in order to make a correct diagnosis; fortune-tellers also hunt for the *xiang* of one’s face to predict some future event in a particular client’s life.

Thus the *Yijing* states: “*Taiji* generates *eryi* [namely, the *yin* and *yang* forces], and *eryi* generates four *xiang* [which is greater *yang* and lesser *yang*, greater *yin* and lesser *yin*]; then the four *xiang* generate eight trigrams. *Yi* [change] with four *xiang* is the means by which it manifests.”⁵ In other words, the *yi* [changes] can be seen through these *xiang*.

Master said writing does not bring out exhaustively what is said, and what is said does not bring out exhaustively what is thought. That being so, is it the case that the thinking of the sage cannot be perceived? The master said: The sages set up *xiang* (figures) in order to bring out exhaustively what is thought.⁶

Xiang are the media connecting the realm of what is intelligible to the realm of what is imperfectly knowable, thus mediating between known and unknown. *Yijing* captures the prognosticating capabilities of *xiang* in numinous things, omens, astrological signs and numerological devices. It also describes how Fuyi formulated the patterns of the universe through the production of *xiang*.

Looking up, he [Fuyi] observed *xiang* in the heaven. Looking down, he observed *fa* (models/patterns/laws) on the earth. He observed the markings of the birds and beasts and their suitability on the earth. Close by, he drew on his own body. Farther away, he drew on things. Therewith he invented the eight trigrams in order to comprehend the potency of what is numinous and what is luminous. And in order to categorize the actual circumstances of the ten thousands things.⁷

⁴ Willard Peterson, “Making Connections: ‘Commentary on the Attached Verbalizations’ of the *Book of Change*.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 42, June, 1982, p.81.

⁵ My own translation.

⁶ Peterson, p. 99.

⁷ Peterson, p.111.

If the *Yijing* is established as “the *simulacrum* or *doppelgänger* of cosmic patterns,”⁸ then its interpretation, especially *xiang* (images) contained in it, has great importance. To know is to embrace *xiang* through diverse human endeavors. Not surprisingly the history of Chinese philosophy bears witness to an ongoing struggle over the elucidation of these *xiang*. One of the ways *xiang* can be seized is through drawing diagrams and symbols. From the Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.-220 C.E.) through the Ming/Qing dynasties (1368-1912), there is a consistent tension between two schools of thought: the school of *xiangshu* 象數 (images and numbers) and the school of *yili* 義理 (meanings and reasoning).⁹ At issue between them is how best to interpret the classics, particularly the *Yijing*. The question as posed is: “Am I interpreting the six classics or are the six classics interpreting me?”

For the school of *Xiangshu* the way to interpret the classics is to produce a figurative and numerological representation of universe through *xiang* (images) and *shu* (numbers). It holds that *xiangshu* are indispensable structures expressing the Way of heaven, earth and human being. Thus the school of *Xiangshu* centers on “I interpret the classics” by means of the images and numbers. The emphasis is on the appreciation of classics. The school of *Yili*, on the other hand, focuses on the exploration of the meanings of the classics on the basis of their own reconstruction. In other words, the school of *Yili* treats all classics as the evidence or tool for supporting their own ideas and theories.¹⁰ The emphasis is more on their idiosyncratic new theories rather than the explanation of the classics. In what follows, our inquiry focuses on the legacy of the *Xiangshu* school.

The most common effort of *Xiangshu* school is to draw the *tu* 圖 (diagram)¹¹. The *tu* often contain, in black and white, structure and lines, place and numbers. They are not an aesthetic operation but a means of articulating the fundamental patterns that govern phenomena in the universe. Although *tu* are presented as pictures or charts, yet they have “a normative quality. Accordingly, the word *tu* may have the meaning of norm or rule (*fa*).”¹² In other words, *tu* are a universe in microcosm and exemplify some definite norms or rules. During the Song dynasty (960-1279) Daoist monk Chen Tuan (陳搏 906-989 CE) made an important contribution to this tradition.¹³ Chen lived on Hua mountain 華山¹⁴ and drew a few *tu* in order to

⁸ John B. Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p.12.

⁹ See more discussion in Zhu Bokuan’s book: *The Philosophical History of School of Yi* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1988).

¹⁰ One example of the school of *yili* will be Guo Xiang (252-312).

¹¹ For the discussion of concept of *tu*, see Florian C. Reiter “Some Remarks on the Chinese Word T’U ‘Chart, Plan, Design’”, *Oriens*, 32 (1990), pp. 308-322.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.311.

¹³ For more information on Chen Tuan see Livia Kohn, “Chen Tuan in History and Legend,” *Taoist Resources*, 2 (1, 1990), p.8-31.

elucidate the *Yijing*. Though none of his *tu* directly was passed down, he is considered the forerunner of the school of *tushu* 圖書 (diagram and writings). It is said that he had three *tu*, and later the efforts to discover these *tu* have become a popular pursuit. Generations of intellectuals have labored on the formulation and creation of numerous *tu*.¹⁵ *Tu* have been seen as signifying celestial realities and deciphering terrestrial regions in a crystalline structure representing the dynamic patterns of the universe. These efforts assimilated a mental, verbal and pictorial imagery into the mysterious process of making diagrams in contrast to writing books. According to Zhu Zheng 朱震 in Song Dynasty, there are three trends in making *tu* emerged: Liu Mu 劉牧 (1011-1064 C.E.): *Hetu* 河圖 and *Luoshu* 洛書 (*The Diagram of River and Chart of Luo*, **Figure 1**); Shaoyong 邵雍 (1011-1077 C.E.): *Xiantian tu* 先天圖 (*The Tu of Preceding Heaven*, **Figure 2**); and Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073): *Taijitu*, 太極圖 (*The Diagram of the Great Ultimate*, **Figure 3**). Zhu Zheng also offers a historical transmission of these works. According to him, Chen Tuan's *Xiantain Tu* was passed down through Zhong Fang – Mu Xiu – Li Zhicai, then came to Shaoyong; *Hetu* and *Luoshu* tradition was handed through Li Gai – Xiu Jian – Fan Hechang, then to Liu Mu; The *Taiji tu* was carried by Mu Xiu to Zhou Dunyi. Zhu Zheng's speculations were confirmed and endorsed by Zhu Xi (1130-1200 C.E.) and accepted among the intellectual circles since then. These three trends eventually led to the creation of the first *yinyang* symbol in the Ming dynasty by Zhao Huiqian 趙撝謙 (1351-1395 C.E.) in the name of *Tiandi Zhiran Hetu* 天地自然河圖 (*Heaven and Earth's Natural Diagram of the River*, **Figure 4**). The following is a brief account of each *tu*.

Liu Mu: Hetu & Luoshu. (The Diagram of River and Chart of Luo)

Hetu and *luoshu* are believed to be the two oldest numbered diagrams. They were often mentioned in the classic literature, but no one knew what they looked like until the Song dynasty. The earliest occurrence of the term *hetu* is given in the *Shujing* (*Book of History*), the *Kuming* chapter. But it also appeared in other early classics. For example, in the *Analects*, Confucius claims, “The phoenix has not arrived; the *he* (river) has not appeared in its *tu* (diagram).” (*Analects*, Book 9).¹⁶ In the *Liji* (*Book of Ritual*), the *Liyun* chapter, it mentions that the *hetu* appeared on the back of a dragon-

¹⁴ Now in Shanxi province near the ancient capital city of Xi'an.

¹⁵ There is a three volume and thousand page books published on the *tu* last year in China. Li Shen and Guo Yu: *The Complete Selection of Diagrams of Zhouyi* (*Zhouyi Tushuo Zonghui* 周易图说总汇) (Shanghai: China Eastern Normal University Press, (华东师范大学出版社, 2004).

¹⁶ My own translation.

like horse.¹⁷ The commentary on the *Yijing*, *Xici* also mentions the *tu* diagram as coming from the river. “The *Tu* was produced from the Yellow River and *Shu* was produced from the Lo River. Sages modeled them.”¹⁸ These accounts have been accepted as the way to grasp the *hetu* and *loushu*. “There are two basic kinds of references to the *Hotu* [*hetu*] in early literature. The first relates it to a precious object, perhaps made of jade, which gave kings the right to rule, and the second identifies the river chart with the eight trigrams first depicted in Chinese legend by the mythical emperor Fu Hsi.”¹⁹ Before the Song dynasty, the *hetu* is treated as “a magic talisman giving the right to reign,” or a “symbol for the eight trigrams.”²⁰ *Hetu* is a sign of heavenly approval. Rulers who are virtuous will be blessed by heaven with a *hetu*.

During the Song dynasty the *hetu* gains a new meaning and is turned into a particular form of diagram.²¹ Liu Mu (1011-1064 C.E.), from the Northern Song, composed a drawing. (Figure 1a). It is said that his *hetu* presents the image of heaven through a series of 55 spots that were seen on the back of a *long ma* 龍馬 (a dragon like horse which emerged from the Yellow River by Fuyi). The *hetu* of heaven is organized in a circular pattern, so the number 55 is heaven’s number (*tianshu*). The 55 spots are grouped into ten subsets. The dark dots and even numbers represent the *yin* and the bright dots and odd numbers symbolize the *yang*. They appeared in pairs and are joined together in a productive union and a mathematical pattern. The numbers are defined as two kinds of functions. Numbers one (1) to five (5) have the utility of generation and they are the numbers of generation 生數 (*shengshu*); six (6) to ten (10) have the role of completion, and they are the numbers of completion 成數 (*chengshu*). There are also a few mathematical patterns in the *hetu*. One of them is an equal relational pattern. The sum total of up even number plus down even number equals the sum total of up odd number plus down odd number. *Yin* and *yang* thus are balanced in equal amount. The *hetu* is considered as “a chart which symbolizes continued blessing and productivity in nature.”²² It reveals the

¹⁷ *Liji* interpretation by Wang Meiou (Taiwan: Commercial Press, 1970), p.386.

¹⁸ My own translation of *Xici*.

¹⁹ Michel Saso, “What is the Ho-t’u?” *History Religions*, 17 (February-May, 1978), p.406.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.407.

²¹ Interestingly different people have different ways of defining the same drawing with different names. They are all about the numbers and how are these numbers organized. They are seen as a geometrical cosmography. At beginning it was said that *Hetu* is the number 45 and *Luoshu* is the number 55. However Liu Mu reversed the order and Zhuxi confirmed this change. Since that the *Hetu* is the 55 numbers.

²² Michael Saso, p.402.

heaven's pattern and has many contemporary applications, for example, it served as "a model for ordering any type of physical space:"²³

The *ho-tu* is a 'river chart' which, like a lengthy stream of water, has flowed throughout the course of Chinese history, changing in shape and size through the ages. Seen from its lower reaches, the *Ho-tu* is a popular chart still found in the modern-day communities of the Chinese in the diaspora, a relic of traditional China. Seen from the middle course of the Confucian past, the *Ho-tu* is a well-known diagram found in treatises on the *Book of Changes*. From the highest reaches of the river, the *Ho-tu* is an esoteric chart of talismanic nature used in the orthodox Taoist tradition.²⁴

Hetu is always presented with its companion chart *luoshu* (**Figure 1**). The *luoshu* has 45 spots that are organized in a square. It represents the earth²⁵ and the earthly number 45. *Luoshu* was first seen on the back of a tortoise. "The *hetu* is a symbol of permanence while the *luoshu* is a chart of change."²⁶ The *luoshu*, a diagram representing numbers by means of dots, "was finally revealed to public view in the tenth century A.D., after some thirteen hundred years of hidden, private or cultic use."²⁷ It consists of nine groups of simple black and white circles or dots. Each group has one to nine units. This *luoshu* design was also termed the "Jiutang" 九堂 (Nine Halls, "The Celestial Numbers of the Nine Halls"), because it shows how an ideal house should be organized. When we place the dot with its equivalent numbers it appears as the magic square of three: the sum of every row and column is number 15. This magic square discloses different religious and philosophical issues. It confirms a tendency to divide things into groups of nine equal units with a center. In many literatures it contains the nine continents, the nine territories, the nine provinces of the Middle Kingdom, and the nine divisions of heaven.²⁸ Such mathematical properties have captured the minds and imagination of Chinese for many centuries.

²³ John B. Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p.82.

²⁴ Michael Saso, p.399.

²⁵ This is a popular Chinese belief: *tianyuan defang* (heaven is circle and earth is square).

²⁶ Michael Saso, p.402.

²⁷ Schuyler Cammann, "The Magic Square of Three in Old Chinese Philosophy and

Religion." *History of Religions*, 1 (Summer, 1961), p.45.

²⁸ The idea of arranging numbers in symmetrical figures to produce effects of balanced harmony is also seen in the Pythagoreans. Pythagoreans have "the square of theon."

One thing about both these diagrams is the middle number five (5). Number five (5) seems to have a special role and relationship with the rest of the numbers. It is both functionally and symbolically the most important number, as manifested in the theory of *wuxing* 五行 (the five elements)²⁹. This underlying presupposition transmits the sense of centrality and the primordial pattern on which most of the others were based. *Hetu* and *Luoshu* “could effectively symbolize the world in balanced harmony around a powerful central axis.”³⁰

Hetu and *Luoshu* were also used by mathematical astronomers. Regularity, equilibrium and congruence among the various orders of reality prevailed in the cosmos. *Hetu* associates roundness, the star, the rules of mathematical astronomy, the eight trigrams, and the King Fu Yi. *Luoshu* associates squareness, the earth, the rules of geographical measurement, the nine square grid forms (*jiuchou*) and the King Yu. After all, these symbols are a representation of the harmonious relationship of *yin* and *yang* in the balanced pairs of odd and even numbers around the middle number. “Thus the diagram functions as a matrix wherein disparate numerological phenomena, representing a multitude of processes, relationships, and points of view, can be successfully integrated, and myriads of disparate things successfully contemplated.”³¹

Mou Zhongshan, a contemporary Chinese scholar, confers the importance of *shu* (number) in Chinese thought. According to him the claim that everything consists of number means that number communicates the order of generation and completion. In other words:

Due to the order of generation and completion there emerges the number; so number is the natural order. The numbers of heaven and earth are the principles of the generations and completions of heaven and earth....The natural generation and completion (*shengcheng*) has the mathematical orders, and the numbers were used to express these orders; number cannot generate myriad things; number is the result of natural order of generation and completion. This view is more insightful than the Greek philosopher Pythagoras’s view that number is the model of everything. Chinese treat generation and completion as the fundamental basis, that is, they focus on concrete facts, but Pythagoras treats abstract number as the fundamental

²⁹ Five elements: water, fire, metal, wood and earth.

³⁰ Schuyler Cammann, “The Magic Square of Three in Old Chinese Philosophy and Religion,” *History of Religions* (Summer, 1961), p. 48.

³¹ Kidder Smith, *Sung Dynasty Use of I Ching* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.122.

basis, that is, he focuses on the abstract form. This is obviously the fallacy of misplaced concreteness.³²

Although both Chinese thinkers and Pythagoras see the significance of numbers, Pythagoras identifies numbers as things in themselves, while Chinese thinkers value numbers as the function, order and movement of *yin-yang*. Number is only the pathway or channel to transport the structure and the law of the universe, but it is not the thing existing in itself.

Shao Yong's Xiantian Xue (The School of Preceding Heaven)

Shao Yong (1011-1077 C.E.) is “one of the six masters of the Northern Song”³³ He is also considered a numerologist and the founder of a numerological system. His book, *Huangji jingshi* 皇極經世 (“*The Sublime Principle Which Governs All Things Within in the World*”) “contains a rigid, mechanistic and esoteric cosmology based upon numerological charts,”³⁴ but it organizes both history and natural phenomena into a coherent whole, expressed by hexagrams based on number. Shao Yong employs numbers “to order the past, structure the present and predict the future.”³⁵ He maintains that although the *tu* has no words, it encloses the principles of heaven, earth and the myriad things. By perceiving the cosmos “as a set of processes of varying magnitudes,”³⁶ he makes an important step toward the visualization of knowledge initiated in the *Yijing*. While Shao Yong identifies himself as a Confucian well-versed in the Confucian classics, he demonstrates that mathematical permutations in the charts link to both ethical and political behavior.

Shao Yong's important contribution to the *xiangshu* tradition is his new theory of *xiantian xue* 先天學 (The School of Preceding Heaven) and his elaboration of a few *tu*. Shao Yong draws the eight trigrams into two *tu* named as *xiantian* 先天 (prior to heaven) and *houtian* 后天 (posterior to heaven) attributed to Fu Yi and King Wen, respectively (figure 2). These two *tu* transform the conceptual statements of the *Yijing* into visual presentations. The *xiantian* and *houtian* terms and their distinction come

³² Mou Zhongshan, *The Natural Philosophy and Ethical Meanings of the Book of Changes* (Taipei: Wenjing Press, 1988), p.48.

³³ The others are Zhou dunyi, Zhang zai, the two Cheng brothers and Si ma guang.

³⁴ Michael D. Freeman, “From Adept to Worthy: The Philosophical Career of Shao Yung.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 102 (1982), p.484.

³⁵ Kidder Smith, *Sung Dynasty Use of I Ching* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.105.

³⁶ Michael D. Freeman, p.488.

from Daoism.³⁷ They “draw from the Taoist tradition, as simply ‘before Yao and after Yao’, changing its meaning and reducing an ontological shift to an historical point in time.”³⁸ In the Daoist text, *xiantian* and *houtian* are used to describe the time before the formation of world and after the formation of the world. This distinction is also manifested in Daoist *neidan* (inner alchemy) practice.³⁹ Shao Yong claims that *xiantian* is both temporally and logically prior to heaven and earth. It should be presented as the eight trigrams in the circle, according to the description of “Shuogua” (“Discussion of the Trigrams”) in the *Yijing*. “Heaven and earth determine the position, the *qi* of the mountain and that of the lake interact with each other. Thunder and wind arouse each other. Water and fire do not oppose each other.”⁴⁰ According to Shao Yong this is the Fu Yi’s points of compass which exhibits a sequence in pair, so it is called the “Diagram of Directions of Fu Yi’s Eight Trigrams” (Figure 2a). A primal eight trigrams are arranged in line with this vision. North (*qian/tian*) is up and south (*kun/di*) is below, a north-south axis; fire (*li*) is east and water (*gan*) is west, east-west axis. These four cardinal trigrams set up the basic matrix of directions. The mountain-lake pair and thunder-wind pair are something between.

The *houtian* diagram (Figure 2b), named as the “Diagram of the Direction of King Wen’s Eight Trigrams,” has a different composition based on other statements in “Shuogua” of the *Yijing*. “*Zhen* (thunder) is at the east. *Xun* (wind) is at the southeast. *Li* (fire) is the trigram of south. *Qian* (heaven) is the trigram of northwest. *Kan* (water) is the trigram of north. *Gen* (mountain) is the trigram of northeast.”⁴¹ This King Wen’s arrangement assembles temporal progression between cardinal trigram and the seasons.

Shao Yong postulates the universe as a set of cycles of varying magnitude and interprets the cosmological charts in historical terms. While these two *tu* share the same basic principle, their differing arrangements are seen in the *xiantian tu* as the *ti* 体 (the structure) of universe and the *houtian tu* as the *yong* 用 (the function) of the universe. The arrangement of the eight trigrams is extremely significant for the performance of ritual in the temples until today.⁴²

Shao Yong claims that the basic forces in the universe can be discovered through these *tu* of *xiantian* and *houtian*. *Xiantian* circle goes around clockwise from the top, *qian*, through the decline of *yang*, to the

³⁷ According to Kidder Smith, it derives from “a passage in the Wen-yen commentary.” *Sung Dynasty Uses of I Ching* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.112

³⁸ Michael D. Freeman, p.482.

³⁹ See Fabrizio Pregadio and Lowell Skar, “Inner Alchemy (Neidan)” in Livia Kohn, ed., *Daoist Hand Book*, pp. 484-485

⁴⁰ My own translation of Shuokua, in *Yijing*.

⁴¹ My own translation from Shuokua, in *Yijing*.

⁴² Michael Saso, p.404.

bottom of fullest *yin*, *kun*, then back up as the decline of *yin* regains its fullest *yang*, *qian*. This is how time flows and revolves. “If we look up at night to the pole-star, the heavens also appear to revolve very, very slowly to the left.”⁴³ Shao Yong assumes that temporal sequences of one order of magnitude had numerical and cosmological relationships with all the others. The whole circle represents the year, and it can be divided into 360 segments or 360 days. Each day is influenced by its line and by the position of the line within the hexagram. Each day can be divided into twelve hours and 30 segments. Each segment has its proper place and is related both to the whole and to every other segment.⁴⁴ So divided, it becomes clear that different times bring different opportunities.

These two *tu* show that the cosmological pattern is circular.⁴⁵ The heavens continually circle in their course and carry all within them in a regulated movement. The sun and moon make their rounds in circular motions, as well as in the cycles of hours, days, months and year. Shao Yong not only delineates the circle to describe the movement temporally, he also discloses a numerical sequence in the spatial positions. The circle “indicates stages in both the cyclical growth and decline of *yang* or of *yin*.”⁴⁶

The *xiantian* diagram circles around the center. Going from the bottom up is called rising. Going from the top down is called descending. Rising is called giving birth [to *yang*]. Descending is called declining [from *yang*]. Therefore *yang* is born below and *yin* is born above.

By means of this the ten-thousand things are produced by inverse movement (*fan-sheng*). *Yin* gives birth to *yang*,

⁴³ Kidder Smith, p.119.

⁴⁴It is very interesting to see this parallel insight given in Plato’s *Timaeus*: “The sight of day and night, the months and returning years, the equinoxes and solstices, has caused the invention of number, given us the notion of time, and made us inquire into the nature of the universe; thence we have derived philosophy.” (47a).

⁴⁵For further parallels in ancient Western cosmology, consider the following: Plato’s *Timaeus* describes the universe as “a circle moving in a circle.” Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1949), p. 16; Aristotle states that “circular motion is necessarily primary. For the perfect is naturally prior to the imperfect, and circle is a perfect thing.” Aristotle, *De Caelo*, W.D. Ross, ed., Aristotle Selection (New York: Scribner’s, 1927), p. 126. Time itself is such a circle measured by heaven. The word for the yearly unit of time, *annus*, was taken from the word *annulus*, ‘ring’. John Swan, an early seventeenth-century Cambridge philosopher, claims “In Latin the year is called *annus*, because we may say of it, *revolvitur ut annulus*. For as in a ring the parts touch one another, circularly joining each to the other; so also the year rolls it self back again by the same steps that it ever went.” S.K.Heninger, Jr. *The Cosmological Glass*, p.4.

⁴⁶ Smith, p.114.

yang gives birth to *yin*. *Yin* again gives birth to *yang*, *yang* again gives birth to *yin* [or ‘returns (*fu*) to give birth to...’].

By means of this it follows the circle and is inexhaustible.⁴⁷

These processes and numerical sequences make possible an inference that there is a continuum from multiplicity to the underlying unity of things. This *xiantian tu* is a celestial diagram that is situated in the sky and changes in the cycles of progression. South and west are mainly *yang*, but there is hiding in them the birth of *yin*; north and east are mainly *yin*, yet there is hiding in them the power of *yang*. “A double movement is observable: first, the usual clockwise movement, cumulative and expanding as time goes on, and determining the events that are passing; second, an opposite, backward movement, folding up and contracting as time goes on, through which the seed of the future take form.”⁴⁸ It is in a constant flux, with the *yin* and *yang* alternately waxing and waning in the course of the day, month and year.

What was the impetus behind all these formulations? Why does Shao Yong bother to contemplate the universe? It seems there is no other motive to explore the cosmos except the hope of grasping one’s own personal destiny and achieving the well-ordering of the state.⁴⁹ The cosmological processes are intelligible, and humans should adjust their conduct on the basis of that intelligence. By discerning the patterns that pervade the universe, one will obtain a model for one’s own life and fulfill one’s own potential as a microcosmic image of the universe. Turning human attention to heaven supplies a course of knowing the order of the universe and resonates the introspective quest for personal perfection, which itself becomes a justification for claiming or acknowledging rulership.

Zhou Dunyi’s Taiji Tu

Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (Chou Tun-i, 1017-1073 C.E.), the forerunner of Neo-Confucianism and founder of *Daoxue* 道學 in the Song dynasty, published a diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (*taijitu* 太極圖 **Figure 3a**)

⁴⁷ Smith, p.115.

⁴⁸ Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (Princeton University Press, 1967), p.267.

⁴⁹In the West, by studying the secrets of nature, man may discern the attributes of God, since the cosmos and universe already presuppose the creation of beauty, goodness and order. The study of the ordering of the universe provides human beings with “a sort of mirror in which we can contemplate God, who is otherwise invisible.” (Heninger, p.8) In Medieval Christian theology, nature is a book human beings study for spiritual enlightenment. This book of nature displays God’s intention and is a source of revelation carrying authority equal to that of the Holy Scriptures. The Bible and physical nature are the two books of God and we can understand the Creator from understanding both books.

and wrote a concise 256 word philosophical account of it (*taijitu shuo* 太極圖說).⁵⁰ This diagram delivers a visual representation of the universe and divulges the progress of the generation of the universe. Zhou Dunyi's *Taijitu* consists of five images along with six lines inscriptions. The first image is a circle placed directly under the inscription, “*Wuji er taiji*,” 無極而太極 as it is rendered by Zhu Xi, or “*Zi wuji er taiji*,” 自無極而太極 as several commentators believe it was originally. The overall philosophical interpretation of the *Taijitu shuo* may hinge on these two formulas. The second image consists of interlocking blank and shaded areas forming six semicircles with a smaller blank circle in the middle. This image is the combination of two trigrams from the *Yijing*. A correct reading of it should start from the middle and divide this image into two parts. The left part is *li* 離 (fire), one of the eight *gua* 卦 (trigrams) turned on its side, with two light lines (*yang* line) outside and one dark line (*yin* line) inside. The right part is *kan* 坎 (water), another *gua* turned on its side, with two dark lines (*yin* line) outside and one light line (*yang* line) inside. Fire and water are two most important trigrams after the *gua* of *Qian* 乾 (heaven) and *Kun* 坤 (earth). On either side of these images are inscribed the words, *Yangdong* 陽動 “*Yang* is motion” (on the left), *Yinjing* 陰靜 “*Yin* is rest” (on the right). These words grant an unequivocal role to *yinyang* and its cosmic significance.

The third image of the *Taijitu* is the flow of five elements (五行 *wuxing*) “fire,” “water,” “earth,” “wood,” and “metal”, a popular categorization of things since pre-Qin times. The last images, four and five, both contain a circle equal in size to those featured in the first image. On either side of image four is an inscription. On the left: “The Way of *Qian* makes male.” On the right: “The Way of *Kun* makes female.” The *Taijitu* is completed with an inscription centered under the last circle: “Everything becomes and transforms.” The *Taijitu* as a whole should read from top to bottom.

The origin of the *Taijitu* is attributed to Chen Tuan.⁵¹ It is supposed to describe the progress of Daoist practice of *neidan* 內丹 (inner alchemy). The *Wujitu* consists of the exact same five images as *Taijitu* (**Figure 3b**).

⁵⁰For a more detailed discussion please see Robin R. Wang: “Zhou Dunyi's *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate Explained (Taijitu shuo 太極圖說): A Construction of the Confucian Metaphysics*,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* (December, 2005), pp.307-323.

⁵¹The origin of this diagram has been an ongoing debate from centuries ago until today. The dominant view is that this is the Daoist diagram and Zhou Dunyi just took it and gave a Confucian span. However, contemporary scholar Li Shen presents many convincing evidences to argue that Zhou Dunyi, in fact, discovered this diagram and Daoist Song plagiarized it. See Li Shen 李申, *The Examination of Yitu 易圖考* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1993).

Yet all inscriptions are different. The other most significant divergence between these two diagrams is that the *Wujitu* should be read from bottom to top, the opposite direction as *Taijitu*. The first image at the very bottom of *Wujitu* is the gate of the mysterious female, the starting point of alchemical cultivation and refinement. The second image describes a cyclic progress with two continuous movements. Beginning on the right side, one cultivates *jing* 精 (material essence) into *qi*, 氣 then refines this *qi* into *shen* 神 (spirit). The third image illustrates the connection between *qi* and the five elements and how they all turn to the origin. The fourth image is fashioned from the two trigrams, *Kan* and *Li*, of the *Yijing*. The inscription states, “taking *kan* (water) to fill in *li* (fire).” The fifth image is the end of this journey and one has reached the highest stage of inner alchemy.

While Zhou Dunyi’s *Taijitu* seems to contain substantially the same images as Chen Tuan’s *Wujitu*, reading from top to bottom, rather than bottom to top, yields a dramatic change in perspective. Chen Tuan’s *Wujitu* bares the Daoist practice of self-cultivation or “inner alchemy.” This inner alchemy can be summarized into three central interrelated stages a) cultivate *jing* 精 (material essence) and transform it into *qi* (煉精化氣); b) cultivate *qi* 氣 and transform into *shen* 神 (spirit), (煉氣化神), c) cultivate spirit and return to emptiness (*huanxu*, great void) (煉神還虛). These processes equip disciples with a map outlining the crucial points by which self-transformation is attained progressively. This journey leads practitioners to return to the “Infinite” or the “Void.” Zhou Dunyi’s diagram begins that the Supreme Ultimate is emergent, and with it comes the basic metaphysical principles of *Yin* and *Yang*, from which transpire the myriad things and humanity. Zhou Dunyi’s focal point thus is not on mapping the ascending stages of spiritual exercises that will eventually transform the self through a mystical absorption into the *Wuji* from which all things emanate. Instead, his focus is on the metaphysics implicit in such spiritual exercises, how following *Taiji* is grounded in a dynamic ontology; this ontology would in turn establish a rational basis for authentically Confucian moral teachings and practices.

Taken together, the three diagrams just now explored proclaim how Song thinkers employ non-discursive ways of thinking to search the ultimate meanings of the universe and the human being’s place within it. The pattern of the universe is articulated in figurative and numerological terms. After all they believed that the essential aspects of various orders or reality could be incorporated into a system so comprehensive as to transcend the limits of discursive argument and so complete as to be practically a *simulacrum* of the cosmos as a whole. Within this conceptual tradition, the first *yinyang tu* ⁵² is formed in Zhao Huiqian’s (1351-1395 C.E.) work in Ming

⁵² There is a debate in the Chinese academic field about whether this is the first *yinyang* symbol. However this has been the most accepted view. See Li Shen 李申, *The Examination of Yitu*, 易圖考 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1993).

dynasty, *The Essence of the Six Books*, 六書本義 seen as the *Tiandi ziren hetu* (“The heaven and earth natural river chart” **Figure 4**). Zhao describes it in the following terms: “The sun has no waxing or waning and the moon adheres to the way of a vassal in that its light brightens and dims according to its distance from the sun.”⁵³ The first *yinyang* symbol thus presents as a natural *hetu* of heaven and earth. In Zhao’s mind, it is another *hetu* given in the form of a circle. So he takes Liu Mu’s *hetu*, Shao Yong’s circle and Zhou Dunyi’s black and white diagram to produce this new image. It is also called the *yinyang* fish symbol due to its look like two intertwined fishes. This original symbol is surrounded with the words which are part of the *yinyang* symbol as well.

MAPPING THE DNA OF THE YINYANG SYMBOL

Given the historical and conceptual contexts, what could we conclude from this symbol? How does this symbol work? Two arguments might be formulated from this discussion.

The Function of Visual Thinking

Is there a tension between perception and thinking? For the Chinese the world of the senses does not present the Pythagorean dichotomy between the heavenly order of rationality and the terrestrial disorder of irrationality. The world of the senses is pervasive throughout the interplay of cosmic forces, which rule the stars in the heaven, seasons in the earth and the smallest things in the human. There are no two qualitatively different realms, one the calculable order of the heaven appealing to our thinking and other the variety of earthly shapes and events impinging upon our observation and sensual experience. How, then, are we to comprehend the role of sensory or perceptual experience? The Chinese efforts of making different *tu* disclose a tacit insight that thinking is not simply a mental process above or beyond perception but is an essential ingredient of, perception itself. Visual perception is visual thinking.

Thinking has been considered an intellectual operation that transforms raw perception into concepts. However it may not be possible to appreciate visual thinking strictly within this context. Visual thinking involves the identification and recognition of perceptual patterns. It is the art of grasping the structure of a visual pattern and its function as an analogy. For example, the *yinyang* image conveys meaning primarily in an analogical mode of presentation. The raw perceptual reality appearing in it epitomizes the full range of gradations of phenomena of the visible world, such as day and night, male and female, movement and rest...and so on. Words and concepts limit our knowledge to a finite set of distinctions and fixed categories. But images provide an infinite range for comprehending the actual

⁵³ My own translation from Zhao’s book.

texture of reality. This allows one to perceive and think about the world in a three-dimensional space. Something is seen in “spatial intelli-gence.” We often see how the *yinyang* symbol illuminates different events and things from all possible directions.

Visual thinking can also be seen as both passive perception and active perceiving. It makes possible a distinction between context and object. From the perspective of the active perceiving agent, visual thinking perceives an object in space, in other words, it envisions it in a context such as the size, shape, location, color and the movement of the perceived object. On the other hand, visual thinking is able to ignore the influence of context in order to focus on the particular object in its pure state. This is the case in the diagnostic practices of Chinese medicine. The physician seeks to establish the nature of any symptoms in themselves in order to distinguish them from the surrounding conditions.

As our analysis of the *tu* should suggest, visual thinking clearly has been an important tradition in the history of Chinese thought. Even in the West contemporary virtue epistemology has recognized the narrowness of defining knowledge only as a justified true belief.⁵⁴ The virtue of the mind presupposes a broader conception of knowledge that ropes in perception and understanding. The epistemic value of perception can be traced back to Plato’s discussion of the Divided Line and The Allegory of the Cave in the *Republic*. Plato “depicts knowledge as a kind of intellectual seeing” and uses “perceptual language in his discussion of knowledge...”⁵⁵ Virtue epistemology explains the act of understanding in terms of making a connection between the parts and the whole.

To understand something is to make sense of it, to see how its parts fit together or to be able to fit it into a larger whole, to see how it connects with other things. To understand is often to be able to explain, something connected causally or logically or even analogically to what is explained.⁵⁶

This has clearly been the consistent practice of Chinese thinkers. The *yinyang* symbol is a way of understanding that fulfills a mediating role between the world of perceptual experience and the disembodied forces underlying the universe. The *tu* tradition cultivates human rationality by tracing its emergence holistically and rendering it faithfully in one unified cognitive and visual account.

⁵⁴ Robert C. Robert, “The Concept of Knowledge: Plato and Aristotle as Resources for Contemporary Virtue Epistemology.” Delivered at Loyola Marymount University, April 13, 2005.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Correlative Thinking vs. Trinary Thinking

Nucleic acids (DNA) are the information-carrying molecules in cells. Their primary structure contains a code or set of directions by which they can duplicate themselves and guide the synthesis of proteins. The investigation of how DNA is replicated led to the discovery of the three dimensional structure of DNA. This structure is the so-called “double helix”⁵⁷ which consists of two right-handed polynucleotide chains that are coiled about the same axis. The heterocyclic amine bases project inward toward the center so that the base of one strand interacts or pairs with a base of the other strand. Not only is the discovery of the double helix itself an interesting example of visual thinking, but there is also a remarkable similarity between the structure of DNA and the *yinyang* symbol.

The *yinyang* symbol is one of the simplest and most dynamic examples of the *coincidentia oppositorum*. It is easy to argue that this pattern is evident in the qualities, such as vitality, change and balance expounded by the *yinyang* symbol. However, it can be argued that there is a thinking model presupposed in this symbol. The Chinese way of thinking has been defined as a “correlative thinking” which illustrates the world in a correlation between heaven, earth and human being. Based on a careful reading of the original primary texts, it is imperative to go beyond this stage of explanation. Greater attention should be paid to the way of *yinyang* thinking in the sense of “thirdness,” or what Chinese tradition fathoms as the significance of *zhonghe* 中和 (integrated harmony). In the *Daodejing* 道德經, chapter 42, Laozi claims: “Dao generates one, one generates two, two generates three, three generates myriad things. Everything embodies *yin* and embraces *yang*, blending these *qi* to attend the *he* (harmony).” This statement provokes some interesting philosophical questions: Why are the myriad things the results of three, yet everything consist of only two, namely *yin* and *yang*? This question calls attention to a deep structure moderated within *yin* and *yang*. In other words, the interaction of *yin* and *yang* originates a *zhonghe* triad.

The *Taipingjing* 太平經 (*Treatise of Great Peace*)⁵⁸, an early Daoist text written after Laozi’s *Daodejing*, expands this *zhonghe* triad more explicitly. Throughout the text there are many discussions and applications

⁵⁷Watson and Crick won the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine in 1962 for the discovery of DNA’s double helix.

⁵⁸ There have been a few debatable issues around this text. One is the time of this text. It has been said that there were three texts bearing this name during the Han dynasty. But the current text was believed to be from the end of Eastern Han and was collected in *Original Daoist Text* Ming dynasty. Another issue is about the author of the text. The consensus is that this is not a single author’s work but a few authors through a period of time.

of the concept of three. “Heavenly *dao* (*tiandao*) has three: Primordial *yin* 太陰 (*tai yin*), primordial *yang* 太陽 (*tai yang*) and *zhonghe*.”⁵⁹

Primordial *qi* (vital energy) has three kinds: primordial *yin* (*tai yin*), primordial *yang* (*tai yang*) and *zhonghe*. Form 形体 (*xingtǐ*) has three kinds: heaven, earth and human being. Sky has three kinds: sun, moon and star, the north pole is in the middle; earth has three kinds, mountain, river and plains; human beings have three kinds: father, mother and child; governing has three kinds: minister, subject and people. In order to have the great peace 太平 (*taiping*) in the world these three elements must be united and become one....The amalgamation of the three *qi* is the great harmony 太和 (*taihe*). The great harmony comes from the *qi* of great peace. If these three *qi* are diminished, there will be no one united *qi*, and the great harmony will not occur, neither the great peace. The core of *yinyang* is *zhonghe*. Once the *qi* of *zhonghe* is realized, the myriad things will flourish, people will harmonize and the kingdom will be at peace.⁶⁰

Clearly *zhonghe* can be seen in two features: one is the interaction of *yin* and *yang*; the other is the triad of the *yin*, the *yang* and the *yinyang*. For the *Taipingjing* (*The Classics of Great Peace*), this triad is the root of great harmony and peace. “*Yin* and *yang* mutually receive and interact to become *he*. They form a triad. The three *qi* in a joint devotion and interface will nourish all things...harvesting these three *qi* will generate heaven and earth and reach the great peace.”⁶¹ The *Taipingjing* also shows how these three constituents, as the primal building blocks, rally together in making heaven above, earth below and human being between. If and only if these three *qi* are in the proper places will the world weave into one harmonious whole. “If there is *yang* without *yin*, there will be no life and peace will vanish; if there is *yin* without *yang*, there will be no life and peace will vanish; if there is *yin* and *yang* but no *he*, there will be no transmission of kinds, and this will also lead to extinction.”⁶²

The triad or the three thus has captured a special eminence in this classic text. In the *Taipingjing*, chapter 30, we read, “Primordial *yin* (*tai yin*), primordial *yang* (*tai yang*) and *zhonghe* are three *qi* (vital energy) which form the *li* (principle) and its interactions. Human being in a pivotal

⁵⁹ My own translation from *Taipingjing*, chapter 31 Reading by Yu Liming (Chendu: Baomin Press, 2001), p.202.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.29-31.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.128

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.128

position must know it deeply.”⁶³ Chapter 48 is devoted to the *zhonghe*. Three is itself a state of being. Man, woman and child form the family. The *yinyang* itself goes beyond a one and two that is merely reciprocal, complementary or interdependent. There is a transformative thirdness mediating between these two.

The *yinyang* paradigm is a perpetual living mirror of the universe that demonstrates the trinary structure of reality. Characterizing this state as *zhonghe* goes beyond the paradoxical existence recognized from Plato to Hegel. Francois Jullien, for example, formulates a new concept of “logical tendency” to explain what the history of Chinese thought suggests about the Chinese view of nature and the world. This “logical tendency”...

incorporates two ideas that Chinese thought cannot dissociate: first the notion that in reality everything always comes about immanently as a result of an internal development, with no need to invoke any external causality; second, the idea that this spontaneous process is itself a supremely regulatory force and that the norm it expresses constitutes the basis for transcending reality.⁶⁴

However, Jullien does not offer the basis for this tendency. The discernment of the *yinyang* triad can offer a unique rationale for this interpretation. The *yinyang* is a property of all existence and ultimately causes 生 (*sheng*) things to emerge, exist and endure. So there is no other external source needed to explicate the change and movement of things other than Dao itself. As the *Yijing* declares “One *yin* and one *yang* are called Dao.” *Yinyang* is the necessary and sufficient condition of the occurrence of things. Whenever an occurrence has the property of the *yinyang*, then the mode of behavior or phenomenon of movement and change will emerge.

The *yinyang* interaction itself goes beyond the one that is merely reciprocal, complementary and interdependent. There is an emergence of the thirdness as the result of this interplay. Let’s think about the *yinyang* symbol as two teardrop-shaped parts, namely *yin*-dark and *yang*-bright, but when they are brought together they form a circle. Now the emergent properties of a circle are different from either of these two constituents. If the circle were a hoop, it could rotate or roll and neither of the two parts could do these things.⁶⁵ The whole emergent regularity is more than the sum of its parts. This is the non-linear interactions. It is like the standing wave that forms in a moving stream, where the water particles are constantly changing though pattern persists. This differs from the rocks or buildings

⁶³My own translation from *Taipingjing*, Reading by Yu Liming (Chendu: Baomin Press, 2001), p.29.

⁶⁴Francois Jullien, *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China*, translated by Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p.231.

⁶⁵ Thanks to P.J. Ivanhoe for this insightful example.

that consist of fixed components. *Yin* and *yang* together form a new existence which is not simply a half circle plus a half circle. The thirdness of this symbol is the constant configuration of these two forces as the DNA of Chinese culture.⁶⁶ The *yinyang* image itself is a perpetual living universe and exhibition of the trinary structure of reality.

There is a similar case, in the phenomenon known as “antibiotic synergy” in Western medicine. In using antibiotics in medical practice, the single use of an antibiotic A will reach a 30 percent desirable result, and the single use of antibiotic B will reach a 40 percent desirable result. However, if one apply A and B together they do not have a 70 percent result; instead they bring out a 100 percent desirable result. This synergy trumpets that the thirdness of two parts is greater than the sum total of each individual part. “Synergism is defined as the activity of two antimicrobials given together that is greater than the sum of the activity, had the two agents been given separately.”⁶⁷

This unique thinking model has also been manifested in some Chinese practices. For example, in the Confucian teaching, *li* 禮 (ritual) and *yi* 義 (righteousness) interact, and *ren* 仁 is the thirdness of these two.⁶⁸ The Chinese word for universe is *yuzhou* 宇宙. *Yu* 宇 is the time, continent and concurrency; *zhou* 宙 is the space, the place. Only time and space together make the universe. The Universe as the triad of time and space is the modern scientific formulation. Another word and practice is *fengshui* 風水. *Feng* 風 is wind, the unseen element from heaven, *shui* 水 is water, a tangible element of earth. When these two are united they generate something called *fengshui*, the art of managing one’s environment. These elements are not accidentally joined, but they materialize a triad.

The constructed argument here is that the interaction of *yinyang* fashions a configuration of the thirdness in reality. American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), has offered some substantial discussion of the logical and practical aspects of “thirdness.” He contends that the triad exists in all aspects of human intellectual work and reality. “Thirdness is nothing but the character of an object which embodies Betweenness or Mediation in its simplest and most rudimentary form.”⁶⁹ Peirce also proposes a conceptual justification for a triadic theory. “The Third is that which

⁶⁶ The *yinyang* plays important conceptual roles in sustaining the Chinese culture. Its diversified functions can be easily recognized in history, religion, art, medicine, philosophy and all aspects of life.

⁶⁷ Principles and Practice of Infectious Diseases, *Gerald L. Mandell, ed.* (Philadelphia, Churchill Livingstone, 2000), p.256.

⁶⁸ This point was brought out by Roger Ames at ASDP conference, April 2005.

⁶⁹ “The Seven System of Metaphysics” in *The Essential Peirce, Selected Philosophical Writings*, Volume 2 (1893-1913) (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 183.

is what it is owing to things between which it mediates and which it brings into relation to each other.”⁷⁰ The thirdness as trichotomic, is a mediation between the two that actually links these two together.

Trichotomic is the art of making three-fold division. Such division depends on the conception of first, second, third. First is the beginning, that which is fresh, original, spontaneous, free. Second is that which is determined, terminated, ended, correlative, object necessitated, reacting. Third is the medium, becoming, developing, bringing about.⁷¹

The thirdness intercedes between *yin* and *yang* and sustains the *yin* and *yang* interface. The recognition of this thirdness could avoid many problems. According to Peirce, “A philosophy which emphasizes the idea of the One, is generally a dualist philosophy in which the conception of Second receives exaggerated attention.”⁷² On the other hand, the focus on One and Two binary thinking might lead to a hierarchical understanding of the relationship between things. If one and two only interrelate then there will be a question of who is in control and who should follow whom. But bringing the vision of thirdness will ensure the one and two are valued in a relational flux and without assuming that one must conquer or control the other. Instead they rally together to achieve a new stage of being. The thirdness is the process of mediation. Sometimes one dominates, but thirdness will authenticate that this domination is merely a temporal passing segment and will always fetch for the space of otherness.

Correlative thinking and trinary thinking are both processes and tend toward motion and dynamism. However, correlative is the beginning and trinary is the completion that begets thinking to its fullness. The correlative structures are abstractions or human cognitive constructions and the trinaries are the living realities. Of course, correlative thinking and trinary thinking are intrinsically connected, for without the binary structure there is no emergent trinary. If binary thinking evolves without discernment of its trinary context, it risks falling into abstract polarizations that may diminish or distract one from perspicacity of reality. All the myriad things are in fact trinaries which can be known by decoding their correlative structures and reconstructing the trinary patterns of their existential emergence. This trinary thinking will also have a consequence of achieving the best attainable compromises among conflicting practical, moral and political interests.

⁷⁰ “A Guess at the Riddle” in *ibid.*, Volume 1 (1867-1893) (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 248.

⁷¹ “Trichotomic” in *ibid.*, Volume 1 (1867-1893) (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 281.

⁷² “The Architecture of Theories” in *Ibid.*, Volume 1 (1867-1893) (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 297.

To conclude, from the trinary thinking perspective the *yinyang* symbol itself is only an invitation for perceivers to think and mediate in order to empathize human beings and the universe. It can not be simply defined through the question “What does it mean?” Because the *yinyang* symbol denotes nothing in terms of imposing human abstraction to it, yet it signifies everything as the way of authenticity. This symbol does not exist as a static and flat two dimensional sign, but as a three dimensional realm of a waving, spiraling movement. This image itself is an argument for various contested beliefs. The Spanish mathematician, Jacques Bernoulli (1654-1705), asked that an epitaph be assigned to his tombstone: “*Eadem mutato resurgo*” (“Though changing, I rise again the same”). The motto describes a fundamental property unique to the logarithmic spiral – it does not alter its shape as its size increase. This feature is known as self-similarity. Fascinated by this property, Bernoulli indicated that the logarithmic spiral ‘may be used as a symbol, either of fortitude and constancy in adversity, or of the human body, which after all its changes, even after death, will be restored to its exact and perfect self.’⁷³ Nature exhibits logarithmic spirals from sunflowers, seashells, whirlpools to hurricanes and giant galaxies, so it is clear that nature supplies a marvelous pattern of spiral. The *yinyang* symbol is but one of many ways, perhaps the Chinese way, to embrace this universal structure beyond the human cognitive and linguistic abstraction.

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⁷³ Mario Livio, *The Golden Ratio: The Story of Phi, the World's Most Astonishing Number* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), p.116.

Figure 1a:

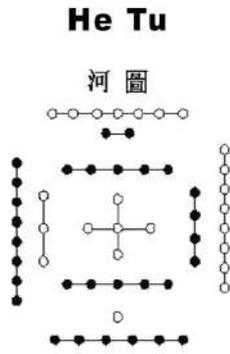


Figure 1b

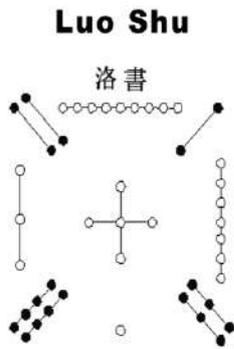


Figure 2a
Directions of Fuyi Eight Trigrams



Figure 2b Directions of King Wen Eight Trigrams

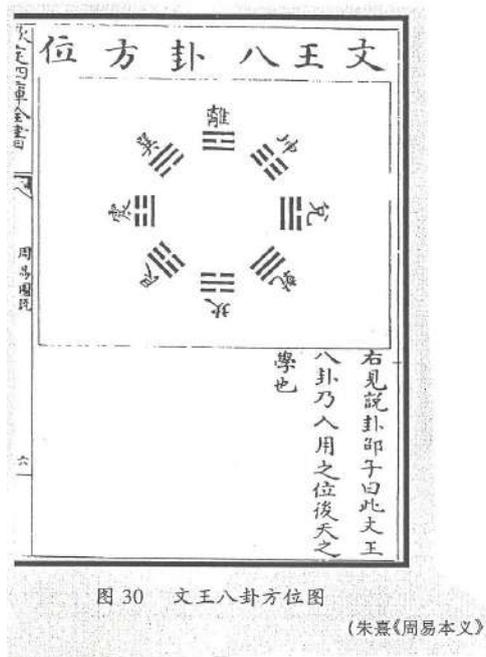


Figure 3a Zhou Dunyi's *Taijitu*

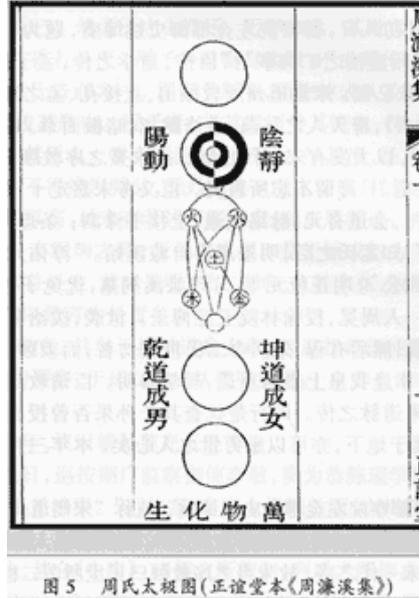


图 5 周氏太极图(正谊堂本《周濂溪集》)

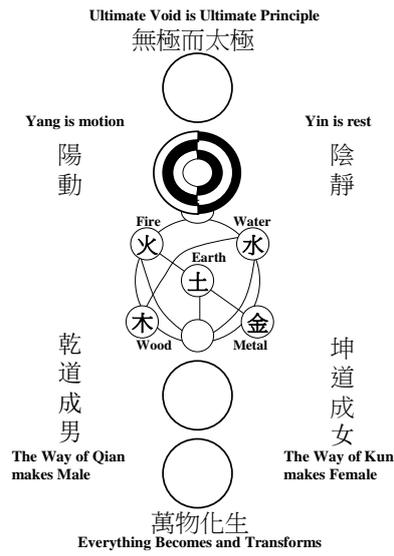


Figure 3b: Chen Tuan's *Wujitu*

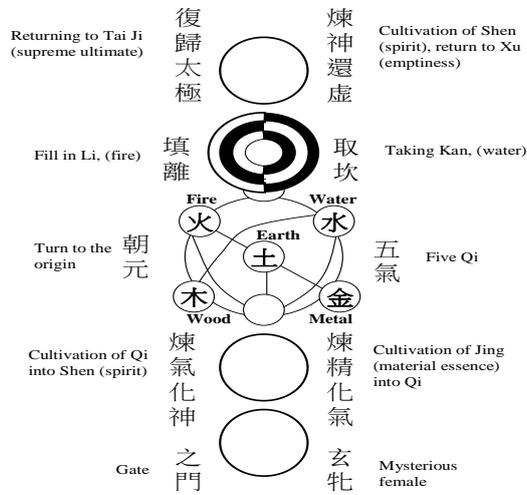


Figure 4 Zhao Huiqian *Heaven and Earth's Natural Diagram of the River*



图 90 天地自然河图

CHAPTER XVIII

VIETNAMESE BUDDHISM IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

HOANG THI THO

Vietnam is a small country with a population of about 80 million and an approximate size of 330 square kilometers. At present, the Buddhist population in the world is about 300 million and in Vietnam is more than seven million.¹ As such, Buddhism is considered Vietnam's traditional religion, and has a great effect on Vietnamese culture now. But Buddhism in contemporary Vietnam is not the same as the original religion of Vietnam – it is, rather, a mixed product of intercultural communications rendered through a very long history.

Vietnam is located in South-East-Asia, with the South China Sea on the east, Laos and Cambodia on the west and Thailand on the southwest. According to the map drawn by French historians in the beginning of the 19th century, Vietnam is named the “Indochinese Peninsula” – “Indochinese” means between India and China. Vietnam is also referred to as “Tonkin” or “Giao Chau,” now the Red River Delta. In Jataka Buddhist collections, the region named “Golden Land” (Suvannabhumi) also includes Vietnam. In this geographical position, early before the Christian Era [CE], Vietnam had been a bridge between India and China, the two most ancient civilizations of Asia, and probably, of the world, as well.

By sea routes, Hinduism and Buddhism from India were imported into Vietnam and became part of Vietnamese culture before CE. Now we can see communities of Champa – a community with Hindu customs, art and religion (Brahmanism) – living in central Vietnam, and Theravada Buddhists in southern Vietnam. By both land and sea routes, Mahayana Buddhism, together with Confucianism and Taoism, were imported into Vietnam from India and China. From the beginning, Buddhism in Vietnam was a mixed product of intercultural communication, which included Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism coexisting with native beliefs. In its structure, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism together constitute the basic ground of Vietnamese traditional culture. While this structure is similar to that of China, Japan and Korea, Vietnam's particular conditions of cultural

¹ *Vietnamese Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, Vietnamese Center for Publishing Dictionaries, Hanoi, 1995; Le Quang vinh. Respect and insurance for the right of religious belief and irreligious non-belief” *Review of Communist Party*, No 6, 2000, p. 13; According to Google.com web page: “*Buddhist statistics*” Vietnam is the eighth country in the list of 10 top Buddhist countries in the world, with 55percent of the population, in concrete numbers, 49,690,000.

communication make Vietnamese Buddhism not quite the same as those found in these other regions.

Through its long history, Vietnamese Buddhism has already contributed its brilliant mark in building and defending the nation. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, Vietnam is very much influenced by the global tendency toward modernization and industrialization. With aims of national development and sustainability, Vietnam has been accepting human progressive achievements of culture and civilization, and at the same time, trying to preserve and develop its own preeminent character and dignity. How will Buddhism contribute from its well-known tradition to modern time? This article wishes to contribute one opinion, from the perspective of Buddhist philosophy to discuss our capacity of intercultural communication in a time of global interaction.

BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY AS A GENERAL BACKGROUND FOR INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Buddhist Teaching of Human Suffering and Liberation

From the viewpoint of historical thought, it is important to recognize that at the beginning Buddhism was a revolutionary movement against the theistic authority of Brahmanism in ancient India. Thus, Buddhist teaching is religious, but it already contains a progressive spirit concerning equality and non-theistic authority. These are sustainable factors even in modern times. According to the Buddha's teaching, everyone is equal in suffering, which is not special for any caste or any one person. This idea is inherited from ancient Indian religions by Buddha, but the revolutionary point in his teaching is the affirmation that all are equal in their ability to achieve enlightenment and move towards liberation. Especially important is the idea that the way to emancipation is not paved by any god or supernatural being; everyone must decide by himself, step up by himself and realize by himself with his entire belief and morals.

To avoid the two extremes of lust and mortification, which were continuously argued by the ancient Indians, the Buddha's teaching paved the Middle way (*Madhyamika*) which proves that the true nature of the human is not-self (*anatman*) and that through the leading of ignorance, the craving sentient being misunderstands that there is a real self (*atman*) and then tries to possess it (by ways of both lust or mortification). This is the cause of pain and evil that can begin and grow uncontrolled. This is the basic point investigated by Buddha and serves as the foundation of the Buddhist theory of human suffering and emancipation.

In Buddhist teaching, the theories of emancipation and ethics are not separated from each other. It is taught that good or evil and right or wrong are attributes which are neither originally decided by birth nor created or determined by any god, but deeply rooted just in the realization of self or no-self. Because of ignorance (*avidya*), sentient being attaches his mind to

the self (*atman*), arousing his craving (*kama*) and forming his deeds through body action, speech and thought. These are accumulated as *karma* that consists of good and evil, right and wrong. The more *karma* that is accumulated, the longer people float in the circle of birth and death with suffering (*duhkka*).

The Buddhist way for emancipation is closely combined with the way of morals. First, the sentient being is to avoid ignorance, to be conscious of the not-self through regular introspection, such that he should avoid the attachment of the self. Second, he consciously practices self-discipline of concentration to control his deeds (body, speech and thought), change himself from wrong (even from evil) to right and good. Finally, by regular meditation (*zen*), he should automatically avoid *kama* and reach the ultimate enlightenment and turn himself to be his own nature of no-self. It is the ultimate emancipation when there is no more good or bad, right or wrong, good or evil; perfection is to become the human's no-self or natural character. This way to liberation is at the same time the one moral goal.

The core of Buddhist teaching is the Four Noble Truths that leads sentient being from suffering to emancipation, and at the same time from wrong or evil to right and good. First, The Noble Truth of Suffering teaches about all kinds of suffering, as mentioned above. Second, The Noble Truth of Cause of Suffering explains that the initial cause of the pain of sentient being is ignorance, which is always in search of pleasure and lust, namely the craving for passion, for existence or non-existence. Third, The Noble Truth of Cessation of Suffering teaches that the realization of the cessation of pain is by non-attachment, abandonment, and forsaking of that craving. Fourth, The Noble Truth of the Way that Leads to the Cessation of Suffering teaches about The Noble Eightfold Path (*Ashtangika-Marga*), namely: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

It is obvious that Buddhist teaching focuses on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. These are eight methods of right cultivation for everyone to consciously develop the self on the way to final emancipation, also called *Nirvana*. Buddhism inherited the moral tradition of Hinduism in general, and techniques of introspection from Yoga in the concrete. Then it was developed to become a realizable model of self-cultivation and called the Noble Eightfold Path. To practice the Eightfold Path, man has to concentrate on the moral value of "right" by controlling himself in all conduct, such as right view, right intention, right speech, right action, and right livelihood through right mindfulness and right concentration without cessation of right effort for the ultimate liberation (*Nirvana*) with right wisdom (*prajna*). The construct of Buddhist teaching combines three parts comprehensively: Commandment (*Sila*) – Meditation (*Samadhy*) – Wisdom (*Prajna*). In other terms, they can be called three sections of self-cultivation: Self-cultivation of conduct (by *silā*), Self-cultivation of consciousness (by *samadhy*) and Self-cultivation of wisdom (*prajna*).

In Buddhist teaching, the final judgment of man's deeds is the law of causes (*karma*), which acts secretly through lives not by any god's decision. Happiness or unhappiness is the fruit caused by one's good or bad conduct done in the past. Judgment as the law of causes admonishes people to be serious with one's every action (body, speech, thought). Buddhist ideal examples are Buddha and Bodhisattvas who, being already enlightened, exemplify the essence of the no-self and are not led by any craving or passion. They are omniscient and free from mundane attachment. This means perfect emancipation from the circle of lives, namely *Nirvana*.

Buddhist Teaching on Meditation

Ch'an/Zen Buddhism is an Indian-Chinese product. It is a typical product of the intercultural communication of two cultures right from the beginning of the first millennium, and now it has become a long-lasting Oriental cultural value. Literally, "*Dhyana*" is possibly formed by the Sanskrit verb root "dhyai", which means "meditation" in English, "Ch'an" in Chinese, and "Zen" in Japanese.

Yoga of India was the very origin of Buddhist meditation practice. In the most ancient Indian literature, Veda sutra (about 2000 BC) had mentioned the method of liberating spiritual power from the body through regulating breath and breaking off all barriers of the sensual world so that Atman (individual spirit) should dissolve in the Brahman (the Universal spirit). It is called Yoga; a technique of training man's ability for transcending insight through controlling breath and postures. In ancient times, for every Indian religion, the practice of Yoga was used as the common method for training the inner mind. Meditation (*Dhyana*) is the basic technique of Yoga that was then selected and inherited by Buddha.

Buddhism was founded in India in the 6th century BC. According to the Lalitavistara sutra, countless forms of ascetic austerities were in vogue in Buddha's time. Alara, one of the Buddha's teachers, was adept in Yoga. Buddhist teachings on meditation are familiar with Yoga methods of concentration. The Four states of *Dhyana* in Buddhism correspond roughly to the four stages of conscious concentration in classical Yoga. Buddha himself practiced *Raja-yoga* (the fourth step of Yoga)¹ and he stressed the main capacities of Yoga: *Dharana* (concentration on thoughtfulness), *Dhyana* (meditation on insight), and *Samadhy* (concentration on Ultimate truth). Buddhist meditation directly inherited the meditation practice of Yoga and considered it a technique of introspection to discover and experience the truth in order to attain ultimate salvation. Thus, it is possible to say that Buddhist meditation directly developed from the system of ideas, categories, and practices of Yoga. Buddhist teachings use the terms "dharana",

¹Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2. Edited by H.D. Lewis. A George Allen and Unwin, Bombay- Calcutta- Madras- New Delhi, 1977, p. 338-340

“Dhyana”, “and Samadhy” to denote Buddhist meditation. For example, *samyag-samadhy* (right concentration) is the eighth step in the Eight-fold Path (*astangika-marga*); Samadhy is a main chain of the system of Three-learning (*sikssa*): *Sila-Samadhy-Prajnaparamita* (Moral Conduct-Meditation-Perfection of Wisdom).

Buddhist Theory on Ontology

“*Sunyata*” (Emptiness) can be seen as the ontological principle on Ultimate Reality in Buddhist philosophy. First, emptiness means that all things are without any substance or attribute of their own, due to the general principle of interdependent causation. Second, on the spiritual level, it means that the spiritual achievement of a sage consists in total freedom – attaching him neither to being nor to non-being, neither to dualism nor to non-dualism, nor even to any form of spiritual achievement, no matter how high and deep it is. Finally, on the linguistic level, emptiness means that all words are nothing but artificial constructions – they are without any fixed correspondence to Ultimate Reality.

With this theory of Ultimate Reality, Buddhist philosophy was enabled to make itself understandable to other indigenous philosophies of China, such as Confucianism and Daoism. Buddhist experience of emptiness, the Taoist experience of *dao* and *wu* (voidness), and Confucian experience of *ren* (humanness, humanity and cosmic interconnectedness) and *cheng* (sincerity and true reality), all of these, though quite different in terms themselves, still enjoy some sort of similarity and complementarity as experiences of Ultimate Reality. Therefore, much effort has been made to meet one with another, through which a Confucian or a Taoist might be able to understand Buddhist discourse of “emptiness” as Ultimate Reality. This is the basic philosophical background for the construction of the Common Origin of Three Teachings in Vietnam, China, and Japan, and Korea cultures as well.

Buddhist Theory on Epistemology: Prajñā and Alaya-vijñāna

“Wisdom” (*prajñā*) is the Buddhist concept of epistemology founded by Nāgārjuna (100-200 CE.) in his *Madhyamika-sastra* (Treatise on the Middle Doctrine). This is the theory of converting consciousness into wisdom or to attain wisdom. In fact, wisdom was the common concern of the two Indian Mahayana Buddhist schools: the *Madhyamika* (Middle Doctrine) school and the *Yogacara* (Consciousness Only) school. For *Madhyamika*, wisdom means emptiness, whereas for *Yogacara*, wisdom is based on the marvelous being of *Alaya-vijnana* (the eighth conscious). For the *Madhyamika*, the other (objective) is that which lies always beyond, in denying or making void that which one arrives at in negative dialectics. To render the void in order to show the non-substantial character of the Ultimate Reality is the Middle Path, which is wisdom, and consists in

understanding the interdependent causation in the sense of non-substantiality. After destroying any dualistic situation in the process of negative dialectics, even the reality of interdependent causation should be denied. This is considered the spiritual achievement of a sage, who has no attachment to the realm of either being or non-being, no attachment to his own spiritual achievement whatsoever. He belongs to the marvelous function of his mind/heart, which on the one hand is non-substantial and empty, but on the other hand, is marvelous in its function and self-transcending nature.

The theory of Double Truth further develops the Buddhist theory of epistemology on wisdom. However, the real point of this theory is to overcome any dualism, rather than merely committing to the one-sidedness of the worldly view and the common view. The negative dialectic consists in first, denying the dualism between *you* (being) and *wu* (non-being), then secondly denying the dualism between two one-sided-views, and finally that between the one-sided-view and the middle (central) view. The true wisdom is somewhere in the middle path. It is thus interpreted as neither one-sided, nor-middle, and realized in the process of negative dialectics as emptiness.

In the case of the Yogacara (Consciousness Only) school, the term “*Alaja*” (the eight consciousnesses) is the main theory of epistemology. This school is named Yogacara because it attains wisdom not by the method of negative dialectics, but by its *yoga* praxis that purifies consciousness and finally transforms consciousness into wisdom. The idealist doctrine of this school is quite often exaggerated, that there is no self, no *dharmas*, but Consciousness only and everything else is merely a definite form of manifestation of Consciousness.

The purification of consciousness takes the form of consciousness analysis. We find there is an analytic progression from the five consciousnesses to the empirical self-consciousness, to the transcendental self-consciousness, and then finally to the ontological origin of all consciousness, the *Alaya-vijñāna*. The five sensible perceptions of seeing, listening, touching, smelling, and tasting constitute the five common consciousnesses. The center of the five sensations – or in other words, the sense-centered consciousness – is the sixth consciousness, which is an empirical one. The seventh consciousness, as the thought-centered consciousness (*manas-vijñāna*), is the store of all thinking, which often attaches itself to its own imagined centerness as its own true self. It is quite similar to the transcendental Ego of Western philosophy but for the Yogacara School, thought-centered consciousness (*manas-vijñāna*) is not the ultimate self but only a derivative transformation of the *Alaja* (eighth consciousness). Finally, the eighth consciousness (*alaya-vijñāna*) contains all seeds or potentialities of right/wrong thoughts and good/evil deeds to be manifested and thereby affected in the former seven forms of consciousness and receives also their influences. *Alaya-vijñāna* exercises double processes: on the one hand, it realizes the seeds into deeds and thoughts in the process of manifestation, and on the other hand, it receives the influence of the former

seven consciousnesses in its actual operation. The process of Yoga praxis is the way to convert consciousness into wisdom.

Zen Buddhism finally integrated both epistemological theories of Madhyamika and Yogachara schools with Chinese Taoist philosophy of "Avoidness". Zen Buddhism used Dhyāna to attain one's own Buddha nature and considered it as the prajñā of Madhyamika and as well as the Alaja (Purification of consciousness) of Yogacara.

The common characters of these methodologies are to lead to a direct insight into the unfathomable emptiness. As this direction of Buddhist epistemology tends to deny the function of language, texts and forms unfortunately the sacred scriptures and rituals are thereby abandoned without being carefully read and seriously practiced. This is a direction of Zen Buddhism that is considered a modernization of Buddhism from inside the system.

VIETNAMESE BUDDHISM

Vietnamese Buddhism is, first, a mixed product of cultural interactions. In this section, I address the history of intercultural communications as influenced by Buddhism, and conversely, how intercultural communications have affected Buddhism in Vietnam.

Buddhism Introduced into Vietnam

Following the voyages of sailors and traders, Buddhist monks came to propagate Buddhism into Vietnam. According to Chinese and French historical records, Buddhism was introduced directly, via sea routes, into Vietnam by Indian monks a very long time before it entered Southern China. Buddhist monks at that time were often intellectuals who had a broad knowledge of Buddha and Buddhist teaching. In Tonkin (Giao Chau), Luy Lau was a Buddhist center. From there, Buddhism spread to Pengcheng and then to Luoyang in China. Some have even suggested that in this way Theravada Buddhism was first introduced into Vietnam, before Mahayana Buddhism.

Vietnam is a water-agriculture civilization. Hence, water is the natural power most affecting people's lives in Vietnam. When Buddhism was introduced into Vietnam, it accommodated the local water-agriculture civilization. At the beginning, Indian Buddhism was to be accepted and introduced through surrounding local beliefs. The narrative of "Chu Dong Tu" is an obvious example. In this story, Chu Dong Tu and his wife were given a hat and a stick by an Indian priest who taught them magic to control the power of water. Then in a huge flood disaster, they used the hat and stick to save the whole village, and good rice seed and necessary things for water-rice cultivation were preserved. Another Buddhist narrative describes *Arahants* and *Bodhisattvas* as the Four Dharmas: Dharma Rain, Dharma Thunder, Dharma Cloud and Dharma Lightning, which were introduced by

an Indian monk (Mahakyvuc) and considered symbols of Buddhism. Now these symbols of the four Dharmas are worshiped in many Buddhist pagodas, together with Buddha statues. Working people hope that they will control the power of water and yield good crops. This ritual expresses the beliefs of a people of a water-rice culture – a symbol system that mixes native and Buddhist belief and meaning. In some narratives and fairy tales, the Indian name “Buddha” was changed to the Vietnamese name “But” and became the symbol of a Deity or God who always supports and encourages the good and the poor man with his magic power. In this context, “Dharma” is understood by common people as a superpower who shares the peasants’ happiness or unhappiness on their farms. At that time, religious theory on rebirth, suffering (*dukha*), circle of lives, liberation, seed of action (karma), passion, altruism, generosity, charity, tolerance, avoidance, bad and evil, and other such concepts were simply explained in terms of belief and a good way of life – such that common people could easily understand and accept it.

In the first intercultural communication, Buddhism was peacefully introduced, and then accepted and indigenized in Vietnam, earlier than Confucianism and Taoism. From that time on, Buddhism was always considered a traditional religion of Vietnam – whether orthodox or heterodox, Vietnamese Buddhism has a special advantage in relation to Confucianism and Taoism.

Buddhism in Establishing a System of Religion and Thought

Around the first ten centuries, another movement of Mahayana Buddhism was introduced by land route indirectly from China. Mahayana Buddhism spread first from India to China and then from China to Vietnam. I think it is necessary to clarify the difference between the first time and the second time that Buddhism was introduced into Vietnam. The first time, Buddhism was introduced through common people’s belief. In contrast, the second time occurred when Vietnam was under Sino-domination (about one thousand years) and introduced through the royal classes. Most Buddhist monks had good knowledge of either Buddhism or Confucianism and Taoism. Taoism and Confucianism were two main traditional religions in China, and Buddhism was introduced there through these two systems. Here, I want to mention again that Chinese Buddhism was already a mixed Indian-Chinese product. In this early period, Chinese Buddhism was already not a “Chinese” system of thought and religion as if China and India had not had intercultural communication.

During the first millennium, Vietnamese-Indian Buddhism had another chance to mix with Chinese-Indian Buddhism. This is the reason why Vietnam is the only country in Asia that has both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism together. In this period, Vietnamese Buddhism developed ideologically, in its religious and philosophical thought. The Vietnamese Buddhist book, *Thien Uyen Tap Anh Ngu Luc* (compiled from the late 11th

century to the early 13th century) refers in some detail to the Buddhist situation at Luy Lau at that time: “Giao Chau has routes leading to India. By the time that Buddhism was introduced into China, 20 Buddhist towers had already been built, more than 500 monks trained and 15 books of Buddhist sutras translated in Luy Lau. Then monks, like Mahakyvuc, Khuong Tang Hoi, Chi Cuong Luong, and Mau Bac, went to China to spread Buddhism.” This quotation is direct evidence that Buddhism flourished in Luy Lau a long time prior to its introduction to Southern China.

During this time, many books were written by monks to introduce Buddhist theory. The book *Ly Hoac Luan (On the Correction of Doubt)* written by Mau Tu (160-198 CE.) especially explained Buddhist teaching about suffering and liberation, no-self and karma (deed) but through Taoist and Confucian terms. The *An Ban Thu Y Sutras (Anapanasati Sutra)* was translated by Khuong Tang Hoi (200-247 CE.), one of the first monks who spread Buddhism into Vietnam. It was only after becoming a famous monk in the North of Vietnam that Khuong Tang Hoi went to China to spread Buddhism. The *An Ban Thu Y Sutras* is a book of Buddhist Theravada meditation, recognized by contemporary Buddhist communities (even subsets of Buddhism) who use its basic techniques and theory of Buddhist meditation.

It is possible to say that with the appearance of the Mahayana ideological movement, Buddhism flourished and reached beyond India's borders to far away countries including Vietnam. In this time, Vietnam had the chance to establish an integrated theoretical system of religion and philosophy, with Confucianist theory of socio-politics, Taoist theory of No-action (Avoid-ness), and Buddhist theory of Liberation from suffering. This system of knowledge was greatly effective in resolving contemporary problems. But during the period of Sino-domination, Giao Chau still retained its function as the national Buddhist center to receive Buddhist thought from both India and China, for example: Khuong Tang Hoi from China (3rd century), Dharmdeva from India (5th century), Vinitaruci from China (6th century) and Wu Yan Tong from China (9th century). As such, Vietnamese Buddhism had the opportunity to accept and develop the two greatest streams of Buddhist thought, and, from that condition, Vietnamese Buddhism is more flexible and less rigid.

Under the Ly and Tran dynasties (from 12th to 14th centuries), highly educated Buddhist Masters were a spiritual force and took part in political affairs, in leading the nation to win against the powerful Sino and Yan imperialists. As an orthodox religion, Buddhist monks contributed their high virtue and intelligence as advisers (Royal Court Adviser). They are profound not only in relation to three religions, but also to political, military, and diplomatic relations (while they never mind reputation and wealth for themselves). Examples include such famous Zen masters as Ngo Chan Luu (933-1011), Phap Loa (1284-1330) and Tue Trung Thuong Sy (1229-1291). At this time, Buddhism was at its height; it was the leading spiritual tendency of the nation. In that period, Buddhist teaching was one part of the

content of the national examination (Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism). The history of the Ly-Tran period still records many Buddhist kings such as Ly Nhan Tong (1072-1128), Ly Anh Tong (1138-1175), Tran Thai Tong (1218-1277), Tran Nhan Tong (1258-1308), and famous bonzes combined the Buddhist idea of no violence and benevolence together with Confucian thoughts of socio-politics to govern the country in peace. Some famous kings transferred the throne to the younger generation and converted to Buddhism. They dwelled in Buddhist temples as ordained monks to cultivate their minds and virtue by practicing meditation, studying, and explaining the meaning of Buddhist teachings. It is possible to say, then, that in this period Buddhism successfully fulfilled the function of an ideology in building and defending the nation in the second millennium.

Vietnamese Buddhism in War Time and in Peace Time

Although the Buddhist idea of non-violence and no-killing is a particular one, it was applied in wartime without rigidity. For Vietnamese Buddhism, the nation's existence, is at the same time, Buddhism's existence. For the sake of the nation's existence as well as that of Buddhism, Vietnamese monks should take off their robes, take up weapons and go to the front to struggle against violence and evil power to save the country. In the emergency of the nation and religion, Vietnamese monks "swore an oath of burning his temporary body" to make a patriotic torch as a demand for freedom of belief of Vietnamese Buddhism. We cannot forget the Buddhist patriotic-body-torches such as Quang Duc (self-immolation on June 11th, 1963), Nguyen Huong (August 4th, 1963), Thanh Tue (August 13th, 1963), Dieu Quang (August 15th, 1963), and Tieu Dieu (August 16th, 1963). The way that Vietnamese Buddhists developed and manifested non-violence and no-killing concepts through patriotism and without rigidity is unique in the world.

In peacetime, the pagoda is a complex functional space not only for Buddhist cults but also traditional customs and folk ceremonies. The pagoda is often called a "Zen gate" where everyone can go to introspect and cultivate their minds and morality in their free time or in cases of emergency. At home, people often practice meditation and worship Buddha and Avalokitesvara or Maitreya together with their ancestors on the same altar, and follow Buddhist practices of fasting, praying, and keeping the five radical Buddhist moral rules.

Generally speaking, the Vietnamese have actively combined three religions and have most effectively used Buddhist ethical values at important historical moments toward brilliant achievements. Through a long history, Buddhism has become firmly rooted in all aspects of Vietnamese culture and spirit, in times of war and peace. Now Buddhism is the main inner feeling-religious life of the Vietnamese people.

THE VALUE OF BUDDHISM

In my opinion, Buddhist values are more humanist and sustainable in comparison with theistic religions. Buddhism's religious ethical advantage depends on the individual internal mind of self-consciousness, self-confidence and self-liberation, while, in modern societies, the value of personal peace, freedom and confidence obviously is an urgent internal requirement. More than ever, the conflicts of modern societies are not only caused by economics and politics but also by religious and ethnic group conflicts which are rushing people into a blind alley of inner feeling and belief. The internal mind is still a vacant room in which theistic religions have to resolve issues by Gods, and modern societies try to resolve their bad results by national courts and law. Buddhist methods of meditation (or *Zen*) can provide people with an active ability and realizable method for introspection to self-reflect and to have peace oneself.

Since the middle of the 20th century, Buddhist methods of training the mind and inner feelings (meditation or *Chan/Zen*) have been attracting modern (Western) scientists. They have been interested in the Buddhist method of introspective self-cultivation and have done various scientific investigations and analyses by modern techniques, including that of modern psycho-physiology. These studies have produced marvelous results concerning abilities of controlling and mastering the human mind and inner feelings. It becomes important, even urgently so, to recognize that people in modern industrialized societies are more pressed in their inner life a state which cannot be solved by high standard of material life (high civilization). Now, modern scientific and technical achievements are devising multiple techniques for killing with more "indirect" and more "clean" criminal ways as its negative side, such that it becomes more difficult to reflect on oneself. Moral spoilage is not only caused by economics or politics but also by racial and religious conflicts, so that modern society needs a more perfect and more progressive humanist ethics. Buddhist ethics of introspection and internal self-consciousness will be a necessary aid to improve modern ethics.

However, Buddhism also has its limits because of its religious standpoint. Buddhism does not pay attention to politics and socio-economics, and it does not encourage any way of developing and satisfying the human material needs of the individual and society. Buddhist social programs, generally speaking, do not reform or create material conditions of life, but only try to build up the spiritual condition by ethics and religious beliefs whereby everyone can be compassionate, generous, perseverant, and benevolent altogether. This is the limit that Buddhism had been adjusting to. Buddhism is continuously in the process of expanding and indigenizing in other cultures, being applied in various communities and nations in order to fulfill its religious mission in the modern age.

Buddhist thought and the logic of a market economy are radically opposite. Buddhism resists hedonism, never encourages achievement of

wealth, and even considers enjoyment and the desire of wealth as the cause of evil and pain. The basic economic thought in Buddhist teaching is the ethical-economic one with the idea that it is “less desire” – not by more production or by higher productivity – that brings real plenty: “avoid craving, reduce need.” As with Arahants and Bodhisattvas, who live a plain ordinary life and pass over all difficult situations, the Buddhist paragon of virtue is Sakyamuni, who left the royal luxury life full of pleasure to live as an ascetic and find the way to Liberation.

Today in Vietnam, China, Korea, and Japan, Zen Buddhism still resonates in various styles of art such as: Method of Nutrition, Martial Art, Zen Poetry, Zen Painting, Tea Ceremony, Calligraphy, and Flower Arrangement. As a Buddhist way of life, Zen Buddhism is a typical product of intercultural communications; it highly praises the capacity of bodily life to achieve human happiness. Zen Buddhism has contributed in terms of theory and practice toward resolving the problem of human suffering. However, in general, it is impossible to place *Nirvana*, Enlightenment, and Liberation on the side of individual. On the other hand, it is also a cause of superstition, or misleading, because it turns back the responsibility of checking the truth to non-conception-experience.

Zen Buddhism successfully formed examples of life transcending material and spiritual suffering, as salvaging ones. For example, the transcendental life of Zen Masters and the name “Zen Master” is often connected to the name of famous monks. Their lives are praised as a manner of compassion, altruism, modesty, wisdom, and transcendence over life and death. A Zen Master is generally considered to be a mirror of a controlled mind, desire and the stream of thought, as well as an internal universe in which he may decide his life and death. His life is described as holding the religious superordinate to life and death, being calm and wise in every event or dilemma. He should understand the natural reasonableness of all irrationalities, and realizing a good side in a bad one, a beautiful aspect in an ugly thing, goodness in evil, happiness in suffering, etc.

Buddhist methods of nutrition pay attention to training inner potentiality and teaching the nutriment of mind and body. Body nutrition is about training the body through breathing practice, body postures and diet in order to strengthen body and nerve capacity to face all external challenges. Buddhist body nutrition inherited ancient Indian Yoga practice and is combined with the Chinese traditional breathing practices and diet of the Lao Tzu cult.¹ Spiritual nutrition is about training the mind, controlling sense organs and feelings of self in order to purify the instinct. The pure nature will automatically reach the good, creation will appear. Zen Buddhism insists that man could combine well both body and mental nutrition in meditation practice in order to transcend all worldly sufferings. This should explain why the Ch'an school has endured long through historical events

¹ Lu K'uan Yu (Charles Luk). *The Secrets of Chinese Meditation*. Samuel Weiser, Inc. York Beach, Maine USA, 1969, pp. 167-175.

and should propagate. Today Zen Buddhism is practiced and studied by Western people, and they especially praise its value in avoiding stress, which is the negative side of high civilization.

Buddhist Martial Art relies upon special principles discovered by Zen Masters involving the process of training the mind. From time to time, Buddhist monks teach training the mind in the art of using weapons and martial gestures. Buddhist martial art requires one to forget oneself in a state of unconsciousness, without checking feeling or even rational consciousness. The self is completely forgotten – so that the power itself is well done by relaxing all power, all endeavor. Here, strong power, accuracy, and quickness should transcend consciousness, or distinction between subject and object. There is no win or lose in the Buddhist martial art. The beauty of this art depends not on the level of martial danger, but on the harmony of power with non-violence. It develops the perfect power of non-violence.

Zen poetry consists of verses praising the pure mind of the human in accordance with the beauty of nature in order to express the noble teaching of Buddhism, about the Ultimate Reality. Basically, Zen poetry develops the Buddhist idea of Enlightenment. Zen poems are often written by a Zen Master who is both poet and philosopher. In style, Zen poetry is characterized by compact and modest words, with a penetrating philosophy about life and the human relation to nature. Its verses bear attributes of super salvation in which words are only a hint.

Zen painting is considered a quintessential expression of Zen Buddhist ideas. The painting makes use of nature as an object to describe inner mind, according to the idea of sudden enlightenment in which the basic action of painting action should return to the original emptiness of no-mind. In a masterpiece, mountain, river, lake, stream, and forest become the creation of the impermanent. A Zen painter considers that Buddha nature or spiritual nature should be found in every thing and in every one. The aim of the art is to grasp the essence of nature, which is hidden under external forms of things. The painter should draw quickly, accurately, without hesitation, naturally. The strokes move freely without being controlled by the Self. The painter should draw the spirit of the object, not just its external forms. This style shows the moving space, from limited to unlimited, from visible to invisible...Ch'an painting should express the feeling about the origin of all forms-formless. Especially while drawing, the painter integrates himself with the object in a strong effort of concentration, wherein only intuition works. Zen painting is respected and accepted as a holy product of Buddhist culture.

Calligraphy means the art of writing letters developed in terms of Zen thought. Each letter is a masterpiece reflecting the writer's mind and heart. Because Zen Masters use calligraphy to express completely the mind and soul, each letter is a unique picture. The letter is active as lifelike strokes full of vitality. In calligraphy, only light and dark strokes, black and white colors are used but they should manifest space abstractly, as well as concretely. Calligraphy was used as a way to train the mind by Zen Masters,

but later it was accepted as a lofty art of Chinese intellectuals, which then spread to other countries in East Asia.

The Tea Ceremony is the basic idea about inner spirit manifested creatively by Zen Masters and improved in the art of drinking tea. The Tea Ceremony is a meticulous ritual of making tea with long series of actions that form a whole moment of simple harmony over everything. The endless ritual endeavors to help every participant clearly feel how the atmosphere is changing, so they can enjoy and experience those things not able to be expressed in words. The aim of Tea Ceremony is to calm one's mind, to integrate oneself with nature, with the least action possible. The Tea Ceremony radiates an aesthetic sense of simple, elegant freedom. Maybe, at the beginning, the Tea Ceremony served as a way to get perfect relaxation of a Zen Master during the training process. In the end, laymen of different classes enjoyed it. Gradually it became a unique art of drinking tea in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Although different in local settings, the Tea Ceremony's basic spirit remains as an excellent and lofty art.

Flower Arrangement is an art of planting trees or arranging flowers developed as a philosophical expression of inner life. Flower Arrangement is an artificial mode of a reduced nature: flowers and trees are just nature, but through art they suddenly show their deep splendor. Flower Arrangement is not just collecting the external and visible beauty of nature, but requires the artist to have the mind and heart of nature, which should integrate with nature and know how to perceive and praise artificially the potential beauty hidden under the simple forms of nature. The Artificiality of Flower Arrangement is an art that involves transcending the subjective idea of the Self. It is the basic idea of this lofty art, and the basic trend of training the inner mind of a Zen Master. Later, it was introduced as a style of art, which helps to make life beautiful. Flower Arrangement had a long tradition in China, and then it came into vogue in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Before a masterpiece of Flower Arrangement, one should feel the sudden openness of mystic beauty, as a perfect one of nature. At this moment, one should perceive that Beauty itself is unlimited.

CONCLUSION

In Vietnam, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism are the three basic systems of Oriental thought, which are accepted and applied altogether creatively in a process of establishing and affirming the nation's dignity. We can say that as a result of the interaction with India and China, radical Vietnamese theories about cultivation of self-improvement, controlling family, and governing country were established in the tendency of integration of the three religions altogether, and among them Buddhism occupies an active and distinguished place in forming internal (introspective) values.

After being spurn of for a period by Marxist materialist ideology, Socialist countries came to realize the spiritual value of religion, to a certain extent. For them, the spiritual value of religion means not only negative

aspects such as superstition, but also positive values relating to philosophy, morality, and culture. Moreover, they consider religion as a tradition for the development in the meaning of civilization and globalization as well.

Civilization is a globalization trend in the new millennium, and the standard of life will be better, thanks to progressive achievements of science, engineering, and technology. These fruits are quickly popularized, and through globalization, become the common property of humanity. However, the trend of civilization, modernization and globalization is reason to speed up the appearance of a philosophical problem: a high quality of life is not just happiness. Man in modern society is facing modern dilemmas, such as AIDS, drugs, corruption, pollution, national and ethnic wars, etc – in the Buddhist term, “worldly suffering.” The whole picture of modernization and civilization somehow draws forth the question of whether a high standard of life is an effective and comprehensive solution for human being's happiness.

The desire to understand the Self once became a philosophical question. The Western schools of Existentialism, ‘Techno-activism, and Psychoanalysis are thought to be requirements for real happiness when a high quality of life did not answer the problem of “suffering“. In general, Buddhism was a system selected and inherited from Indian and Asian traditions, which has been tested and improved through a long history. Thus, its pre-eminent factors have become common precious values of mankind, and don't belong just to Buddhism in the religious sense. Already with its advantages as an internal-equal-anti-theistic authority-religious ethics, Buddhism's rich experience in intercultural communication makes it a candidate with the potential capacity to integrate into the modern age and face the challenges of globalization, as well.

In the future, individuals will have multifold chances to choose, but it is more difficult to decide and to realize the Self in that condition. In other words, it is easier to lose than to express the self. Regardless, modernity and globalization provide reasons that force man to directly challenge internal suffering. In this respect, the internal-atheistic-religious-philosophical approach of Buddhism should be considered as an emergent character of Oriental thought, which can make up for the shortage of man's knowledge about the Self. While Buddhism is a religion, we should remind ourselves that it would certainly take advantage of modern scientific achievements to protect and improve its traditional theory of humanity towards the trend of a religious system. In fact, Buddhism has to step back to (inner) psychology in which many questions about the Self remain.

However, Zen Buddhism has contributed general value to humanity through its internal-atheistic-religious-philosophical approach. Today, with the trend of global civilization, doors will open for the meeting of Eastern and Western values onwards to a better life in common perspective. In this condition, the positive values of Buddhist thought and practice will continuously be preserved and promoted in the common perspective of the new millennium.

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PART III

**SYMBOLS, TRANSCENDENCE AND
GLOBAL INTERACTION**

CHAPTER XIX

**SYMBOLIC CODES
IN AN AGE OF GLOBALIZATION**

DAVID N. POWER

The efficacy and tenacity of symbolic codes in giving adherents a common identity and worldview is very much affected by what is vaguely called globalization. The process known by that name is geared mostly to economic interdependence across the globe and to the spread of far-reaching systems of communication such that more profound cultural factors in the exchange between peoples are undermined. To this, there seem to be two sorts of reaction.

First, despite much necessary interaction on a global level, and much migration, peoples often retain a sense of national or ethnic identity and have divergent views of the world and the transcendent, so that communication and the pursuit of common interests is difficult. Second, in an opposite direction, other persons, societies or communities, are less prone to adhere to traditional symbolic codes and share in some sort of ill-defined mass culture, so that one may also speak of social and cultural disintegration. The more established symbols and rituals of public life and religion during periods of cultural and social change seem to fail or lose their persuasive power. The diminishing participation in religious rituals in some churches reflects either disaffection for what is ritualized or the failure of either the ritual to persuade or of the parent community to hold people's allegiance. Civil rituals also decline in importance, including the ritual of casting votes in elections, with many thinking it not a matter of great import.

However, there is a third type of reaction, as well: new kinds of ritual activity emerge, of a more open and fluid character. Various forms of Pentecostalism are on the upsurge around the world. In the USA, the Nation of Islam draws a following because it holds out a promise of solidarity and of strength in solidarity, of brother and the values of mutual concern, drawing on the remembrance of an African past. New Age spirituality, with its own forms of symbol and rite, continues to develop in the USA because of its simultaneous emphasis on the individual person and on community.

Rather than see all this disintegration and counter-ritual as purely negative, one can look at the possibilities offered of communion within pluralism in a society whose culture is increasingly affected by economic interaction, the spread of systems of communication, and frequent migration of peoples. For this to be realized, religions, societies, and communities have to become more conscious of the ongoing process of interpretation and change within their own symbolic worlds. The tradition of symbolic codes

is something within which peoples constantly operate and express meanings, values, relations, and aspirations. Even when something new emerges, nothing is created out of nothing. Symbolic creation cannot be totally arbitrary. No person or persons can simply create new symbols and codes at will. However consciously or unconsciously, they draw upon symbolic heritages even to say something new. The astute, however, will be more conscious of the process at work, in the past as in the present. As philosophers would say, a hermeneutical turn is needed when situations and identities are fluid and somehow all adherents of a code need to be caught up, at different levels of consciousness, in this process and without using such a technical term. When communities and their members are more conscious of themselves as speaking subjects or agents, they are more ready for dialogue with others, for a living and mutually enriching encounter.

This time of globalization is a time for seeking to bring into being a genuine humanity. When differences enrich interaction and perception, all can work together – through hope and dialogue – towards a gradual formulation of the common good. It has to be remarked that this process requires a special sensitivity to those peoples and groups who are less wealthy in material and industrial resources, and as a result, lose their place in the overall scheme of things. With the globalization of the economy, they are often forced to forsake their accustomed relations to land, water, environment and ancestors. They migrate to cities where they are physically and culturally dislocated and lose something as elemental as their language. Bringing them in as partners in the making of a world, seeing them as speaking subjects, is not properly based on a Hegelian dialectic of development or a structuralist anthropology. Though they may be poor in resources, it is the richness of their humanity that is to be allowed expression. It is not a time to indulge in aspirations of cultural victory in the meeting of cultures; all are being subjected to the desire for economic development.

DESCRIBING THE SYMBOLIC

How is one then to perceive the functioning of symbolic codes? Do they retain their capacity to give identity and meaning in the midst of change? Do they possess a dynamic that persuades their adherents to be open to cultural interchange (including the religious), where differences are not denied and yet the pursuit of common interests of a global nature is made more convincing?

Rather than work with the definition of a symbol – as that which represents something other than itself, or that which is a means of living encounter with another or others – we do better to work with a broader description that sees the action of a symbolic code as the action of a people or community within a historically given and changing world so that, through it, they relate with meaning and affect to this world. We expect to find how allegiance to such codes relates adherents and practitioners to matters of life and death, to some working judgment on what is good and

evil, to social virtues and community relations, and to past and present. Metaphysical speculation tells us that the symbolic has roots in the desire for being, for modes of being, for truth and beauty, and for the perfection of the human in the sublime. That, however, is a second-level observation, which always needs to be put to the test.

Thus a symbolic code, with rituals playing a key part, is a complex of significant things, of gestures, sounds, images and words that invite participation in the reality represented and given expression. In other terms, the symbolic universe itself, or the symbolic code as it may be called, is quite complex, but it is not to be seen “in itself,” but as the language given to a speaking subject, inherited and transmitted across time, so that we are attentive to that which is done through it by the speaking subject. From this perspective, it becomes apparent that as the common language of any human grouping, symbolic codes are constantly changing, both in their functioning and in the intuitive meanings assigned to them.

While often enough it is asked what meaning a symbol expresses, or what cognitive elements it contains, in fact the cognitive is embedded in imaginary, sensory and affective forms, and cannot be explained apart from them. Hence, rather than appeal to a psychological faculty, which attributes some actions to the senses, others to the imagination, others to reason, and still others to higher faculties of the mind, we do better to consider operations in which the whole person, as a whole person, and the corporate body as a body, is participatory. In this way, for example, we can see that the senses do not hinder the mind’s activity, nor simply provide images; the imagination does not simply present images to the intellect for insight, nor serve to bring affect into line with reason. On the contrary, the positioning of the body in symbolic action and the working of the imagination are creative, imaginary and felt constructs, suggestive of meaning and potent forces for opening up the possibilities of action to the community and its members.

With this perception of the symbolic in mind, we can say that symbolic action is both participation and mediation, so that, if we speak of symbolic mediation, we touch on the key role of the symbolic in human life. It invites participation in what it represents, and it mediates this participation. For example, in a meal ritual, relations to earth, to the past, to community, to the social, and to the divine are both expressed and mediated, and the relations of adherents to each other are mediated within this commonly held worldview. In this sense, the symbolic meets the meaning of the Greek word, *symbolon* – to bring together.

Elements of Symbolic Codes

Semiotics teaches us that each sign or symbol has to be seen within the whole, even as it and its interpretation are operatively subjected to the point of view and the practical interest of participants. Because of this complexity, it may be helpful to first delineate some of the elements at work

in symbolic codes. In fact, in examining symbolic codes, semioticians often start with visual symbols that express a relation to the body, to the universe, and to the subconscious seeking, as it were, some root for the symbolic in the place of the human in the world and in familial relations. Thus historians of religion and culture write of oneiric, bodily and cosmic symbols. These, of course, never stand alone, outside the larger symbolic code, but attending to such non-verbal elements in systems allows the interpreter to query how the tradition relates adherents to modes of being in relation to body, cosmos, environment and the subconscious. In their movements, these elements also readily allow for upward, downward, sideways, forward and backward movements. In this way they may say something about transcendent relations.

Bodily actions, such as eating and drinking, washing, anointing, prostrating, standing, sitting, etc., are also integral to meanings – the bodily intuition being completed by verbal expression. Gifts are offered, but with incantations, invocations, praises and prayers. Food is shared, but with words of salutation. The ongoing construction, action, and renewal of symbolic codes however is motivated by underlying narratives – recalled either explicitly or by reference. In some cases, mythic narratives are dominant. In others, hero myths or stories dominate. In others, historical memory does. Indeed, oftentimes there is an admixture of all three types of narrative. It is by reference to these narratives that communities find common meaning and identity and their place in space and time. While one may always look for some pristine story, in fact the narrative constantly changes or is modified as people adapt to new events and new conditions of living, or seek to harmonize symbolic thinking with other forms of acquired knowledge and functioning in the universe they inhabit. Another reason for change is that counter groups within the parent group demand that their narrative be given place in the whole, while challenging some of the assumptions of the major or dominant forms of the story inherited and transmitted.

Some examples are appropriate here. In Britain now, people are asking how to bring together old Anglo-Saxon narratives, the narratives of Norman conquest, the Celtic narratives of Scotland and Wales – all of which are seen as necessary to cultural and national identity. Furthermore, with the large influx of immigrant populations from former colonies, their stories have to be woven into the cultural fabric as well. Another example: among Jewish people in many countries, who keep their own identity while living among others, the ancient story of the Covenant has to accommodate the destruction of the Temple and now the remembrance of the Shoah.

Closely associated with foundational narratives is the mapping of space, but this, too, undergoes modification. How the sense of being in space and place is affected by the dissolution of story is neatly expressed in the title of one of Umberto Eco's novels, *The Island of the Day Before*, which suggests the confusion experienced as past and present seem to claim differing loyalties or offer different meanings.

In religious traditions and symbolic codes, the primary way of representing a sense of space is through places of religious worship, such as

the Hindu temple, the Jewish synagogue, the Islamic mosque, or the Catholic Church. However, their relation to the surrounding space differs, as does the sense of belonging for those who convene there. In the story of Christian churches, we know that church buildings often dominated the landscape. Their large courtyards even became centers of hospitality, commerce, and burial of the dead. While the National Cathedral and the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC still attempt dominance, downtown places of worship are absorbed into the common mass of buildings. In the building of a new Catholic Cathedral in Los Angeles, the side of the structure visible to the commercial and entertainment quarter was made to look like any such building; while inside its courtyard space, commerce still flourishes (e.g., cafeteria, gift-shop). Immigrant groups of other religions also have to choose how to construct and where to place their buildings, and to be attentive to how these relate them to their new cultural milieu.

As far as national identities are concerned, there is a spacing of public and commemorative buildings, which bespeaks common memory, identity and aspiration, and recalls the common stories with all their vicissitudes. Thus, in the city of Washington, converging in the same area are the George Washington Memorial Obelisk, the Lincoln Memorial Monument, and the Vietnam commemorative Wall. Because of the memory of Martin Luther King Jr., the Lincoln Memorial now stands not only as a monument to the freeing of slaves and the memory of the Civil War, but also as a memorial to the ongoing search for Civil Rights. In London, Trafalgar Square has become the place for daily recreation, festive gatherings and protest rallies, thus locating in one place different aspects of national memory and shared aspiration. In Australia, rather than choosing one of the great cities associated with British rule, the country built Canberra as a deliberately post-colonial capital. In Dublin, change has been expressed by turning the old Parliament building into a commercial bank, while retaining the residence of the Regal Viceroy as the residence of the President of the Republic.

SOCIAL ORDERING OR ACTION AND SYMBOLIC HERITAGE

People's symbolic heritage and their social order and action intersect but do not converge so as to make them indistinguishable. The cultural and symbolic heritage is greater than the social order that prevails. It carries a surplus of meaning that can be drawn upon either to corroborate or to challenge the order. It often happens that social and political orders are dominated by special interests or influenced by ideologies that have some quite specific future in mind. Even then, symbols that seem familiar are used to affirm the conduct of government, politics, judiciary and commerce. Within the cultural heritage, however, other aspirations and ideals are contained that create a tension between prevailing systems and cultural hopes. There will be those who in such situations draw revolutionary

inspiration from the tradition. The revolution may be suppressed or it may come about through violence or through peaceful means. But its leaders know that to be efficacious it needs not only organs of government and policies, but also symbolic expression. There has to be sufficient interaction between the social order and its institutions on the one hand, and recognizable symbolic expression on the other, for change to be effective. In fact, during times of oppression it is the poets, the artists, the storytellers, and the cineastes, who keep hope alive with their ability to draw from deeper wells of symbolic inheritance.

Metaphoric Key to Meaning and Creativity

Metaphor – verbal and performative – provides the key to meaning and the possibilities of creativity within symbolic codes. While metaphor – the positing of likenesses – has often been thought of as a stylistic device or an exercise in persuasive rhetoric, as described by Paul Ricoeur, creative metaphor occurs through the making of unlikely conjunctions of words, images, events, persons. While he examines utterances, metaphor can also be found in visual conjunctions, as in art and cinema, or in ritual transgressions. An ethnic and national example of such metaphoric usage on a large scale is found in the idea espoused in England by immigrants from the Caribbean: “English is Blackness.” Thus these people lay claim to the heritage of the Magna Carta and a parliamentary tradition, even as they transform the configurations of national identity by their colour, their idiom of speech, their music and their poetry.

Under the Soviet domination of Russia, the director Andrei Tarkovski found a way of expressing a peaceful hope in the film *Andrei Rublov* through the image of the horse. Throughout the film, the horse appears as a symbol of invasion, oppression, war and carnage, but in the last frame, when Rublov has again taken up painting and his young companion the casting of bells, the viewer sees horses peacefully grazing beside the water in green pastures.

There are also abundant examples of religious metaphorical creativity. Going back to some Russian writers in the nineteenth century, especially Mikhail Tareev, the image of *kenosis* has been offered to suffering peoples as a metaphor of hope. This key metaphor associates the slave and the lord in the one person of Christ. This unlikely conjunction is made into a symbol of hope for deliverance from bondage. In Asia, among some interested in dialogue between Judaism, Islam and Christian, an unexpected meeting-point is found in a common embrace of the sense of religious ecology among Asian peoples. A togetherness is offered through the embrace of that which, at first blush, seems most alien. In biblical tradition, metaphoric conjunction makes the most abjured foreigner a neighbour. In the history of Christian churches, this mandate has at times been affirmed, although just as often, negated in practice. Nevertheless, it is always there in the tradition to be evoked.

An example of metaphoric ritual transgression is found in marriage practices among the Filipino peoples of Northern Luzon, and maybe among other peoples as well. In the festive marriage celebration, the young couple omits the accustomed visit to the homes of parents. By expressing and constructing a different mode of relating to families in this way, they claim a freedom from traditional constraints.

These few examples bring our attention to what it is in metaphor that expresses meaning: appealing to a tradition but transforming ideals. In looking back over traditions we are helped if we can find or catch metaphors at the point of their invention, before they may have become dead metaphors or simple illustrations. We can also be constantly on the lookout for metaphoric utterances and performances. These do not usually occur in the first place in the observance of public symbols and rituals, but rather at the margins – in the work of artists of all kinds and in the practices of social groups who are said to practice forms of “popular culture.”

CRITICAL EXAMINATION

The public use and official structuring of symbolic codes, while expressing a sense of common identity for people, have often been quite oppressive of some members (even if they were not consciously aware of it, and merely fitting in with what was expected of them). Much of this has come to life when we see how symbol systems fostered class distinctions or placed women in inferior and subordinate roles. Religions appear to be particularly susceptible to such ideological escapades because of the hierarchies to which they give a divine significance. Those who want to continue to live from the power of their traditions need then to establish a critique that does not break symbolic continuity. This is more readily done when symbolic codes are taken as the locution of speaking subjects. Taking the symbolic as a living language and not a static form, we can see how some persons have spoken within it, as it were, on the periphery.

The work of Julia Kristeva may provide an important key for understanding how this is done. While her particular interest is in the study of Chinese traditions and Judeo-Christian traditions, and her particular concern is with women's well-being and emancipation, her approach is more broadly suggestive. While she has learned from Freud and Lacan that the only avenue to human consciousness is through language, she does not adopt their theories of sexuality or masculine/feminine relations. For her, the process is more fluent and open and involves listening to the voices of women. What she shows is that women have often failed to give open expression to their lives and desires because of social constraints, but many have expressed themselves outside the circle in images drawn from the symbolic tradition. The public symbolic order and the marginal voices draw on the same heritage but do so in different ways. One way of bringing about change is to permit that which has been excluded into the movements of symbolic ordering. If the speaking subject of community admits new voices,

it becomes more internally dialogical. This is a way of critical inquiry and reconstruction that is open to many cultures and societies. For example, in India more attention is given among some to the symbolic voice of the *Dalit*. In Africa, women ask why and how African customs and rituals often favour male domination. In both cases, the issues are raised within the symbolic traditions expressive of people and culture.

In the speech and the social and symbolic expression of global interaction, Stuart Hall has underscored the need to hear marginal groups and what is said and done at the local level. In the interests of a humanity in which all are to be partners, there has to be the intersection of many stories, many musics, many rhythms, many artistic forms. May we be preserved from “global culture” and become a living dialogue of cultural communities, in which all are allowed to be speaking subjects, free from dominant interests.

The Symbolic and History

Like any other historical movement, the process of globalization needs historical narratives as its underpinning. At its best, this will have to mean the interaction of varied historical memories, out of which participants draw the inspiration and the creative freedom needed to take part in the process. People and communities must be able to narrate their own memories in ways that touch on present realities, and as such, to find how purpose and identity may be invested in a dialogical global process.

One approach to historical narrative, exemplified by Braudel, is to say that if we know the economic, political and military structures of a period, we know its essential history. For those who believe that history has to be an account of peoples, persons and events, there is no single school of thought. Some see it as an account of events, to be as accurate as possible, from which we can derive the motivations and causes of events. It is however increasingly argued that historical narrative is interpretive. As such, an effort to relate historical narrative to the meanings and aspirations of peoples' lives today is important. To make this link, historical narrators draw from the symbolical, the visual, imaginative, and poetic expressions of meaning found in a people's heritage. It is through this means that current realities can be submitted to discernment and incorporated into the historical horizon of the future.

Besides particular local histories, there has always been European history, African history, Asian history, and finally, world history – inasmuch as peoples and nations are seen to interact and act upon each other. With the kind of convergence and interlocking of peoples that goes on today, history needs to be rewritten. This does not mean that the true nature of past events is camouflaged, but it may need to be seen in a new light, however painful this may be. Much that was kept undercover in the approved historical narrative has to be brought to light.

As but one example, we know that the Catholic Church has had to rewrite the story of its presence in Africa and Asia. Moreover, in secular history, much of the current writing of the history of North America is revisionist. This rewriting is necessary if the rights and interests of all the nation's constituent peoples are to be respected. Despite the tension between Southern states and Northern states surrounding the meaning of the Civil War as a key historical moment, people are, for the most part, collectively inspired by the story of the Pilgrim Fathers, the trek to the west, and the American War of Independence with its constitutional resolution – events which are given a quasi-mythical status. The trouble, however, with prevailing narratives is that many people are left out or made marginal to the main story. This includes Native Americans, the African-American population and Hispanics. How then, from their perspective, are events to be remembered, narrated, and made an integral part of the nation's historical narrative?

The opening for this new narration is created by some revisionist history within the approved main discourse. It has become more openly recorded that the Fathers of the War of Independence and of the American Constitution kept slaves and severely limited democratic voting rights among the white population. Their inspiration was that of an elite government, according to the model of the ancient Greek Republic. When the story is thus broken open, there is – one hopes – a greater capacity to hear other stories. In a mythical way, it is said that everybody may aspire to the American dream. In terms of historical memory, the dream may be changing so as to be more inclusive of other ways of being a people. One can call this either a clash of civilizations or a civil colloquy, depending on which symbolic code one wishes to draw upon.

As mentioned earlier, the identity of the English is undergoing change; its history is now perceived to include many hitherto excluded groups, with their memories and their symbolic heritage. Peoples who have emerged from under Soviet domination to establish themselves as partners on the world stage have to narrate their history, as well as write their poetry, create their music, and recall their myths. Peoples who have been freed from colonial dominion know that a postcolonial future is not possible without a symbolic heritage and narration of history with a postcolonial imagination. The people of the Republic of South Africa began their own distinctive life with the activity of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This was to allow truth to emerge, memories to be healed, and reconciliation to be effected. At the heart of the matter was the telling of stories – stories of persons, families, and prisoners, of executioners and executed, of villages, townships, and dorps. Out of many such stories, there may emerge the story of a People who are, by constitution, a Rainbow Coalition. The African capacity to tell stories, make poems, to sing, and to praise is playing its part.

Religion

A brief word about religions and religious communities is needed to complete the picture. On the world stage, religious adherents have often played a coercive and violent role. This has made the secularization of Europe, for example, something to be desired by many. When adherents are true to their roots – as to the Gospel in the case of Christianity, the Law and the Prophets in the case of Judaism, the Koran in the case of Islam – they may still be able to contribute to a movement towards true freedom and peaceful relations. At present, the practice of religion develops in ways hitherto unknown and is too many times a force of resistance to change and openness. A deep freedom of persons may be served within religious communities only if they are open to an internal change that purifies past memories and engages with new events and realities.

As practitioners follow their religious rituals and practices, and find meaning in their symbols, they are transformed within the horizons of their faith and beliefs. If the neighbour is respected and loved within this horizon, if justice is inspired, and if hope is engendered, adherents can become a force for transformation in society. This does not mean calling on others to be of their persuasion or imposing their point of view in the public domain. It does mean, however, being able to bring religious perspectives to humanity and the human project into a respectful, pluralist, public debate.

At the best of times, by reason of their own beliefs, values and trust, religious groups are alert to the dangers of the arrogance that belittles others. They perceive with clarity what is demeaning in human relations. They are attentive to the call of the poor and needy of the world and of all those unjustly treated. They bring these concerns into the public forum and seek to express their way of seeing the human in a persuasive way, so that society may gear its workings to a justice that is mindful of all, and particularly of the weak and the marginalized. However, without finding such resources in their own symbolic codes, they will live in a self-centered and closed world, resistant to others' truths.

BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

The disintegration of symbolic cultural identity and symbolic exchange is typical in a period of great social and cultural change. Formal rituals tend to be replaced by distinctively new patterns of behavior. While appealing to symbolic heritages in their own way, such rituals tend to carry the power and authority of the common or normative in a less formal way. After the disintegration of monolithic hierarchies and cultural systems, the process of social reconstruction requires various forms of public expression, inclusive of public ritual and more suggestive of a plurality within unity.

In the meeting of peoples, cultures, and civilizations resulting from global economics, mass communication and migration, peoples have to work together with understanding and with a sense of engagement in a com-

mon enterprise. A peaceful and just future depends on being able to understand and respect each other. What Paul Ricoeur described of the situation forty years ago is still largely true. The world has seen the end of the political domination of some nations by others, and there are fewer dictatorships or internally oppressive regimes than in the past. To take part in an international enterprise, each people is pressed to know its own identity, to understand its own culture, to find creativity and resources within its own heritage. Only with this sense of self is it possible to allow oneself to be faced by the other and to be enriched by the other. Because the end to conflict and the need to preserve peace is urgent, this kind of dialogue seems necessary. Yet the peoples of the world are far from being able to undertake it in any depth. Hence, much intercultural dialogue and inter-religious dialogue focuses on ethics and the clarification of values, which has brought some results. It is hard to tell how long this can last, however, for such discussions are far from being able to give deep understandings of the other and do not allow for a grasp of the other's view of the world and of reality. Behind metaphysics, there is always myth; behind epistemology, there is ritual; behind ethics, there is trust in the future. In these areas, cultures are quite diverse, and at the present juncture of world affairs, they are often quite insecure. Beyond an immediate clarification of ethics and values, it is necessary for peoples to meet each other in these areas of cultural heritage.

Much of the above may sound more like "utopian writing" than an "account of what actually happens," but utopias have always played a creative symbolic part in opening up the imagination of the impossible and the creative capacity to make it possible.

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CHAPTER XX

SYMBOLICALLY MEDIATED REVELATION AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

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In the introduction to this international seminar, Professor George McLean wrote: "Symbolic expression is key to the specifically human.... This seminar proposes to study the role of the symbolic in establishing cultural identities and values, their ideological manipulation, and their key role in negotiating transitions." We present in this paper an interpretation of how Judaeo-Christian Scripture understands who God is through symbolic mediations. Thus we show what Christians actually believe in this matter. The effort to retrieve this belief may make it seem alien to many men and women of our time, which means that it still must be shown how this view relates to contemporary experience of history. How, for example, can God act in history?

As Christians we hold that Scripture is normative for our belief. Not all Christians would accept Vatican II's understanding of God and belief in him, but we can find common ground beyond our differences by turning to Scripture for answers. We are not attempting to give a full scriptural theology here, but to concentrate on some central ways in which knowledge of God is understood to be mediated. We are not facing here philosophical difficulties that can be raised against the scriptural understanding of God and faith in him.¹ But in our treatment of Scripture, we are using contemporary studies of Scripture that have in part already addressed many of the

¹ We will not try to justify here this assertion of the normative character of Scripture for Christians, but direct the reader elsewhere. See Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*. ch. 2-6. Also see Avery Dulles, "Scripture: Recent Protestant and Catholic Views," *Theology Today* 37 (1980) 7-26. The view of Vatican II and the present article differ in important respects from that offered by Edward Farley and Peter Hodgson in "Scripture and Tradition," Peter Hodgson and Robert King, eds., *Christian Theology. An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 61-87. And though David Kelsey's analysis of the ways that Scripture is used in recent theology is very illuminating, it does not seem wholly adequate. See David Kelsey, "The Bible and Christian Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 48 (1980) 385-402.

The present article includes, with the permission of the publisher, edited sections of two books, Farrelly, *Belief in God in Our Time*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992) 73-84, and Farrelly, *Faith in God through Jesus Christ* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997) 54-58.

difficulties that men and women of our time would find with it. For example, through recognition of different genres in Scripture, we realize that we should not accept in a fundamentalist sense Genesis' account of creation and the first human beings. Vatican II has a more modest view of the truth of Scripture than do fundamentalists, for it teaches that "the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures."² There are two sections to this paper. In the first, we show how Scripture is a witness to a symbolically mediated revelation of God. And in the second, we survey briefly how the people to whom the books of the New Testament were addressed were struggling to find meaning in a world in transition.

SCRIPTURE AS WITNESS TO A SYMBOLICALLY MEDIATED DIVINE REVELATION

We are using Scripture here in a way appropriate to the manner in which it mediates Judaeo-Christian belief and the revelation on which this is based. To be able to enter *in medias res* rather than to spend a great deal of time developing concepts at this point, we are presupposing here that Scripture is not claimed by Christians to be of itself revelation, but to be written by believers for believers to present what God has revealed through words and deeds and has done for his people, the grounds in human experience on which this is asserted, and the implications for human life of what He has done. Since it is Scripture as it is understood to mediate God's revelation that we recall, it is the whole course of Scripture that we have to be concerned with, rather than any one part of it. Scripture is for Christians an account of a continuing and evolving dialogue between God and his people. As the Epistle to the Hebrews states: "In times past, God spoke in fragmentary and varied ways to our fathers through the prophets; in this, the final age, He has spoken to us through his Son" (1: 1-2).

We are attempting here only an introductory presentation of what is central to our specific questions. We do not recall specific Scripture texts as "proof-texts" in the way that earlier manuals of theology frequently did, as in and of themselves ultimate authorities. Rather we recall texts within the context of their mediation of God's dialogue in love with his people and this people's response. We are not attempting here to defend the proposition that there is a basis in history for Israel's and early Christianity's claim that God has made revelation through definite actions and words. Here we simply present the claim that there is such a relationship, because that is essential to the Christian identity and belief in God. And it is only that identity and belief that we are critically concerned with at this point.

While acknowledging the diverse interpretations of what the religious meaning is that they mediate to us, in this introductory answer we approach Scripture from the outside in. We can acknowledge, first of all,

² *Dei Verbum*, II.

that Scripture is a collection of signs, texts, and different forms or genres of literature, such as narrative, poetry, wisdom literature, prophecy, apocalypse, and letters. The authors or editors are in different ways testifying to their beliefs and to those of the community of which they are a part. The language they use testifies to what they believe. These books, which were written, edited, and reedited over successive ages, were later recognized by the Jewish and/or Christian community as expressing their beliefs, and as normative for their beliefs.

That is, eventually they were put together to constitute a canon. We can look at these books as a whole, together with those who practice “canonical criticism,” in addition to using other critical methods. This means that we can interpret a text in its original context, then in the context of its acceptance and “resignification” in later generations, and still later as it is accepted as part of the whole canon.³

We can say that as literature or literary forms, these texts depend on the creative imagination of their authors and editors in the context of their communities and circumstances.⁴ Poetry shows creative imagination; narrative takes creative imagination to structure a story with beginning, issue, and denouement. Similarly with the other forms of literature represented in Scripture. When we specify imagination as creative, we are distinguishing it from mimetic imagination that simply organizes what is given it. Immanuel Kant articulated the creative function of imagination – its function in synthesizing by giving a metaphor to a concept. What is central here is metaphor (and, analogous to it in narrative, the structuring of a story). As Ricoeur points out, metaphor is a form of enunciation, and not simply a word. It is the whole proposition, such as, “Old age is the evening of life.” To use metaphor is to give an unexpected predication of a reality that shifts our view of it and opens up new perspectives on it. Initially a metaphor is destabilizing for our perception, because, for example, old age is obviously not an evening, and the kingdom of God is not a mustard seed. Metaphor is central to the creative imagination and thus to literature and what it means.

³ On canonical criticism, see James A. Sanders, “Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy,” *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology*. eds. G. Coats and B. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) 21-24; J. Sanders, *Canon and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Brevard Childs, “The Canon in Recent Biblical Studies,” *Pro Ecclesia* 14 (2005) 26-45.

⁴ See in this volume, David Power, “The Imagination in the Post-Kantian Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur.” Also see Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); and Paul Ricoeur, “Poétique et symbolique,” in B. Lauret and F. Refoulé, eds., *Initiation à la Pratique de la Théologie*. Tome I: *Introduction* (Paris: Cerf, 1982) 37-61. Also see my report on a seminar relevant to this matter, “An Evaluation of Paul Ricoeur’s Interpretation of God-Talk in Scripture,” *Proceedings*. Catholic Theological Society of America, vol. 42 (1987) 165-167.

We find it throughout Scripture – in the account of the first man and woman, in the epic story of the Exodus, and in the parables of Jesus. These metaphors involve the reader now as they involved the hearer initially, for in them logos and life are joined; and they, correlatively, appeal to both logos and life, reason and desire in the hearer or reader.

Scripture is specifically religious literature, and thus has been compared with other religious literature of the ancient Middle East. We do not give here a specifically philosophical reflection on theological language; rather we restrict ourselves to the question of scriptural language as Christians believe it to function. Ricoeur joins Eliade in recognizing the reality of religious experience and of language as mediating this experience. In this language the pre-conceptual is primary, though it leads to doxology and confession where conceptual language is evident. It is particularly the pre-conceptual language and rite that is called symbolic. The metaphors in Scripture can often be called symbols – religious symbols. Ricoeur points out an analogical structure in such symbols: “By analogical structure, we signify provisionally the structure of expressions with a double meaning in which a first meaning sends us back to a second meaning which alone is intended, without however it being able to be attained directly, that is, other than through the first meaning.”⁵ For example, to say that the reign of God is a wedding feast is to speak indirectly of the reign of God through speaking of a wedding feast. To tell the story of Adam and Eve as a “narrative interpretation of the enigma of existence”⁶ that confers on humanity the unity of a concrete universal and a direction is to speak indirectly of God and our relation to him.

Symbols are not wholly translatable into direct and literal language; by interpretation the plenitude of experience that the myth designates only obscurely will not be restored. The secret of such symbols is metaphor that comes from a creative imagination giving an image to a concept, redescribing reality through a model or reconfiguring reality inaccessible to direct description so that we are enabled to see it.

The primary religious language in Scripture thus seems to be not doctrinal but symbolic. It speaks of God not so much directly as indirectly – through stories, poetry, prophecy, apocalyptic, and other literary forms that make central use of symbol. Here, as in metaphor more generally, we have an intersection of logos and life, reason and desire; we have a language that engages the reader or, initially, the hearer. These religious symbols, as Eliade and Ricoeur point out, present the Sacred to the reader or hearer in an almost sacramental manner, making available the power of the Sacred and participation in it, transforming, evoking a knowledge which is participative.

This is language that cannot be wholly translated into doctrinal statements. This is as true of Canaanite religious myths and rites as it is of the

⁵ Ricoeur, “Poétique,” 44.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

stories in Scripture. People of antiquity lived in a symbolic universe, a universe the reality and meaning of which was mediated to them largely through religious symbols. One of the problems people in our time have with faith is that many find it alien to life in a universe mediated symbolically to them; yet, ironically, when they dismiss religious symbols they frequently turn to other and less adequate symbols (e.g., those of a political movement or of popular culture).

However, scriptural language about Yahweh or God cannot be simply equated with that of the Canaanites about their gods, since the acts by which the Sacred is known differ for these different peoples. H. Cazelles calls upon different studies of the religions surrounding the emergence of Israel to understand how Israel's proclamation of God differed from theirs.⁷

The Yahwist and Elohist documents of the Pentateuch did use the Semitic designation for god or gods (El) for the God of Israel. To avoid excessive assimilation of Yahweh and the Canaanite El, we have to recall that the modes of action, comportment, and capacities of the gods of the surrounding peoples are shown in their myths and rites. These gods seem, or the symbols and myths by which these peoples speak of their gods seem, to be associated with the powers on which or on whom these peoples' lives depend. Thus H. Cazelles writes of these surrounding peoples: "Like his neighbors, the Phoenician discerns in the cosmic, political, physiological and even moral or intellectual forces an intelligence and a will more powerful than his own. But when he tries a synthesis by lists or by myths, the inconsistency is apparent. Here we have three Elohim, of whom one is El-father, there we have two: we have seven Baals of whom only one is defined (by the cult of Saphon). The role enjoyed by Mot in one myth is held by Yam in another. Ashtart can replace Anath.... The identifications are fluid."⁸ The powers shown in the yearly cycle of death and rebirth of vegetation are certainly important in the Canaanite religion, and this is one sense in which their symbols and myths are bonded to the cosmos and not fully translatable into doctrine or the conceptual. In a somewhat similar manner, the God of Israel is known as the power behind the actions ascribed to him. But this God is initially identified through very specific historical actions, such as the call of Abraham and the Exodus. Thus, though God is presented as an "elusive presence," he is known as a definite personality through the initiatives he freely adopts with his people. The world in front of the text into which people are invited by the scriptural message is presented as a revelation initiated by this personal God.

What seems central in Scripture is the witness to the faith of the Jews and then of the Christian community. The message is largely a proclamation

⁷ See H. Cazelles, "Le Dieu du Yahviste et de l'elohiste ou le Dieu du Patriarche et de Moïse et de David avant les Prophètes," in J. Coppens, ed., *La Notion biblique de Dieu. Le Dieu de la Bible et le Dieu des Philosophes* (Louvain: Louvain Univ. Press, 1976) 77-89.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

of God's offer of salvation and his call for the response of the obedience of faith. This offer and call are reactualized in generation after generation, as is shown by the way that traditions were proclaimed in new ways or reinterpreted to make God's salvation actual for changed circumstances. The prophets proclaimed God's message to the people of succeeding centuries by reflecting on the Exodus event. The New Testament is called the good news ("Gospel" means "the good news"); this is what the apostles proclaimed before it was written. Paul spoke of his gospel which he preached to Jews and Gentiles alike; and this is reactualized as it is proclaimed to succeeding generations, even down to our own time, e.g., through its use in the liturgy. The proclamation makes this offer of salvation present and calls for the response of faith. Though there are quite different messages given at different times, and a growth and correction with time, God has an identity manifested by these actions, and the one called to believe has identity through the call to believe.

Thus the metaphors and creative imaginations of the human community and of the individual authors and editors are understood to be responses to and mediations of this divine revelation. We can say then that the ultimate "creative imagination" at work here is understood by these scriptural authors and by the community of believers to be God's. The action, e.g., of the Exodus, has him as its author. Thus by his words and deeds God performs symbolic actions that give his people access to the Sacred, participation in his saving power, transforming knowledge, etc. Similarly the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus is understood to be God's act by which, as this act is understood through passages of the Old Testament, he vindicates Jesus and declares him to be Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36). In many different metaphors the authors of Scripture mediate God's saving presence and revelation.

What interpretations of Scripture does this oppose? It opposes those who take Scripture too objectively and too subjectively, e.g., many Neo-Scholastics and Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann interpreted the Gospel stories of Jesus' resurrection appearances as expressions of an interior religious experience of renewed life occasioned by proclamations of God's love for us shown in the death of Jesus. It opposes those who diffuse Christian identity excessively by assimilating it to that of the other religions of the Middle East in antiquity, excluding those characteristics that most distinguish it. It opposes those who will not speak of God with the personal pronoun, as though this would be to make an idol of or over-objectify the Sacred. It opposes those who interpret the language of Christian doctrine, also found in Scripture, as stipulating rules for the Christian use of language rather than having ontological reference. We are not here reflecting on the validity of the Jewish or Christian claim concerning the bases for their faith, e.g. God's action in the Exodus or in the resurrection of Jesus. Here we simply assert that their claim should not be diluted, even though modern naturalism and many philosophical interpretations of human knowledge and horizon of values find these claims as such unintelligible or unacceptable. We note also

that it is important for a theologian to present the Christian belief in the form Scripture does, and not only in the more conceptual form of theology; to do otherwise does not do justice to the meaning of this belief.

Third, in view of the differing theologies present in Scripture and its antiquity, how can one find an answer to questions we have in our time and a center in Scripture? With many scriptural scholars, we must say that although the critical historical method of studying Scripture is essential to contemporary biblical interpretation, by itself it is not adequate. That approach investigates the origin of the text in such matters as relation to previous themes, the circumstances of the time, the language used, and the intention of the author. But if we restrictedly study the languages that Scripture uses, the history behind the text, or the literary genres used by the author, then, as important as these are, they seem to leave a great gap between what we learn and our present questions. There seems to be such a gap between biblical anthropology or the biblical world and the world of the early 21st century that we may experience its strangeness rather than its relevance when considering the problems we have with faith or the understanding of God. There are aspects of Scripture that share in the strangeness of other pre-modern religions.

It is here that the whole development of hermeneutics in recent times has been such an aid. Against Adolf von Harnack, Barth and Bultmann showed that the scientific study of Scripture that tried to find out what really happened and was said was not sufficient; and, after Bultmann, there has been more and more attention given to questions of hermeneutics. Theoretical analyses of what is involved in interpreting ancient texts have been given from the time of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) till our own time with the important contributions of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and others.

Studies of this can be found elsewhere,⁹ but at this point we shall simply show something of how we can gain an understanding of the meaning of biblical texts that relates to our present question of the meaning of faith in God. We cannot achieve this meaning by excluding critical helps that show us what the text meant at the time of its first use or later when it was reedited and included in the context of a larger literary work. However, we primarily want to know the kind of world or universe of meaning that is projected in front of the text. What relationship of God to humankind and of humankind to God does the text project? And what bases for such a rela-

⁹ See Richard Palmer, *Hermeneutics. Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1979); David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination. Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: 1981); David Klemm, ed., *Hermeneutical Inquiry*. 2 vols. (Baltimore: Scholars Press, 1986); and Werner Jenrond, *Theological Hermeneutics. Development and Significance* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

tionship does the text offer? The meaning that the text projects can both affirm and challenge us in our understanding of life and the subject matter of the text. For many in our time and in the time when these texts were written, they are counter to the horizon of meaning and the human search; for others they largely affirm their horizon of meaning.

Perhaps the primary basis by which we can understand the meaning of the text in the sense of the kind of world that it projects is to take it as expressing and interpreting actions and words as God's. Using a recent book's analysis of some ways in which this meaning can be conveyed to us through the text, we can list several such ways.¹⁰ The witnesses to faith that Scripture gives us are frequently testimonies to the divine acts by which God offers his saving intervention for his people. These testimonies point not only to the events but to their meaning by giving narrative accounts of such things as how the Israelites came to be a people and how the Christians came to be a people distinct from Judaism of the first century. (Of course, in the process they give accounts of events that transcend our normal expectation. And this raises difficulties for a naturalistic historical consciousness in our time that must be addressed at some point.) Thus meaning is frequently conveyed in Scripture in narrative form. Hence the meaning of an action or statement is not exclusively known through its relation to the intention of the author, but also by its consequences in the narrative. Again, the meaning of a statement is known in part through supposing that it conforms to the rules of the language, as human behavior is in part understood through supposing that the agent performed it in accordance with rules of behavior in a certain society (e.g., the meaning of Solomon's building of a temple, Samuel's anointing of David). Both language and action can have a meaning in what they signify and in what they seek to bring about (e.g., commands, admonitions, healings, forgiving).

Still further we may have access to the meaning of a document, event, or statement by how it was received at the time and at later times. In some circumstances it goes against the expectations of the period and transforms these expectations or is rejected, but in any case it is always significant. Something similar is true of the way people of a later time may receive the earlier text or statement. Much of the prophetic discourse in the Old Testament shows how the founding event of Israel was interpreted in later times; and this is part of the meaning of the original event for Israel. As this process of resignification took place constantly in the reactualization of the proclamation of God's salvation through the biblical period, so too it has continued to occur through the Christian era. So we in our own time recognize larger meanings in the divine events and words to which the scriptural authors give witness, even to the point of finding there some answers to our questions about the meaning and foundations of belief in God that are proper to the Christian identity.

¹⁰ See Francis Schussler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology. Jesus and the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1984) 29-33, 108-122.

How can we from the diversity of theologies in Scripture claim to find an answer to our questions that is valid for all Christians? We are not attempting here a biblical theology. That has its own problems in our time, because the difficulty of finding one center in Scripture is more evident now than early in the 20th century.¹¹ And yet we cannot be satisfied with simply a history of the viewpoints of those who formed Israel's traditions and writings in succeeding ages. We acknowledge differences of theology, of course, among the writings in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, but these writings have been gathered into one canon. This shows that the Christian community has a conviction that there is no basic contradiction between them, even though the parts should be interpreted ultimately within the context of the whole and in view of the development of the dialogue between God and Israel that revelation represents. The theologies had to be different if they were to be appropriate to differing circumstances, and the same is true for our time. But this kind of pluralism is consistent with a common faith. The center of our theology here is found in part in the questions we address to Scripture from the vantage point of our time and circumstances. But the unity of our view of God and of faith, its meaning and foundations, depends upon the basic unity found in Scripture itself. What is central here is the initiative of God through his saving presence and revelation and the response of his people or of individuals to him.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE RELIGIOUS SEARCHING AT THE TIME OF THE WRITING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

There is, it seems to me, an interesting parallel between the first century and the present century in reference to the context for coming to belief or to a more critical belief as Christians. A new culture has emerged in the Western world and, indeed, in the whole world in the last century or so with the Enlightenment, science, historical consciousness, and awareness of the worlds of many peoples. Many who were previously Christian have embraced this larger culture to the point of a near total erosion of their Christian belief, while many from this larger culture are now experiencing an emptiness in it and are examining Christianity anew. But many from a strong Christian background resist a great deal in this culture and keep to an earlier cultural expression of their Christian belief. All of us face the question of the interface of our Christian belief with our contemporary culture.

The Gospels (and books of the New Testament more generally) present themselves as an experientially based witness to God's symbolically mediated offer of revelation and salvation through Jesus Christ and the

¹¹ See Gerhard Hasel, "Biblical Theology: Then, Now and Tomorrow," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 4 (1982) 61-93; Rolf Knierim, "The Task of Old Testament Theology," *ibid.*, 6 (1984) 25-57; and Roland Murphy, "A Response to 'The Task of Old Testament Theology 4,' *ibid.*, 65-71.

Spirit to a people concerned for themselves and their societies in a period when many people were searching, disappointed by the emptiness of the dominant culture of their time. Still others were being uprooted from a past into confrontation with a world empire and culture that challenged their traditional symbolic worlds and were adjusting their traditions in varied ways to these changed circumstances.

The texts of the New Testament are religious texts in the sense that they proclaim to people a religious world or God's relation to them that is symbolically mediated, and they address Christians who have accepted the Christian message in the midst of the pluralism of that time. They are addressed to Christians who came from this first-century world, and so it is helpful to say a word about some aspects of the world in which these texts were written. The interpretation of the texts is aided by some reference to the search of people at that time as a religious search, so different from, and yet analogous to, our own period of change. We will recall aspects of that time from the perspective of people's religious search – a search related to, or inclusive of, their economic, political, or social concerns but one that cannot be reduced to these concerns. The data relevant to this question can be found in the texts themselves (e.g., in the implied reader, or the kind of reader the text supposes is open to its message) and also in what other texts of the period witness.

We direct readers to other books where they can find analyses of the world of the New Testament.¹² Here we simply recall schematically that it was a world in transition. This was true for the Jewish world but also for the larger Mediterranean world of Roman power and Hellenistic culture. In fact, these two worlds were profoundly interconnected, because a central factor in Judaism's experience at the time was how to face this larger world that impacted them so severely and how to face it in a way faithful to their past. We shall first recall something of the larger Mediterranean world and then of Judaism's situation in the first century.

¹² In this I am largely following Luke T. Johnson. *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). See also, for example, Sean Freyne, *The World of the New Testament* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1980); Hans J. Schultz, ed., *Jesus in His Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); Bruce Malina. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981); M. Hengel. *Judaism and Hellenism*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); Richard Horsley and John Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 55-93. The citations in the text at this point are to Johnson's book. For a recent study of how, in fact, Judaism and Christianity reacted differently to the experience of Jesus and of the larger culture, see Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines. The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), and a review of this book by Jack Miles in *Commonweal*, October 21, 2005.

Hellenism had spread through the Mediterranean world from the time Alexander the Great had conquered so much of it and sought to spread Greek culture. This culture was initially centered in the city states of Greece; after Alexander, the cities became too large for citizen participation, and they were not free but were included in empire, eventually that of Rome. This Roman rule was preoccupied with power and its efficient use to ensure a peace of sorts; along with the benefits it brought to many peoples, it also imposed heavy taxes and caused a sense of deracination. Inclusion within empire gave people opportunity for a new identity, but it also led to a breakdown of local roots and, not infrequently, to alienation and despair.

Religious syncretisms developed from this enlarged political context, some of which led toward monotheism. But many people sensed that their lives were ruled by an alternation of chance and fate. Since individuals sensed so often that they did not have control over their lives, both religion and philosophy gave increased attention to the individual. Popular Hellenistic religion tended to emphasize personal religious experience and to feed a hunger for revelation, for transformation, and for personal allegiance that would provide a sense of identity in an alienating world (e.g., through the mystery religions). Hellenistic philosophy was now dedicated more to the art of living than to metaphysics. The Stoics taught that the universe was rational and that events were governed by divine providence. Cynics were individualistic and stressed freedom. Pythagoreans stressed community. Much philosophy called people to the virtuous life as the good life and fostered a religious view of the calling human beings had.

Thus Hellenism was characterized by a reinterpretation of its earlier symbols to make them suitable for a new age in which the acts of gods in Homeric stories did not accord with the ideals of virtue, and the virtues needed were no longer those of the archaic nobleman. The witness of the lives and words of the Hellenistic Jews of the Diaspora was not without its impact in this confused world. There were Gentiles who attached themselves to the synagogues and accepted monotheism and the moral code of the Torah, though they did not accept circumcision. It was among these that Christian missionaries first gained Gentile converts.

Judaism too was in a period of transition. It offered a consistent framework for self-definition but was not uniform. The Torah and the Temple were central for the Jews. The synagogue services were one central place of reinterpretation of the Torah. Both Torah and Temple implied that they were one with the people of old. God had made a covenant with them, had made them his people, was faithful to his covenant, and called them to be holy. But what did being holy mean? On this there was diversity. The Jews, and in a special way those in Palestine, were divided among themselves over the issue of Hellenism and Rome. The presence to them of Hellenistic culture and Roman power challenged them to interpret anew their inherited tradition concerning the relation between religious and sociopolitical-economic realities. The tax collectors and the Zealots had radically different reactions to Roman hegemony. Between these extremes

there were also very marked differences among the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes, and the people of the land (*am-ha-aretz*). They had different interpretations concerning what it was to be God's people, and they transformed their traditional religious symbols in different ways through their experiences and convictions. This had been in process for a long time.

Here we recall a few traditional Jewish symbols to show diversity in the Judaism of the first century. Messianism, the expectation of God's promise of a Son of David to liberate them and fulfill God's promises, was one of these symbols central to many Jews' hope in their conflicted world. Another was strongly developed during the time of the persecution of the Jews about 165 B.C., at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes IV in his attempt to assimilate the Jews into Greek culture. Apocalyptic literature, in this instance the book of Daniel, was a specifically religious response to the persecution experienced by those faithful to Torah and their need for a deep conviction that God was faithful. In symbolic language this literature (e.g., Daniel 7) assured the people that God would soon come and liberate them; that in the age to come as distinct from the present age dominated by forces of evil, God's reign would be given to the people of God symbolized by "one like a Son of Man"; and that the just would experience a resurrection from the dead. Thus it led to a new interpretation of history.

The Rabbinic tradition, in contrast, did not give an analysis of history but rather of the Torah to apply what had earlier been written in a simpler society to a people in such changed circumstances. The Torah "is God's eternal blueprint for creation and for righteous human behavior," and the Pharisees sought to "put a hedge around the Torah" for the people (56). While these emphasized the development of the Torah and separatism, the Sadducees restricted the Torah to the Pentateuch, sought accommodation with the Romans, and contributed to the economic exploitation of the people. The Essenes, made known to us particularly through the manuscripts discovered at Qumran, had reacted to the imposition of a high priest not of the Zadokite line (ca. 152 B.C.) and other factors by a separatism more severe than that of the Pharisees, and so they interpreted the Torah and its prophecies as applying specifically to their group and its future. All these groups were interpreting the Torah, its promises, and the meaning of holiness for the new circumstances posed by Hellenistic culture and Roman power and the Jewish factions these changed conditions occasioned.

The Jews of the Diaspora, over twice as numerous as those within Palestine, also faced the issue of assimilation or separatism, but they did so "in a setting less colored by religious persecution and political oppression" (67). Rome gave the Jews certain rights and privileges to abide by their religious traditions. The Jews were admired by some Gentiles for their monotheism, the high moral code of the Torah, and their attractive claim to be God's people; but they were also under suspicion by others for their separatism. Though as attached to the Torah as the Palestinian Jews, they interpreted the Jewish tradition differently because they were in a different cultural setting.

Thus the Hellenistic Jews of the Diaspora – as distinct, for example, from those in Mesopotamia – read the Torah in the Septuagint translation and had done so for generations, since their native language was Greek. And in the efforts of many of them, particularly those in Alexandria, to make themselves understood favorably by outsiders, they reflected on their history and its main figures (e.g., Moses) by some use of Hellenistic categories. For example, Philo of Alexandria used allegory to interpret the Torah and wrote of Moses as the ideal philosopher-king. The Book of Wisdom reflected on Wisdom, an emanation from God, as guiding his people, on the virtues that came from Wisdom, on immortality that was its reward, on God's philanthropy, and on the way God makes himself known by his works in creation that manifest him analogically.

We have reflected on the problem of hermeneutics and the gap between texts of the first century and interpreters of our century. We have also reflected on initial ways of bridging this gap. The texts of the New Testament were addressed to Christians – those who had responded to the Christ-event with faith and who had come from Palestinian and Diaspora Jews seeking fidelity to their tradition while facing the larger world of Hellenistic culture and Roman hegemony, and to Gentiles living in a world culture and empire marked by deracination and by religious and philosophical pluralism. That world bears some resemblance to our own. Some of us come from a strong Christian tradition and yet face a larger cultural world with its categories and its questions – a world that evokes assimilation or separatism from many Christians. Many come from this larger world and, while acclaiming its accomplishments, no longer find its presuppositions and symbols sufficient to give meaning to their lives.

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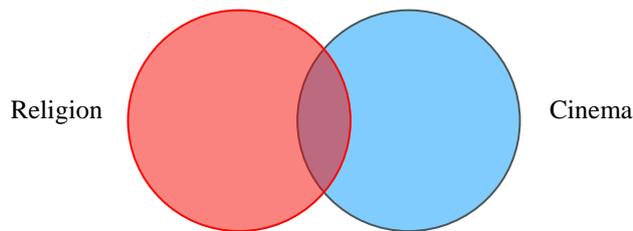
CHAPTER XXI

RELIGIOUS CINEMA: FROM THE VISIBLE TO THE INVISIBLE

NERIJUS MILERIUS

Introduction

In his classification of Christian religious films, Clive Marsh puts them into three categories: first, Jesus against culture; second, Jesus in dialogue with culture; and third, Jesus in culture. In the first case, artistic laws are subordinated to the requirements of theology. In the third, religious symbols become just cultural signs.



In religious cinema, the dialogue between Jesus and culture (in our case, religion and cinema) is the most promising and creative option. However, this type of religious film is also the most challenging. Seeking dialogue, one cannot count on the great number

of Bible illustrations so frequently screened on TV during Christian feasts. These illustrations can help in animating the memory of Sacred Scripture, but most of them have nothing to do with cinema as an art. On the other hand, a great number of religious films play with religious symbols without being sensible to their initial (sacred) meaning. In this case, even highly sophisticated works of art could have nothing to do with religion. To make it clear, the dialogical religious film should “speak” about religion in cinematic language. As cinema belongs to visual arts, religious films should speak in visual images.

In reconsidering dialogical religious cinema, therefore, an initial analysis of cinematic visual “language” is required. That is why, in this

paper, first, the outlines of the theory of the visual in cinema will be briefly discussed. I argue that, in cinema, the visible can be conceived only along with the invisible, as becomes especially clear in the procedure of montage. Second, the status of the invisible in religious cinema will be sketched.

THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE IN MONTAGE

It is almost commonly accepted that the technique that differentiates cinema from other arts is montage. It is quite usual to seek the origins of montage in literature or theatre. The very principle of montage, however, can be found in everyday life as well. In the history of cinema, various forms of montage were invented and mastered. However, there are two film directors without whom the very notion of montage seems impossible. Each of them contributed not only to montage as a cinematic technique, but also to montage as a concept of aesthetics functioning in the domains of arts and daily experience.

Usually, montage is drawn as a linear sequence of frames. See the scheme below:

F1	F2	F3	F4	F(n)
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(Scheme1)

This scheme, however, fails to reveal the spatial-temporal structure of the film. As every film plays not with single time and space but with heterogeneous time and heterogeneous space, the linear sequence of frames should be replaced by the concept of a manifold net. The principle of a film as a net is clearly expressed in the film “Intolerance” by the American director, Griffith.

Griffith

“Intolerance” is composed of four different stories. Each of them represents four different historical epochs: the first story (A) is that of an America contemporary to Griffith; the second (B) returns to the time of Jesus; the third (C) refers to St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre; and the fourth (D) tells about Babylonian times. All four stories of “Intolerance” could be drawn as parallel lines.

The vertical line (A, B, C, D) represents here four stories told by Griffith; the horizontal line (1, 2, 3, 4, n) is that of a sequence of frames. Throughout the film, Griffith constantly moves from one story to another. For example, in the first frame, the first (American) story becomes visible. The second frame depicts the times of Jesus; the third frame turns to St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. The fourth frame tells the story of the crash of Babylon.

	1	2	3	4	n
A	-----				
B		-----			
C			-----		
D				-----	

(Scheme 2)

The actual procedure of jumping from one story to another is more complicated as that drawn in the oversimplified Scheme 2. Each of the four stories is not represented in an equal number of frames, and the American story prevails over the other three. Nevertheless, Scheme 2 demonstrates Griffith’s revolutionary insight into the technique of montage. As one learns from Scheme 2, it is not only the visual parts that compose a film. Along with visualized frames, there are parts that are omitted and left invisible but, nevertheless, participate in the structure of the story. For example, when we are seeing the fourth frame depicting the story of Babylon, the other three stories are not represented directly on the screen but, nevertheless, they are intended and constitute the body of the film as a whole.

As is obvious in Scheme 2, the invisible part of the film (A2, A3, A4, B1, B3, B4, C1, C2, C4, D1, D2, D3) is much bigger than the visible (A1, B2, C3, D4). The film director’s task is not just to make a montage by composing two different frames, but to choose one possible frame from the great number of invisible possibilities and to make it visible.

That is why in the French cinematic tradition, the word “montage” is quite frequently transformed into “mont(r)age.” However, one should not make the mistake of thinking that in “mont(r)age,” the invisible plays just a minor role. On the contrary, in the creation of plot, the cinema director must keep a balance between the visible and the invisible. The necessity of maintaining equilibrium between the visible and the invisible is most evident in such genres as the detective story – to overdose on the visual would only serve to kill the intrigue. In order to make something visible, one should leave open space for the invisible. Quite paradoxically, thus, the invisible becomes the condition of possibility for the visible.

From Griffith’s time on, cinema theorists and critics have been given a powerful tool to draw a map of the visible and invisible fields of a film. It should be taken into account that one could map not only parallel story lines, as Griffith has done, but all the heroes and heroines of a film or, in a more complicated version, not only the content of a film but also its structural levels. For example, in surrealist cinema, the vertical line (A,B,C,D) could represent reality (A), dreams (B), hallucinations (C), and visions (D). In this case, the interplay of the visible and the invisible would take the form of the interplay of the real and the surreal.

The discovery of the invisible in the cinematic story was only the first step. The second step was made by Sergey Eisenstein who discovered the dimension of the invisible in the single image. Even though Eisenstein

does not belong to the sphere of religious cinema, his cinematic principles have been used to create it.

Eisenstein

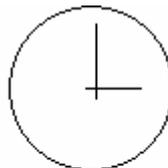
Being not only a practicing filmmaker, but also a theoretician of cinema, Eisenstein himself used to write on the nature of the visual in cinema. Having accepted the notion of montage as the editing of heterogeneous times and spaces, Eisenstein rethought the type of relationship of one story line to another. Whereas Griffith assumed that story lines (A,B,C,D) could be conceived as parallels, Eisenstein insisted on their dialectical relations of negation and synthesis. However, what makes Eisenstein exceptional is not only his reconception of cinematic montage, but also his endeavor to reconsider montage as aesthetical and, at the same time, a psychic category.

Looking from the point of view of Eisenstein, the graphical scheme of montage (Scheme 2) would have one essential shortcoming, namely, it takes the visible image as a single unit and conceals the fact that this image itself is a product of montage. For every visual image in Scheme 2 (A1, B2, C3, D4), the analogous scheme could be drawn:

	1	2	3	4	n
A	-----				
B		-----			
C			-----		
D				-----	

One could wonder what the vertical line (A,B,C,D) would represent here. How can the invisible (A2, A3, A4, B1, B3, B4, C1, C2, C4, D1, D2, D3) exist in the experience of a single object? Answering these questions, Eisenstein introduces the distinction between a picture and an image. Whereas a picture is, let's say, "pure" sensation, an image is a result – a montage of sensations.

Eisenstein believed that the distinction between a picture and an image could be proved by the experience of the following figure:



Looking at this figure, we usually do not hesitate to say that we are seeing "three o'clock, let's say, a.m." Eisenstein argues, however, that what

we are seeing is not a “three a.m.” but the picture of a geometrical figure – a circle and two intersecting lines. An image of “three a.m.” is a montage of different experiences and events that happened – or did not happen – to me at that time.

It becomes clear now how the general scheme of a film (Scheme 2) can represent not only a film but also a single image. Using the same example of “three a.m.”, one can imagine that, in the vertical row, A is the line for anonymous universal time, B represents all the tales, anecdotes or truth stories concerning this time (to B, for example, can belong various expressions to horrify naughty kids, as “vampires are awoken to chase”), C refers to long hours of sleepless nights, and D reminds one of unexpected news just received at that time, etc. Needless to mention, there are countless variations that could be applied to the montage of the figure drawn above.

Every single physical thing or mental concept is an image as such by the help of montage, that is, as composed from different pictures. A table, a screen, a window, and all the other things are nothing else but products of montage. But if everything in everyday experience is montage, how can we distinguish between montage in everyday life and montage in film? Are they identical procedures? No, they are not. What differentiates them is the relationship of a picture to an image. Eisenstein argues that, in everyday life, we move automatically from picture to image without even noticing it (that is why we usually “see” a clock where there is nothing but a geometrical figure). The task of the cinema is, on the contrary, to decompose automatically and unconsciously construct images, disclose how they are constituted, and creatively recompose them in film.

In routine everyday experience, we grasp the visual image without leaving a free space for what is not seen. As we can deduce from Eisenstein, the incapacity to leave open space for the unknown does not let us renew our experience, that which transforms viewed images into stereotypes. The “stereotypical eye” constantly sees things as the same, neglecting that every experience recomposes things in a different way each time. Being incapable to see a thing anew, an eye remains “blind.” It is this invisible dimension in experience that becomes the necessary condition for being able “to see.”

RELIGIOUS CINEMA

The cinematic techniques and practices discussed above are but the ABC’s of cinema – an alphabet essential to all films. However, as the same ABCs can be used to construct different words and texts, different cinematic genres also treat the dimension of the invisible in their own particular way.

As a matter of fact, for example, films featuring catastrophe and disaster reduce the role of the invisible to a minimum. What counts in this type of film is the terrifying images and their effect on the spectator. As I have already mentioned, criminal stories do not minimize the dimension of the invisible, but open and integrate it into the very midst of events. Religious cinema is extremely sensitive to the dimension of the invisible, as

well. Not without reason, Christian thinker and novelist G.K. Chesterton treated religion as a sort of detective work, and saw detective work as having a sort of religious dimension. However, in contrast to criminal stories that usually keep open the invisible only until the final scene where everything becomes more or less visible, religious cinema never ceases to treat the invisible as irreducible and valuable in itself.

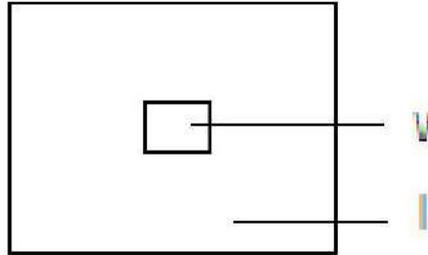
Analyzing the role of the invisible in cinema, nevertheless, one should not forget that there is no coherent religious cinema. In its different types, the status of the invisible also varies. More than that, even in the domain of the dialogical religious cinema that we are mostly dealing with, the dimension of the invisible changes along with the history of film. To grasp these changes, let's take an episode from a religious text – the Gospel:

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray". He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me". And going a little further, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want". Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak". Again he went away for the second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done". Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand" (Mt 26.36 – 26.46).

The Gospel is a manifestation of faith expressed in a certain chronicle of events. Looking through the prism of film, however, the Gospel is too "ascetic" in psychological characters and visual description to allow for a direct translation into cinematic images.

The lessons of Griffith and Eisenstein help us to imagine the visual net (scheme 2) of what can be seen in the episode and what cannot. The different story lines of Jesus and his disciples can be drawn. In this episode, we can even find some references to Jesus' inner states – a quite exceptional and rare case – whereas, the inner states of the disciples are left in silence.

The relationship of the visible to the invisible can be put in the following scheme:



As in other similar cases, the unexpressed and therefore invisible (I) part of the episode is incomparably bigger than that which is easily convertible into the visible (V). What is more striking, however, is the lack of hints on how to visualize Jesus himself and his disciples. It is obvious that in depicting Jesus, early cinema was forced to rely upon the other arts.

Religious visual art has always seen image as something that exceeds the sphere of the visible, in other words, as something that is more than “just” an image. In different cultures, different canons were created to express this surplus symbolic meaning of the image. These canons taught people how to see what could not be seen by an ordinary, untrained eye.



Early silent religious cinema owes a lot to this enormously rich tradition of sacred art. It is this art that helped to extend the field of the visible and make the different visualizations of the Gospel possible. However, transferred from the field of painting to that of

cinema, artistic canons gradually took the form of stereotypical images.

As Roy Kinnard and Tim Davis put it, the painting image of Jesus has dominated cinematic portrayals. Griffith’s “Intolerance,” certainly, was deeply rooted in this tradition. Nevertheless, having related four different epochs in one cinematographic net, Griffith has found a way to make the story of Jesus modern, that is, as it might take place in the contemporary world. In this fourfold net, the stories are not closed in on themselves; each of them is viewed from the prism of the others. It could be said that Griffith filled the cinematic space with images inherited from the history of art, but it could also be said that he opened the field for expressing the cinematic

story of Jesus in the present. In other words, Griffith taught his contemporaries how to see the story of Jesus with their own eyes and within their own lives.

Therefore, Griffith could be understood as someone who foresaw the Eisensteinian program of renewing experience through cinematic creativity. From this time on, religious cinema started to invent its own strategies to depict and at the same time to renew various religious themes. Returning once again to the episode of the Gospel, new possibilities emerge. Along with literal attempts to translate the verbal into the visual, new imaginative cinematic worlds could be, and indeed have been, constructed. In a contemporary history of religious cinema, there is a great number of films in which Jesus' story is told from the side of others – that of the disciple(s), a betrayer, even Barabas, etc. Such a strategy not only constitutes new lines that have never been expressed before but also invites one to reconsider the story of Jesus itself. Needless to say, some of these films – created in spaces that were previously invisible – constantly provoke scandal. As Saint Paul said, the crucifixion itself is a scandal because it contradicts logical rules and habitual stereotypes.

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CHAPTER XXII

TROPING TRAUMA: CONCEIVING EXPERIENCES OF SPEECHLESS TERROR

ROSEMARY WINSLOW

Suddenly his eyes would become blank, nothing but two open wounds, two pits of terror. – Elie Wiesel (*Night*, p. 72)

A metaphor gives us at least a fighting chance of saying something real. – Alicia Ostriker (“Dancing at the Devil’s Party,” p. 208)

...metaphor is one of the chief agents of our moral nature...the more serious we are in life, the less we can do without it. – Cynthia Ozick (*Metaphor and Memory*, p. 270)

In recent years, interest in studying and teaching writings about terror and trauma has markedly increased, especially and understandably first-person accounts of events that affected large numbers of people. As one century that has often been called “the century of trauma” passes into another like it, but compounded so far by the fear that it may also be a century of terror, it is important to read and understand what these accounts have to tell us. Much recent research on personal accounts of traumatic events has focused on narrative and ethos, (e.g., Carruth, Langer, Rosenwald, DeVinne, Bernard-Donals and Glejzer, Hayes). Little has been said about the stylistic aspects despite the highly tropological nature of trauma writings, which depend on tropes to indicate the profound psychological and moral depths of traumatic experience their writers are determined to tell. Lawrence Langer, one of the leading researchers of Jewish Holocaust narratives, has denounced the presence of figural language in survivor narratives, believing that it detracts from the reality of the events that happened. Cathy Carruth has made the necessary distinction between narrative and event; she separates objective events from subjective experience and finds that the event pressures the narrative as gaps, which are the evidence of traumatic events and which cannot be recovered because the experiencer is not fully conscious during the event. What we have, she says, is a fragmented world which cannot be pieced together from personal accounts. At issue in both is the aim of recovering “what happened” in the “objective” world, meaning the physical, social, and political contexts external to the individual, so that the historian is able to construct his or her own version of events. Michael Bernard-Donals has taken up Carruth’s

deconstructive gaps to argue that ethos may be indicated by the gaps. He argues that in traumatic narratives the writer must be judged as credible *on the fact of experience though not on the facts themselves* on the basis of existence of the gaps.

It seems odd that such tropological approaches constitute the methodology for determining the veracity and meaning of events, but not for understanding the *story* – the writer’s constructed perspective on the events. Since the publication of Michel Foucault’s *The Order of Things*, historiography has been seen as tropological, as the historian employs tropological processes in researching and using evidence for abstract claims and generalizing concepts. Metonymic process is necessary to abstract meaning from events, while metaphor is necessary to holding abstraction in tension to retain some measure of particularity through difference. Metonymy threatens erasure of the individual and disempowered social groups through their collapsing fragments of the whole event, and metaphor threatens to overwhelm making meaning at all with its wealth of difference.¹ Yet, the authors of personal experience narratives are not seen as having the same difficulties of metonymic reduction and metaphoric distinction, or of having to resort to the same problematic solutions of decision and tension. Even more, the figural language inside the text is likely to be read wholly off cultural concept metaphors, as are analyses of terror.² Shouldn’t we read the texts on – and *in* – their own terms, at least for some purposes, for example, to learn what their authors, who know intimately the extremes of the human condition, have to say? Shouldn’t we try to read the texts as fully as possible? If we don’t try, I think our failure renders the writer faceless as an experiencer of trauma, when we turn away from the full and particular sense of the indicators he or she has set before us. Although a traumatic event may happen to large groups of people, it always happens to each person – to each body, mind, and spirit. It is felt and thought in individuals, in each body and mind, even if many are physically together. And that feeling and thought, *his or hers*, are what personal experience accounts attempt to set down in a communicable way. To understand trauma narratives, then, we have to look inside, not just for facts of events but for the language that binds meaning and significance to them. We have to read their language more fully than we are used to doing.

To read trauma narratives as having “gaps,” as mere metonymic displacement of fragments of events and fragmentation of the everyday world – as unfortunate interference (Langer) or unfortunate absence (Carruth) – is to ignore both the aims of the genre and tropological language that is *in* the so-called gaps. It is to ignore the language, and thus the experience the writer is deeply intent on conveying. Events may look fragmented and experience of them may look fragmented from the perspective of the everyday world, but to an experience, it is a *whole* world. While in the experience, it is the real world, the one that counts. It is thus a *separate* world, because it is outside everyday experience and thus outside ordinary language, which developed

in and from the everyday, ordinary, consensual world to give meaning to everyday reality.

What appears to the reader when reading through eyes reading from an ordinary language perspective is a fragmented world; what is there is the traumatic world. Its speakability is hampered by the nature of the experience's and the experiencer's outsidedness, and by the necessary reliance on tropical language that is *not* conceptual, that is, not of the everyday ordinary world and language shared by readers. To speak and to read the world *next to* the ordinary world requires using the kinds of tropes capable of indicating (pointing to, gesturing toward) the experience. Knowledge-making in trauma results from a metonymic displacement (not fragmentation) of the already-available ordinary world and its language, which fails in its ordering when faced with trauma. This move shifts the experiencer to preconceptual figural resources. And because the everyday ordinary world and its concepts are rendered meaningless in the total shift outside of it, another world is created that is discontinuous: the trauma world is thus made through a metaphoric process. It exists outside of the ordinary – side-by-side.

Bernard-Donals recognizes this side-by-sideness when he asserts, “the origin of testimony itself...[is] another reality,” and the origin, the event itself, as unrecoverable as its objective fact from the narrative (572). He proposes a view of ethos as indicative, by which he means a view that regards ethos as credible, or “telling the truth,” if the writer is able, through language, not on external grounds, “to move an audience to ‘see’ an issue or an event that exceeds language’s ability to narrate” (566). I want to propose that the world induced by traumatic experience is itself indicative, for it lives in preconceptual figuration, beyond language, and to “see” its truth, we need imaging strategies that move us into its world; otherwise we cannot “see” or grasp its language-exceeding truth. These strategies have traditionally been associated with reading poetry, where we are schooled to build up a sense of an individual’s world from the figural resources that create it.

How do we read the figuration of these texts to make sense of their worlds? If the trauma world is a world radically different from the everyday world, how do we know it if do we not have the conceptual store that enables language to give meaning to experience? If an experience is unspeakable, is it also unthinkable? The answer is no. Primo Levi expressed the difficulty this way, encountered the first morning in Auschwitz: “for the first time we became aware that our language lacks words to express this offence, the demolition of a man” (*Survival in Auschwitz* 26). While the facts detailed in his narrative say what happened, it is the figurative language which indicates what the facts meant in the situation, how they all contributed to the “demolition of a man”: A man, An individual human being. Hayden White’s concern that scientific historiography tells “only part of the story of human beings at grips with their individual and collective destinies” (145, 46) has become a central problem not only for historians, but for rhetoric and composition studies. How we read figuration of

individuals' accounts is basic to gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data; to miss it or to misread is to *mistake* the data. With accounts of traumatic experience, this is even more true. In the absence of already-made language, figuration has to build the sense of the experience, its feel and meaning of the destruction of the human. But more, the figures are the only language with which the experiencer can think *of* the experience.

In *Metaphoric Worlds*, Samuel R. Levin proposes a kind of metaphor he terms "conceiving of," in contrast to "conceiving" it. "To think *of*," he suggests, is very different from "to think" a world. In the first, the world is thought in its fullness and *meaningfulness*; in the second, the world is thought in conceptual terms. It is the first strategy we have not used, but need to use to engage with trauma worlds. It is the second that most directly conveys reading to the reader, but which also can be the significant source of misreading. The first asks us to try to "think of" the world in its own terms and existence. The second easily overlooks and unwittingly erases the world and the experiencer's identity as experiencer and speaker of unspeakable truth.

TRAUMA

But before taking a detailed look at Levin's ideas, it is necessary to have a clearer idea of what trauma is and how the experiencer of trauma thinks of and attempts to present it.

What is trauma? How is traumatic experience?

– *As always when I saw their faces I froze from terror and hatred.*

– Primo Levi (*Survival at Auschwitz*, p. 159)

– *The different emotions that overcame us, of resignation, of futile rebellion, of religious abandon, of fear, of despair, now joined together after a sleepless night in a collective, uncontrolled panic. The time for meditation, the time for decision was over, and all reason dissolved into a tumult....*

– Primo Levi, (*Survival at Auschwitz*, p. 16.)

– *could feel myself as two entities – my body and me. I hated it.*

– Elie Wiesel (*Night*, p. 81)

Trauma induces extreme physical and psychological states, which arise from a body and mind that knows itself to be in the grip of an annihilating threat to a whole or part. Overwhelmed and unable to escape, the experiencer's ordinary world is severely disrupted, rendering impossible the making of meaning of the event while in it. In addition, the experience is not *of* the ordinary world of everyday experience and meaning, and it cannot be made to reconcile (be organized within, ordered, made meaningful) with it. But the situation is more complicated still; changes in physical and psychological states shift the experiencer into an altered state of consciousness characterized by heightened imaging and interference with reasoning. As

traumatic experience is a physiological/psychological phenomenon much studied in the discipline of psychology. I will let Barry M. Cohen, trauma researcher and therapist, define and summarize:

Apiegel (1992) defines trauma as a “sudden discontinuity in physical and psychological experience” in which the discontinuity is both a defense by the victim against the traumatic input (flight from harm), as well as a reflection of it (schema shifts and dissociation)...The victim shifts consciousness in order to avoid pain, separates any previous positive connection with the perpetrator from awareness, and becomes a thing instead of a person.... This moment of disparity and despair facilitates a hypnoid or trance state in the victim which fosters the creation of arational, atemporal, and nonlinear constructs (Horowitz, 1970). The response to this state of overwhelming experience has been described as “speechless terror“, since information can neither be fully assimilated nor accommodated (van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1991)... Trauma often causes the inadvertent association of disparate stimuli...the ability to retrieve information in a manner in which it can be translated into words depends on compatibility with or similarity to current cues....The traumatized individual lives in two different worlds: the realm of trauma (the past) and the realm of “ordinary” life (present). The realm of trauma is internal reality – a world repetitive, solitary, and very importantly, timeless....Further, these are utterly “incompatible worlds” ([van der Kolk and van der Hart,] 1991, p. 449)... This explains why traumatized individuals crave metaphor and imagery...to make sense of their worlds (527, 28).

We can see from this description why Carruth assigns to trauma narratives the term “gaps” and says rightly that the objective facts of the event are not recoverable from this physical/psychological response. However, the disjunction of the ordinary world is not absence, as the term “gap” indicates. Rather, something is present – emotion, imaging, thought – and this something forms the reality and truth of the individual’s experience of the event. If we are looking to draw objective facts in a linear form – a narrative sequence – Carruth is right; it cannot look like “objectivity,” which really means, with respect to narrative, a version of how the ordinary world would structure the facts of an event. But we can recover (an interesting conceptual metaphor itself, that needs objection on grounds that it indicates putting the experience out of sight) something of the truth of the experience, and this is what experiencers who survive insist on telling, and what readers and interpreters must attend to if their concern is to access and understand these experiences as *meaningfull*.

From Cohen's summary of defining features of traumatic experience, five are central to understanding what trauma worlds are and how to read them: (number 1) the presence of "discontinuity" of both physical and psychological experience, and its status as both "defense" and "reflection"; (number 2) the "creation of arational, atemporal, and nonlinear constructs," which are therefore not amenable to the full range of reasoning processes and language resources, which depend on concepts and on time-bound linearity; (number 3) the defining experience of "speechless terror," an extreme emotion that stuns the experiencer out of language; (number 4) the experiencer's shifted view from person to thing; and (number 5) the existence of "two worlds" – "the realm of trauma" and "the realm of 'ordinary' life" – in which the experiencer is and continues to be past the event. These two worlds exist, disjoined (i.e., neither is fragmented nor erased).

All of these features work against the construction of narrative. But tropical thought is well-suited: flexible, imagistic, felt, preconceptual, indicative, and rich with indicative possibility.

In short-term, single-event trauma, the trauma world may be so sparse as hardly to be called a world. In long-term repeating trauma however (as may occur, e.g., in concentration camps, enslavement, prison, torture, war, severely dysfunctional families), the trauma world may develop extensively and be maintained beside, but apart from, the ordinary world. This happens because the experiencer lives in both worlds, must survive, and must therefore maintain cognitive dissonance between the ordinary world, which is organized meaningfully to promote life, and the trauma world, which seems by contrast disorganized and threatens to annihilate (Cohen 527). Cohen classes these worlds as post-traumatic paracosms: "spontaneously created, systematized private worlds...internally consistent and deeply significant to the individual...and self-referential... [they] include the internal reality's environment, architecture, values, culture, and constituents" (530). The alternate reality of the trauma-induced world is much like the art world reality, Cohen says, in its status as a "fundamental way of knowing the world," because "[t]here is no mandate for sequential thought in the non-verbal mind; art carries information differently than language – in visual images rather than in words (528; quote is from Goodman). These images need not themselves be narrative because form in art is content; it alone can communicate" (529). The transfer of experience into art's visual language is, of course, a making of a textual world. It is not *the same as* the experience, even as imaged, as it is *mediated* by the material and formal possibilities of art, just as transfer into language would be by the linguistic medium. However, the visual, non-linear nature of art is closer to the actual experience than language can approach. Images are an inextricable component of semantic aspects of metaphor, as Paul Ricoeur has cogently asserted and demonstrated ("The Metaphoric Process"). They carry psychological/emotional meaning, and are "emerging meaning" (147); they merge "sense and sense" (149). And they are the chief carriers of reference in poetic worlds. Spoken and written trauma accounts bear high

proportions of tropes because tropes must indicate the trauma world with its high content of image and emotion, and because the trauma world is discontinuous with the ordinary world that writers address and the language which they must address them if they are to be understood at all. When experiencers of long-term trauma write the trauma world, that world will appear intermingled with the ordinary, as it must take on rationality, temporality, and linearity in order to be communicated. The life of the trauma world maintains itself in tropical formations and processes, as these are able to translate into language from visual content and form.

In addition, tropes are chief cognitive processes, the two main cognitive resources for thinking and organizing our experience. The two major tropes – metaphor and metonymy – underlie the production of language and life. We “live by” underlying conceptual metaphors, such as “argument as war,” “time as money,” and “theories are buildings” (Lakoff and Johnson). Metonymy allows us to conceptualize by taking one example to stand for a whole and by transferring functions (e.g., cause for effect, type for cause) (Lakoff). Yet, we do not all think alike. Individual variation emerges from each person’s mental representation, acquired from the general store, mingled with personal history and local material. As a rule then, some tropes would have non-common senses. As David Beres and Edward Joseph state, “all conscious psychic activity” arises from unconscious structures which are called “mental representations.” “A mental representation is a postulated unconscious psychic organization capable of evocation in consciousness as symbol, fantasy, thought, affect, or action.” We do not act directly to an external stimulus but instead the external stimulus activates a mental representation, and action issues from *it* (Beres and Joseph 2, 6, 7). Like any individual’s version, or mental representations, of the ordinary world, paracosms are mental representations: they are internally created, but differ from the ordinary world in their individualized nature (the lack of consensuality) and high degree of the visual and nonlinear aspects – features resulting from traumatic response.

If one’s aim is to understand an alternate world, then non-consensual content and structure and their functioning are of paramount importance. Understanding *how* that world means is necessary to understanding *what* it means. If we do not understand the world on its own terms, we misunderstand and misread its differences from and contiguities with the ordinary, consensual world. Thus, what we consider the nature and function of tropes in a specific text determines the understanding and interpretation we make of how individual writings function in social and political contexts.

THEORIZING TROPES AND THE TRAUMA WORLD

I believe that every militant chemist can confirm it: that one must distrust the almost-the-same...the differences can be small, but they can lead to radically different consequences.
Primo Levi (*The Periodic Table*, p. xii)

That night the soup tasted of corpses. – Elie Wiesel (*Night*, p. 62)

Although accounts of history proceed largely through metonymic process, abstracting whole from cases (Foucault, White), texts relating traumatic experience, by contrast, have to rely on metaphor. In narrative accounts, concept metaphors enable communication with readers, but they (1) undercut and oppose them to indicate the disjunction with ordinary world concepts and (2) complicate them with non-conceptual metaphor to indicate aspects of the trauma world that have no ordinary world similarities. The incapacity of already-available concept metaphors to represent the trauma world thrusts tropical language into the role of indicating – through gesture toward traumatic experience – and signals the world’s radical difference from the ordinary world. While experiencers can think the trauma world, without shared concepts, readers cannot – unless there is a way possible through indicative tropes.

In trauma narratives, the typical strategy is to relate facts of the event and use tropes to point toward the sense of the world, to build its thought, feel, and moral dimensions. Tropes that do not have conventional concepts attached to them, or suggest more than do conventional concept metaphors, serve this function. These are the tropes by which poetry (i.e., literary texts) acquires and indicates its reality and truth. While conventional tropical language anchors the reader in the ordinary world of meaning, non-conventional tropical language functions to create a “surplus” of meaning (Ricoeur’s term, used throughout *Interpretation Theory*) that supplies more meaning than the conventional. In the traditional understanding, metaphor is regarded as an expression that does not make literal sense. In various theories it is called false, nonsense, absurd. Its presence functions to send the reader on a search for meaning for similarity across two incompatible semantic domains, while the grammar holds out incompatibility (difference) through its literal assertion. For example, when Elie Wiesel says, after watching a young boy hanged for sabotage at Auschwitz, “That night the soup tasted of corpses,” we see this as a metaphor because in the ordinary world, soup could not be made of corpses. Corpses belong in the semantic domain of death, not food ingredients. This awareness prompts a search for other meaning than the literal one. We look for relevant domains: death – perhaps Wiesel is experiencing some kind of death after watching the courageous, rebellious youth hanged. But what kind of death? And what about that extra, that overflow? A creepy, sinking feeling, distaste, perhaps in our mouths, a tightening in the stomach, revulsion, perhaps a darkening space around us, who have become, through a fuller, felt participation in the image, intensely aware of body. Aware, perhaps, of isolation from everything else but this moment. Perhaps aware of terror, even shame. In the first instant of taking in the literal sense, we very likely recoil, we resist even letting the thought into awareness: so strong is the taboo against eating

human bodies, so strong is the desire – no, the animal instinct – to live. We want, naturally, to protect ourselves. But there is that soup, and that soup is all there is to eat – and eat or die. To read this fully is to take in its awareness, to be cognizant of the felt and morally chaotic experience of which it tells. It is to begin to *think of* that world of experience.

Although the specific responses will vary from reader to reader, some such physical and cognitive responses will attend the visual image arising in us through the trope. Paul Ricoeur, whose interactive theory is the richest and most elaborated of metaphor theories, says that this operation gives metaphoric utterances stereoscopic depth, because the ordinary world is held in tension with the newly-created world: “The metaphoric utterance not only abolishes but preserves the literal sense” (“Metaphorical Process” 152). The estrangement from the ordinary impels a sense of a strange world – a new world previously unthought, apart from, but near to, the ordinary world.

Interpreting via conventional concept metaphor tends to cancel the strange, new world – if it is seen at all.³ The reason for this is that the trope is regarded as deviant or false, and this process reads the trope back into the terms of ordinary world, assimilating the trope’s meaning and world into it (Levin 2, 3). Corpses mean “death,” and the wealth of sensation and thought fades back, unrealized. The psychological component flows back into abstract reduction, tamed, and the reader moves on. This is the point at which our usual ways of reading conventional and nonconventional metaphors end, for we can reach resolution of tension between the literal and figurative meanings through congruence with the ordinary world. Yet, as Ricoeur argues, the “psychological moment” of imaging produces a sensing and sense of the world that lies beyond the borders of the ordinary; it is a necessary component of the semantic aspect of metaphor – so necessary, he asserts (and demonstrates) that no theory of metaphor can achieve even its own aims without it (141).

As I noted above, Levin regards this connective resolution of metaphor to conventional meanings as an assimilation of the newly-created world into ordinary world; assimilation happens as a result of the failure to apprehend a metaphor as a new conceptual world. Assimilation enables an expansion of the ordinary world, but if there is a separate new world being posited and indicated through metaphor, then the price of assimilation is erasure of the newly-created experiential world as an “achieved comprehension” (20). And while Levin agrees for the most part with Ricoeur’s approach, he insists that sometimes some writers mean some metaphors to be taken literally because they are writing of another, real way of experiencing the world. A new experiential world is not governed by conventional concepts; therefore it cannot be thought in those concepts, but it can nevertheless be *thought* through tropes. Readers cannot “think” it, but they can “think *of*” it. For these metaphors, the price of assimilation is the loss of the *meaningfulness* indicated in tropical thought. To gain *meaningfulness*, the reader has to try to “think of,” or “conceive of” the world according to the

literal sense of the metaphors. Levin's principal example is Wordsworth, whose metaphors of nature in happy communion (e.g., various waters "roaring with one voice" in "Mt. Snowden"), invite us into the communion of living, joyful nature, where the poet himself is. "Doing so," Levin says, "forces us to conceive of a world in which nature is 'alive', in which a community of spirit exists between ourselves and the objects of nature. To conceive of a river as loving, of nature as breathing, opens up for us a world different from the ordinary world of our senses and cognitions. This is a metaphoric world, a world of our own making, a world – it is my contention – that Wordsworth realized in his own thought and on the basis of which he wrote such lines as [we find in] *The Prelude*" (236). Wordsworth, Levin argues, invites readers to "conceive of a world or state of affairs whose nature, in its abrogation of the canons that govern existential relations in our world, is estranged from common notions of reality and may rightly be termed metaphoric" (237). To think of this world is to take its metaphors as literal, as the real thought of a distinct, not similar, not able-to-be-assimilated world. The conclusion of Levin's proposal for reading is that metaphoric worlds are conceptual: they present and intend to elicit, through experience of their literal senses, a new conceptual grasp of reality. The metaphoric world comprises a whole way of thinking, and its metaphors serve to indicate the literalness of its newly-thought, uncommon conceptualization.

Levin regards Wordsworth's sublime experience as a cognitive achievement, and one that is ineffable because it can be neither thought nor spoken *in the terms of the ordinary world*. Because such experiences are outside of the everyday world of common experience, metaphors have to serve to convey them to readers through their non-deviant literalness. Like experiences of the sublime, traumatic experience is ineffable, cannot be thought or spoken through the already-made terms of language, and is outside of everyday common experience. Experiencers are thrown back onto the cognitive resources of nonconceptual tropes to conceive of their experience and to conceive the experiential world. Like sublime experience, traumatic experience abrogates the rules and laws that order relations in the everyday world. The ordinary world is organized to support life and sociality; the trauma world is organized for survival a reality whose single overwhelming constant is the threat of annihilation. The trauma world isolates and cuts off sociality; it shrinks context to the immediate event's relation to the individual's need to get away from the threat. It erases context, and its rules. Trauma's happenings are unpredictable and elude systematization. It is the antithesis of the sublime's pervasive aliveness, communion, and total sociality among dimensions of context. It is also the antithesis of ordered, predictive relational rules and of our modern internal-/external metaphysical split. These antitheses, in fact, form the conceptual bridge between worlds. Since ineffable experience cannot be understood in ordinary world terms, the trauma world emerges and develops tropically. If speaking or writing that is motivated toward communication ensues, the

experiencer must use the full range of metaphoric resources if he or she is to enable the reader to enter the world of the trauma experience. If the reader follows the way of reading Levin suggests, if some metaphors are read off conventional concept metaphors and some are taken literally, what was unthinkable becomes thinkable.

The question then is, do writers of traumatic experience ask us to take at least some metaphors literally? I think the answer is yes and offer two reasons. One: the trauma world is not ruled by ordinary world concepts and canons of reasoning. It is arational, and subsequent rationality in ordinary world terms yields a world that is, in many ways, the antithesis to the ordinary world in its striving to annihilate the individual. In its isolation and absence of context, it lacks sociality, which the ordinary world is organized to promote. Two: because the trauma world is atemporal, arational, non-linear, and highly imagistic, tropes leap in where concepts and narrative cannot go. To read the world as other than this is to lose its essential character as well as its means of making sense.

These two reasons – lack of concepts for a thought and consequential use of tropes for its content and effects – are the ones Levin explores as the motivating basis for his category of the “conceiving of” metaphor. His excursion through Giambattista Vico’s explanation of language’s development of concepts out of tropes (Chapter Five) is helpful to understanding how tropical thought is the base and indicator of the trauma world.

Working from the evidence of early poetry, Vico discovered that all tropes were initially catachretic. Early thinking of the world was very different from our descriptions of the actual nature of the things. Rather, it was more like Wordsworth’s comprehension of the world as alive and continually and fully interacting with human beings. Before our modern metaphysical view came into being, conceptions were figural projections from human experience outward onto the world. The world was experienced and thought of as alive with passion and feeling. That their view was composed of projections early humans had no way of knowing, for they had not yet acquired the later split between the external actual world and their internal human experience. As science developed, the external world came to be described in its own nature, but prior to that it could not be conceived as such. Vico discovered that catachretic expressions took the place we now have for conceiving the world. He says that early humans “spoke in poetic characters” (quoted in Levin 120) to describe and think of their world. But they did not see that they were making likeness. Their figural language, taken from the human figure, named the world as they thought it really was. To them, the poetic words were literal; their ordinary world looks to us like a poetic world only in retrospect.

Catachresis is one of two types of metaphor discussed in classical rhetoric. The first type is the traditional. It involves a choice of a different term where another, usual, literal one is available. It is the metaphor that theory has almost exclusively been concerned with describing and explaining. The motivation for this type has traditionally been regarded as

decorative, that is, applied, in the artistic sense, where it doesn't belong in order to vivify or to excite the passions. To put it simply, as a non-literal choice, it is regarded as a deviance from the ordinary term and sense. It functions to estrange at the same time as it links up to similarities in the ordinary understanding of the world.

The second type of metaphor discussed in classical rhetoric is catachresis. This type emerges to fill a gap when no term for a thought is available. Thus, it is not a choice from among options, so it can be neither regarded as, nor processed as, a deviance from ordinary language. Levin quotes Vico: "Catachresis is thus metaphor by default – compare Quintillian [*Institution Oratoria*, Vol. III, 303] where he says, 'As an example of a necessary metaphor [i.e., catachresis], I may quote the following usage in vogue with peasants when they call a vinebud *gemma*, a gem (what other term was there they could use?)" (121). Catachresis grabs an image to fill in a conceptual gap in language. Furthermore, Levin points out, "as Vico describes the origin and nature of the tropes they are all catachretic in their motivation" (121). In Vico's understanding, all the tropes originally functioned as nondeviant; they were the means of conceiving the world where no language for the conception existed before. Language was thus invented out of catachretic expressions.⁴ Only in retrospect do we regard tropes as "poetic." When there is no choice, "tropes *are* the proper mode." Catachretic metaphors "become conceptual metaphors only from the perspective of subsequent metaphysical development" (123). Vico's evidence for the catachretic development of language is the lexicon:

It is noteworthy that in all languages the greater part of the expressions relating to inanimate things are formed by metaphors from the human body and its parts and from the human senses and passions. Thus, head for top or beginning; the brow and shoulders of a hill; the eyes of needles and of potatoes; mouth for any opening' the lip of a cup or pitcher; the teeth of a rake, saw, comb;...the flesh of fruits; a vein of rock or mineral; the blood of grapes for wine; the bowels of the earth. Heaven or sea smiles; the wind whistles; the waves murmur; a body groans under a great weight. The farmers of Latium used to say the fields were thirsty, bore fruit, were swollen with grain; and our rustics speak of plants making love, vines growing mad, resinous trees weeping (quoted in Levin 123, 24; from Vico 405).

If early humans did not think that the world was separate from them, but alive and bodied like them, then all of these metaphors are catachretic. A river has a mouth because it is a being. A mountain has a foot because it is a being.

Following Vico's view of early metaphysics, Levin considers these terms as literal; early on the world was thought in human terms. But Levin

notices that two kinds of catachretic functions appear in Vico's discussion. Lexical terms are projected from the human body to name things in the world. These, he says, would be considered catachretic even by classical rhetoric. But another type insists that nature also functions as a body – pregnant, giving birth, feeling thirst, love, madness, and sorrow. This second type would be considered decorative, not catachretic by classical rhetoric. If these of the second type are catachretic, as Vico and Levin claim, then the world was conceived and thought of as exactly what was said (124).

When we read trauma accounts, at least sometimes the tropical language seems to mean what it literally says and the trauma world seems most accurate in tropical terms. Why? I suggest that the five features of the trauma world I noted earlier as central to this issue correspond to features of Vico's view of early human thinking and language development.

1. Disruption of and, discontinuity with, everyday ordinary reality with regard to bodily and psychic experience create a situation of lack of terms for actors and acts, like the situation of early humans. The projections, however, arise from the experiencer's prior store of knowledge, and they are grabbed to stand for thought without even the organization had by the human body. The tropes will thus appear radically disorganized, because they are self-referential, pieced from the person's total knowledge store. If we try to read them entirely on the basis of shared meanings and functions, we are in danger of serious misreading.

2. Trauma is felt and known in body and psyche, and imaged in sudden tropical emergences that have to stand as literal since there was no reasoned choice of terms, no time for choice in the arational, atemporal sudden freezing in the moment. The tropes that emerge *are* the thought/feeling of the experience.

3. A traumatic experience is one of "speechless terror." It cannot be spoken or understood as it is happening, and further, as it continues past the time of the event, it remains cognized in the literalness of its tropes. In long-term trauma of repeated threat, the individual conceives of the trauma in more tropical formations specific to each situation, thereby developing and elaborating a world where the trauma exists. The experiencer projects the entire trauma world according to her experience of it, grabbing terms for actors and acts from familiar images and contexts, but these lose their familiar meanings as they arose to serve the exigence of self-survival.

4. A main strategy for self-survival during trauma is to think of oneself as a thing: the thought that one *literally* is a thing. This feature is stated as a constant of traumatic experience, and it reveals that the mind is not thinking according to the ordinary world. The world is self-enclosed, without the *awareness* of doubleness, or the possibility for choice, irony, or deception. It is a literal world. To access the experiential world requires reading it literally.

5. The fact that the trauma world is disjoined and disparate from the ordinary world means that it cannot be communicated without bridging; but

the trauma world, with its self-referential world of literal tropical language, resists transportation into language. If speaking and writing begin, the experiencer retains partial tropical conception, or the trauma world cannot be conveyed, and transfigures some of the world into communicable terms. The trauma world is not *recognizable* from the perspective of the ordinary world, but some of its tropes can be retained as indicators of its literalness. The indicative nature of tropes offers the reader a way to think *of* the trauma world by feeling and imagining what is elicited for him or her through the tropes. The writer has to negotiate back and forth between the linear, temporal and rational and the alinear, atemporal, arational experience, identifying tropes that will convey into conventional conceptual tropes but also indicate to a reader the literalness of the lived traumatic experience. Thus, we can expect texts to retain literal tropes as indicators for reading the way the world fully was, and these may often double as familiar concept metaphors and applied (“decorative”) metaphors. But if taken literally by the reader, these metaphors are capable of eliciting the *thoughtfull*, *meaningfull* experience of the traumatic events and a fuller knowledge of the writer’s true (vs. transformed) experience.

READING TRAUMA WORLD TROPES

As I swallowed my bowl of soup, I saw in gesture an act of rebellion and protest against Him.
And I nibbled my crust of bread.
In the depths of my heart, I felt a great void. – Elie Wiesel
(*Night*, p. 66)

Bread, soup – these were my whole life. I was a body.
Perhaps less than that even: a starved stomach. The stomach alone was aware of the passage of time. – Elie Wiesel (*Night*, p. 50)

The Lager is hunger: we ourselves are hunger, living hunger...The Lager, hardly dead, had already begun to decompose. – Primo Levi (*Survival at Auschwitz*, p. 74, p. 158)

To support these extrapolations, I will next explore a case example of a trauma world, searching its tropes for origins, functional meanings for actors and acts, and transformations during its transference into language. The case example will give a view of how such a world develops tropically and looks, aside from and before mingling with the ordinary world through language.⁵ Then I will explore the two trauma narratives that I have quoted in the epigraphs to locate catachretic metaphors and test the gains of a literal reading.

Exploring the Trauma World: An Example

The experiencer in this case was subjected to life-threatening situations over a period of at least fifteen years, virtually her entire childhood. Because of repeated threats over a long time, and because the source agents of threat came from within the home, she created a richly elaborated trauma world that was maintained to function to contain the traumatic experience. As two psychologists who spent time in Nazi concentration camps, Victor Frankl and Bruno Bettelheim, have both said, children in these situations live under conditions like those in the concentration camps: they have no way out, the whole of their being is under threat of destruction, and they maintain the world of the traumatic experience, and maintain it separately, disjoined from the everyday world (see also Cohen 527, 28, partially quoted above). Because the two worlds are radically disparate in actions, expectations, roles, relationships, morality, order, and predictability, figures of actors and acts look nonordinary and disordered. As the trauma world emerges from the single constant of threat, and is maintained in the presence of continuing threat, some figures, particularly those standing in for the threatening presence, appear as pervasive entities throughout the world.

I will draw a few, illustrative examples from the subject's visual and written productions (drawings, journals, notes, poems, prose). These are supplemented by discussion with the subject's therapist.

In one incident (not the first), at age five, the subject's grandfather cut open her arm, probably with a butcher knife, along the inside of the elbow, missing a major artery by an eighth of an inch. The wound exposed the bone and healed to a four-inch scar that remained large, pink, and ragged for more than a decade. The incident took place in the garage, which doubled as the grandfather's carpentry shop, where the knives for butchering hogs raised on the farm were kept. The trauma world contained a figure of a large snake, blood-red in color. Its figural action was swallowing a previous succession of minor figures, some which were human figures and some of which were non-human figures, whose function had been to protect against the threat. Swallowing these figures was also an act of protection: it meant getting them safely away from threat and keeping them hidden. As the figures all stood in for the subject, they were the means of imaging the near failure, but finally successful effort, to keep the threat from harming the subject. The figures and their figural acts stood in for the subject, but the grandfather appeared as a large, dark, looming solid shape – a thing emptied of "grandfather." This shape – a thing, but motive – experientially displaced and stood in the place of the actual grandfather. This shape was the figural thought of the pervasive sense of threat, it was not confined to the body shape but suffused mist-like the entire scene. And nothing existed *but* the scene. Everything else was a response to this pervasive encompassing sense.

When the subject began to examine the figures, she thought the snake was taken from the garden of Eden story, with which she was quite familiar

at that age. Reading from the Biblical story back onto the trauma world, she arrived at this interpretation, just as we might: the figure was a reversal of the destructive snake, engaged in act of protection against a family member's authority. Because the Eden snake objected to God's command and survived, and the humans in the story hid from God, it seemed a likely parallel. However, this could not be the meaning within the experience of a five-year-old, who has not reached the age of self-reflection and moral development (which is about age ten). In addition, this gives only a rational meaning, it does give the "thought" of the experience itself. In checking this incident with her mother, the subject learned that during the previous summer her father had attempted to kill with an axe a snake that had made its home (its hole) by the entrance to the house. He failed on the first attempt, only cutting half way through the neck. For days, until he completed the act, the snake kept appearing partway out of the hole with its bleeding cut neck. The mother reported that the subject had been so upset the snake was being killed and showing itself that she cried for days. This snake is a more likely source for the figure in the wounding incident. The snake had been deeply cut by a family member using an everyday instrument, and the subject reacted with unconsolable crying, as the subject would almost certainly have done after being wounded. The subject's arm was bloody and deeply cut, and held a white bone which had been unseen and secret until the wounding. The actual snake wounding and the subject's wounding share key likenesses. However, the figural snake was blood-red in color, pervasive through and through, and the secret space inside it for hiding was protective, just as the actual snake's hole had appeared to the girl as both holding a secret and protecting the snake from further wounding, at least for a while. Of course, this kind of imagined protection works only if believed to *be* literally real, which it was as psychically conceived, internal trauma world.

I bring in this incident because it demonstrates how the figures in a trauma world may be mixed or fused with personal history, how easily they can be misread, and how inadequately they may capture the thought of the trauma world. The figural snake enabled the incident to be thought, and it *was* its thought. From within the trauma world, the subject had insisted to the therapist that the snake was a snake, not her, and that the shape was not her grandfather, but only looked like him. The snake was not blood, but was the color of blood. Swallowing was also a literal act. In other words, the trauma world is one of literal sense – it is catachretic. There are no substitute words within the world, they are literal, and they require us to enter the literalness if we are to grasp the experience as it was for the subject. The process is a piecemeal projection from the internalized mental representation of the everyday world of personal history and context and of cultural story onto the trauma world, rather than projection of a whole systematic sense of human body, as in Vico's examples. The suddenness and radical atemporality, arationality, and nonlinearity of trauma makes

inevitable the process of grabbing piecemeal whatever is available from wherever for figural thought.

In a later incident, the subject's father held her at rifle-point while she held her pet cat in her arms. The father kept demanding she put the cat down, and when she finally did, he killed the cat right at her feet with one shot. The father disposed of the cat, so that she could not bury it in the cat cemetery as she always did with favorite cats that died. This incident happened at age ten, and in the trauma world, the subject appears in the shape of a ten-year-old, dark and transparent and mist-like, taking up the very sense of space. The place is grave-like though not a grave; and the figure is "dead," which when asked she said means "not feeling." The figure is nameless, alive, but not moving, and not able to be shot because "dead." This figure served as an act of protection against intolerable feeling and also against the possibility of being shot herself. A tombstone in the scene is also an active, animate figure. It is made of stone, but it is made of heart: it figures the thought of memory of the cat, which didn't have an actual burial. In addition, it is fused with the subject: it is a girl, it is the thought of the subject's own heart turned to stone, paradoxically undieable and "dead" (unfeeling). And probably it figures as the target at which the rifle was aimed, for the girl held her cat in her arms at the heart while the rifle was pointed at her. A stone can neither feel, nor die. The feelings behind the figures were identified as terror, rage, grief, sadness, consolation, and safety. The world was pervaded by the sound of the rifle shot, coming in from the great interminable surrounding distance.

Exploring Figuration in Written Accounts: Two Examples

There are no edges to the subject's trauma world, just as there are none in the Lager world of Wiesel's and Levi's experiences. The trauma world is all that exists – a universe, atemporal and nonlinear. The entire world is animate, an active pervading threat that is a universe: its figures actively seek to annihilate. In addition, they work across domains, as they must take figures from the everyday world, the only one available, across into the trauma world. The figures standing in for the experience are gestures of the sense of the world – sensory thought, as Ricoeur would say. When writing the world entirely from the trauma world perspective, it cannot be understood, except by others who know before hand what such a world is. In the case drawn from above, the subject wrote poetry from the trauma world perspective; given a poem entitled "Cats," only one of fifteen readers (all of whom were poets) understood what was happening. That reader was familiar with traumatic experience. (This is like other ineffable experiences: readers who already know the experience recognize and read the world based on prior knowledge. They know what the indicators mean.) All fifteen, however, said it was "intense," "powerful,...they grasped the sense of the experience itself, if not the facts. And, they understood the few lines that made a plot and figure relation to a Biblical story. This portion

was not in the trauma world, but had been inserted to accomplish a meaning shared by ordinary readers. With two other texts, and a different set of five readers, comments were of two kinds: the reader cannot “enter” the text, or cannot “exit” it. The self-enclosed, self-referential nature made it inaccessible, except that all the readers said the texts had a powerful and overwhelming sense of terror. The two aspects that readers grasped – terror and an inability to understand what was happening – are more truly what traumatic *experience* is than are bare, objective facts.

But readers generally want a distance, and they want events in a way they *can* understand. The felt sense and the frustration of not being able to understand may be a key part of the experience, but it has to be toned down in degree and proportion in a communicable text. In addition, writing requires time, sequence, reflection, reasoning, verbal syntax: that is, it *has* to become mostly ordinary world and ordinary language. The trauma world appears, in at least some of its figuration, and we can read it if we can locate and suffer the frustration and other feeling and thought so as not to cut off its literal sense. Consider again Wiesel’s metaphor, “the soup tasted of corpses.” Take it literally, try to think of that world in which dead bodies are eaten, and tasted. Try to taste the taste of corpses. We most likely recoil from what may have initially passed us by, or flickered not quite into awareness. In the ordinary world, in that world ordered to promote human life, we are *expected* to recoil. Think also that there might be a world in which the soup indeed *did* taste of corpses. This might have been literally true in Wiesel’s experience, in the heightened sensory experience of trauma. It is the effects of trauma in the body and on (in) consciousness that the metaphor is capable of eliciting. The metaphor also stands in for the literalness of dead human bodies pervading all aspects of the experience: dead bodies are an abstraction, they are the specific, actual result of the living, active destroyer which the camp is. It is bodily fear and revulsion, the absence of spirit, and moral shame. It is to eat death, to eat each other to survive. But in the moment, it is the eating of corpses. It is all there is to eat. Wiesel must eat, to survive is to eat. But the figure is tamed for us by Wiesel just before we get to this point. He has heard someone ask that frequent refrain in the camp, “Where is God now?” And Wiesel writes “And I heard a voice within me answer him: Where is He? Here He is – He is hanging there on the gallows...” (62, Wiesel’s ellipsis). The “He” is God transferred into a courageous rebel youth who had been one of a few brave saboteurs of the camp’s electric power station and who was hanged that day, and no one had lifted a hand to stop it. Certainly the death of God, the death of justice, the death of innocence and courage are indicated through the metaphor. Reversals are gestured: the Seder meal’s memory of emancipation, and the Christian Eucharist’s enspiriting, life-renewing and forgiving of sin (a few pages later Wiesel mentions Calvary) are turned toward indicating forced prisoning, deadening, a spiritless way of surviving. Another degree of the destruction of the human person, another piece sheared away.

One of the most important pieces of identity. Soup consumed in order for the body to continue.

Perhaps these meanings linked with the ordinary world *are* more important than the sense of the world itself. Or is that a separation that can't be made? In other words, can the ordinary world meanings be unhooked or ignored without changing or losing the sense of the trauma world? What happens if we do this? I think we lose the sense of "speechless terror," the defining aspect of traumatic experience. It is easy to do, because the account is made of words and we readers are at a distance, a safe distance where the threat of annihilation can't reach us. But if we take even some of the metaphors as literal, we begin to close the distance, we try to "think of" what it would be, that world with no names for things and actions, with only image for sight, taste, touch, sound, smell; with only these now rising in our bodies and starkly filling our minds.

Where are the metaphors that engage specifically this literal sense? Some pervade texts, occurring throughout, and collect to indicate the trauma world's felt sense. In the context of these recurring metaphors, others may acquire literalness as aspects or parts of the recurring metaphors. Throughout *Survival at Auschwitz*, Primo Levi regards the Lager as an animate being. It is the whole world, no one can see beyond it or know beyond it, and it is actively working in every aspect and function to annihilate the prisoners piece by piece – social identities, intellect, reasoning, beliefs, body, and spirit (hope, courage, dignity). The Lager is an organism; it devours; even the sky, ground, and the weather are aligned: "Dawn came on us like a betrayer; it seemed as though the new sun rose as an ally of our enemies to assist in our destruction" (16); "what happened to the others, to the women, to the children, to the old men...the night swallowed them up, purely and simply" (20); "the sun sets in a tumult of fierce, blood-red clouds" (29). And the sky threatens, even a first warm sunny spring day – the "good day" (subject and title of a chapter) – turns on them, destroying their sense of beauty, hope, and a new beginning, for it is stark reminder that they have none of these. Near the end of the book, after the Nazis had fled, the Lager begins to "decompose," and the prisoners are figured as worms, evidence of life that assists decay. These kinds of metaphors aggregate to suggest an applied metaphor, but if they are also read as literal, we have the sense of the world as it is in trauma, encompassing, alive, one being who acts "purely and simply" to destroy.

But there is another set of metaphors which insist that we take them literally, and they help to signal that those others might also be meant so. "But how could one imagine not being hungry? The Lager *is* hunger: we ourselves are hunger, living hunger" (74). The italics tell us to take the metaphor literally. Hunger is the single reality in that dark space that has no edges. It is everything, all feeling, thought, sense, the whole reality. In *Night* is a similar passage: "I took little interest in anything except my daily plate of soup and my crust of bread. Bread, soup – these were my whole life. I was a body. Perhaps less than that even: a *starved* stomach. The stomach

alone was aware of the passage of time" (50). If we read "I am a body" as a literal metaphor, it doesn't *stand in for* a part of the whole person, it *is* the whole person. It can't be an applied metaphor, nor a literal non-metaphoric statement. Rather it stands in for the true experience, the sensory thought of that moment in the Lager world, which is known to have already destroyed everything else. Then Levi zooms in closer, thinks further: "Perhaps less even than that: a *starved* stomach." Annihilated, except for that. Stomach is alive, it is the whole being, desiring, conscious, knowing, unsatisfied, fearing extinction. As literal the metaphor indicates the sensory thought of that moment. It says – This is how it is, purely and simply – try to think of this. When we begin to read it across the ordinary world domain as applied metaphor (and we must do this, but not only this), we have already begun to lose actual experience; the thought-figure fills the consciousness, it cannot be reasoned. It makes a great difference whether we stop first to absorb the metaphor's literal indications.

CONCLUSION

At the outset of this essay, I suggested that readers, scholars, and teachers of trauma writings need to know what traumatic experience is and what it entails for reading trauma experience more accurately and meaningfully. I suggested that narrative's linear movement and ordinary world language and organizations enable communication, but their price is the loss or reduction of the sense of the traumatic world. I then suggested that the trauma world might be retained, at least in some texts at some places, in certain catachretic metaphors, which indicate the speechless terror itself, and that these indicators collect to indicate the "thought" of the trauma world. Finally, following Levin's way of reading, I explored how catachretic metaphors might be located and "conceived of." This way of reading ushers us into trauma worlds, the experience of a person, to permit a fuller knowing of what the person has to communicate. Since traumatic experience has major features common to all experiencers – results of annihilating threat and dealing with threat – it is one of humanity's ineffable experiences. Like Wordsworth writing a sublime world, experiencers of trauma who survive it return, and some of them tell of it. I think we should listen, we should try "to think of" their world – Levin says we have a "duty" to "conceive of" metaphoric worlds (80).

But in addition, this way of reading has implications for reading other kinds of writing. For example, the individuality of persons which researchers such as Christina Haas ask us to seek and preserve in our studies of student writing might be read in the particularity and aggregation of even concept metaphors. But attempts to express what students have no words for may have catachretic features. Homi Bhabha has suggested that all hybrid discourse is catachretic. And for historiography: A central dilemma is that, as Hayden White puts it, "the aporias of temporality... must be spoken about in the idiom of symbolic discourse rather than that of logical or scientific

discourse.” While narrative has its own symbolic imaginary (plot) laid on events, the temporality of all human experience is always highly figurative. Actual experience of time is “‘within-time-ness’...the only experience of temporality human beings can know” (148). Trauma experience is an erasure of temporality, in which thought is “without-time-ness.” The symbolic imaginary is plotless, cleared of that field, making it more possible to see ways we might remake our thinking – our collective cultural plots – in new terms. It might have occurred to the savvy reader somewhere during this essay that many of the root metaphors Lakoff and Turner discuss are entirely inapplicable to trauma worlds: e.g., Life is a journey, Death is a deliverer, Death is a departure, Time flows, Time is money, Life is light, Life is a fluid. While metaphors, in the theories of deviance, are thought to expand the ordinary world, trauma worlds, like sublime worlds, don’t expand it, they resist assimilation. They ask for a different, not an extended, perspective. To bring the trauma world *into* the everyday ordinary world would require such a reorganizing of the world’s core that to do so would render the ordinary world unrecognizable. It would constitute a different world. That is one reason it is so difficult to read these worlds, why we recoil and resist, and why we don’t understand well their terrible costs. For while these writers detail the “facts” of the events, it is the psychic and other human costs that are more damaging and that stay with their bearers for the long-term after the body is healed. And the terrible non-physical costs is why we may also want to exercise caution in taking student readers too fully into trauma worlds.

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NOTES

1. For an excellent elucidation of the tension between metonymy and metaphor as historiographic method, see Maura B. Nelson’s excellent and extensive analysis, “Metaphoric History: Narrative and New Science in the Work of F.W. Maitland.”

2. For instance, every essay in the newly-added section on terrorism in Lynn Z. Bloom’s reader, *The Essay Connection*, Seventh Edition, is an analysis of cultural concept metaphors. Those writers who are exposing them to view, argue we need new concepts. And that is the problem: how do we, as a social/political group of many many millions, discover and acquire a new core concept? These concepts lie deep under our language, motivating our ability to see, think, use language, make meaning, and act.

3. A good demonstration of how concept metaphors yield meaning in poetic worlds is Lakoff and Turner’s *More Than Cool Reason*. Their interpretation of poems shows how we access poetic worlds, but the result of stopping there, as they do, is a felt flatness resulting from domesticating the metaphors in resolving them entirely by reference to the ordinary world.

This way of reading misses the strangeness, the difference that poetic worlds sometimes ask us to enter. The concept metaphors *enable* us to enter, they act as bridges, but we are asked to look around beyond them. As Levin suggests, we are asked to think of the world itself. Certainly in a poet like Emily Dickinson, from whose work Lakoff and Turner provide many examples of their way of reading, tame reading loses Dickinson's indicative states of feeling and consciousness that her best poetry attempts to communicate.

4. Lakoff's and Lakoff and Johnson's work on metonymy and metaphor, respectively, support this insight. They assert that these tropes underlie the "world we live by" as root concepts from which thought and language about our world are generated. In their view, the origins of our ordering of the everyday world are evident in a small set of root concepts and can be read from "satellite" metaphors (Levin's term, 5), which are the so-called dead metaphors (though not dead for Lakoff and Johnson since we still live by them) that indicate we think of argument as war, time as money, theories as buildings, and so on.

5. I would like to express my gratitude to the subject (client) for giving me permission to have full access to this case. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the therapist on this case for helping me understand trauma in general as well as this specific trauma world; my gratitude to her also. She affirms that in her experience with survivors of ongoing severe abuse in childhood where the perpetrators were family members or other close caretakers, the response to the trauma experience has the same kind of figural nature and workings as in this case, although the internal worlds vary in richness and tone. In this case, the wealth of resources the subject had acquired made possible the unusual richness of figures: the subject had heard Bible stories read at least weekly in church and Sunday school, for certain periods of time daily in the home; and she learned to read on her own by age five. The therapist, who wishes to remain anonymous, is also a researcher, professor, and former editor of a major professional journal.

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EPILOGUE

MAGDALENA DUMITRANA

It is amazing how the entirety of human action, on whatever plane or level of discussion, tends toward orderliness and intelligibility. Even the most ineffable human processes seem to succumb to the human temptation to define and classify. Imagination is one of these processes. The symbol is one of these products. They are quite different phenomena; however, both are situated at the junction between subjectivity and objectivity. The hope is that by using imagination, the seeker may find a way to the true nature and true meaning of the symbol. The final objective of this quest is to recuperate the general meaning of life.

Everything seems to be fine so far. Perhaps only two questions – both related to the text – need some answers. The first one is: how can discovering the real nature of a symbol help, for example, a philosopher create a better philosophy? It seems that a symbol cannot ever have an “objective” nature. Its functioning itself addresses the “subjective” capacity of reception, for only the subject is able to understand what a symbol communicates. The search itself for the nature of the symbol is subjective: if a philosopher has elected the Reason as president of his *weltanschauung*, nothing will stop him from seeing the symbols as children of this presidency. It goes the same for a “subjective” philosopher and for the positions in between. Therefore, again, a question is there, waiting for a response: how could a human being, essentially subjective – whatever his/her beliefs and external fulcra are – reach the truth concerning the nature of a symbol? But even so, what usefulness will this discovery have for one’s self-enrichment?

The discovery of the symbol’s nature necessarily leads to a second question: is this the true nature/meaning of the symbol? No doubt, every symbol in its own epoch has been (almost) fully understood or at least followed by people in an attempt at harmonization. But the question does not concern this understanding, whether appropriate or not. The search for a symbol’s meaning starts when this meaning is lost, leaving behind only the sign; it develops throughout histories, looked upon and judged from another time and space. The motivation is strong; the stakes are important. As Professor McLean pointed out, the study of the symbol could reveal our selves, our identities – as individuals, and as nations. Therefore, the urgency of the task is understandable as we find ourselves on the edge of a potentially dangerous “subjectivity/objectivity” situation that threatens being, as a whole and as an individual.

Reaching the forgotten meanings of symbol could be perceived as a way to rediscover forgotten traditions (which is actually happening) in order to find strength and sense in the present world experience.

Still, we have here some (almost) insurmountable obstacles. Naturally, an old symbol can be misunderstood if it is viewed from a much more recent, younger position. Second and third mistakes will occur also when the symbol is analyzed from within particular fields: philosophy, literature, art, psychology, and so on. Even more, at times, the symbols and their contents are stolen, distorted or reversed, making the original worthless, even as a source of opposite meanings. This is the case for the Swastika: the Hindu symbol whose meaning – the eternal nature of the Brahman, the omnipresence of the Absolute – was appropriated by Nazis, and becoming, at least in European eyes, a fascist emblem. Something similar happened with St. Paul's concept of the New Man which was "borrowed" (as were many other Christian concepts), inserted into a communist ideology, and promoted as an expression of the complete Socialist personality. Such "loans" appear to be habitual and programmatic in attempts to remove the spirituality from people's lives.

On the whole, however, the results of the search for symbolic meanings could be spectacular, feeding new trends and nurturing personalities in philosophy, the arts, and so on. Still, discovering different significances seems to be just another aristocratic exercise of mind, but not the path to follow for truth. Yet, if we are not mistaken, the final target is precisely this one: to discover the only meaning of the symbol, that is, to discover truth.

Every generation has its own discoverers of the Truth. But it remains always a simple subjective acquisition from time to time shared by believers within a religion. What an irony – to be able to touch objective reality only by means of a very subjective grasp! That is why the truth, revealed in history, now and then by strong spiritual personalities, remains actually a secret, hidden in symbols, metaphors and parables. That is why, also, the quest for truth will have an end only in the end of human history. Otherwise, the danger of the objectification of faith – as a phenomenon generally accepted as overcoming individual differences and leading to the same genuine, single reality – is strongly counteracted by the proclamation of a new God ruling our times: Relativity. This divinity, propagated by economic-ideological and political interests, has the function to stop individual consciousnesses from becoming aware of their common nature.

Given these objective obstacles, there perhaps remains one way of advancement in symbols: the imagination – not as a philosophical, literary, psychological process, but as a spiritual tool. The imagination is closely related to the intuition. Both are psychological "wings" leading to invisible zones of culture. Both rationalism and subjectivism, as philosophical and mathematical techniques, are supported and stimulated by imagination and intuition together. The third element, necessary for a spiritual functioning, is faith. Achieving the triad of *faith-imagination-intuition*, man can have the hope of reaching a glimpse of truth. Of course, this solution is deeply unsatisfactory for the seekers of the ultimate truth in the objective matter, which they equalize to reason. But, as Prof. McLean says in the closing of

his paper, “All is purposive.” So, even the wrong ways could lead, in conformity with His Reason, Will and Love, to the right path ahead.

Bucharest, Romania

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The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

PROJECTS

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and

look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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