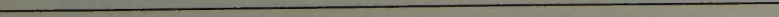


IN QUEST OF THE
SACRED

The Modern World
in the Light of Tradition

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The Modern World
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Edited by
Seyyed Hossein Nasr
and
Katherine O'Brien

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PREFACE

The first conference ever held in South America on traditional studies took place in Lima, Peru in August of 1985. Organized by the Foundation for Traditional Studies of Washington, D.C. and the Instituto de Estudios Tradicionales of Peru directed by Dr. Ramon Mujica, it brought together a number of eminent authorities on traditional thought from Europe and North America together with many outstanding scholars and students of the local Andean traditions. The conference, entitled 'Encuentro de Culturas,' consisted of a week of lectures and discussions. The morning sessions were devoted to papers delivered almost completely in English by visiting scholars and the afternoon sessions to papers mostly by Peruvian and other South American and Central American scholars mostly in Spanish. There was also a great deal of discussion in both the morning and afternoon sessions and between local and foreign scholars.

At the end of this unique and important conference, it was decided that the Foundation for Traditional Studies would publish the English proceedings. The definitive text of all the English papers have now been edited and are presented in this volume along with the message sent to the conference by Frithjof Schuon, the foremost authority on traditional metaphysics and the perennial philosophy today.

We wish to thank all the contributors for having made the final version of their text available for this volume and Dr. William Stoddart for having written an introduction to this book. We hope and pray that this work will make available certain teachings concerning the truth of the traditions by which human beings have lived over the millenia and which alone provide guidance and meaning for man's earthly journey.

Washington, D.C.
November 1993
Seyyed Hossein Nasr
Katherine O'Brien

INTRODUCTION

Meaning Behind the Absurd

by William Stoddart

Space and time are the two fundamental conditions of our existence, but neither is unchanging, and this is particularly evident, as well as profoundly disturbing, to modern men.

For most of this century, it has been a commonplace to say that "the world is getting smaller." This has shown itself in two ways: modern communications on the one hand, and massive migrations on the other. These phenomena have given us the experience of having as "neighbors" peoples of whose very existence we may previously have been unaware. As a result of this, we now know concretely that, despite the seeming invincibility of modern uniformity (humanistic, skeptical and amorphous), cultural plurality is still far from having been extinguished. It is notorious, however, that the foreign cultures and unfamiliar psychologies that now crowd in on us are in general badly understood. This is not helped by the fact that most cultures and psychologies — including both our own and the unfamiliar ones that cause us problems — have long since passed their prime, and frequently are no longer true to themselves, having assimilated, and been deformed by, many ugly modern poisons.

If "space" has unquestionably become smaller, "time" has unquestionably become more menacing. "Life is a dream" (*la vida es sueño*): Calderon's words remain true, but perhaps today they should be translated as "life is a nightmare," for this is exactly what life has become for vast numbers of people on our globe. Following the two world wars (affecting principally the "developed" countries), there have been, in all parts of the "third world," endless wars, revolutions and repressions of the most

cruel kind. This warfare (from 1914 onwards) is quite unprecedented, in the sense that in it modern science for the first time began, unmistakably and frighteningly, to reveal its true colors; as did, at the same time and equally frighteningly, the totally confused, bankrupt and post-moral *Zeitgeist* or "spirit of the times." Both phenomena (and they are continuing and becoming worse) have been received by those who have most fully experienced them with inexpressible horror, incomprehension and despair. They strike terror because, besides being evil, they are absurd.

It was in full awareness of this contemporary context that the Foundation for Traditional Studies of Washington, D.C. and the Instituto de Estudios Tradicionales of Lima, Peru, held a joint symposium in Lima in August 1985. The two institutes are not absolutely identical in their interests and aims but, as their names indicate, they overlap to a significant degree, and both are concerned with the study of the traditions, philosophies and religions of all times and places. If there is a universal truth, a perennial wisdom, a sacred science (as the ancient wisdom-systems, the world religions and even the tribal cultures all combine to suggest), what bearing does this have, theoretically and practically, on the absurd anarchy and anarchic absurdity of these latter times? The received scholarly viewpoint is that traditional philosophies and religions are of historical and psychological interest only; but since (amongst other things) these ancient traditions can frequently be seen to combine homely wisdom and lofty subtlety, is it possible that they can be viewed alternatively as signposts to a deeper and more qualitative reality, of such a nature as might help to explain — and even counter — the manifestly superficial and quantitative state of absurdity which, in modern times, has made possible such unprecedented terror and despair throughout so many parts of the world?



Let there be no mistake about it: despite every setback, the received religion of our time is still an amalgam of evolutionism, progressivism, scientism, and psychologism. Unfortunately, the horrors resulting therefrom are dealt with simply by further doses of the same: and so the structures of society, and of "normalcy,"

are destroyed and consumed in an unending vicious spiral.

That the official religion is as described is proved by what happens if one shows any serious opposition to any of its elements: truly fundamental “heresy” of this kind provokes from the modernists a vituperation and vilification as savage and impassioned as anything that ever stemmed from religious bigotry in ages past. For the majority (who believe staunchly in the received religion) a business-like attack on evolutionism, progressivism, scientism, or psychologism is clearly seen as an attempt to cut the feet from under their world, and they react with a corresponding violence and emotion.

Most speakers at the Congress in Lima spoke from a point of view that implied radical criticism of the received religion of modern times. And so, in the papers here presented there are frequent references to the various world religions (particularly Christianity, Islam, and the Native American religions) in their historic and pre-modern forms, in other words, in a pre-Freudian, pre-Marxist and pre-Darwinist context. This shows itself as a concern primarily with the intellectual contents of each religion or tradition (together with a serious consideration of their meaning) and also in an exploring of how this meaning can be applied to the interpretation — and handling — of current cruelties and absurdities. The general approach of the speakers, however, was not experimental and empirical, but consciously “Platonic.” And it bespoke a “Platonism” which was explanatory, peace-giving and saving.

The central intellectual characteristic of the specifically modern age is what one might call the “abolition of the absolute.” (That the resulting vacuum is subsequently filled with all sorts of false “absolutes” is another question.)

The “false prophets” of the 19th and early 20th centuries (three of them — Freud, Marx, Darwin — have just been referred to) are still very much with us, but they have been discussed to satiety for many decades. In any case, there are two other “false prophets,” dominating the second half of the 20th century, who, far from being seen in their true colors, are widely regarded as angels of light. I refer here to Carl Jung and Teilhard de Chardin.

Freud is obviously pretty gross. Jung, to many, appears to be the friend of religion. For this very reason, the great spokesman

of the “traditionalist” school, René Guénon, called Jung worse than Freud. In “Tradition and the ‘Unconscious’” (chapter V of *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée*, pp. 63-64), Guénon says that Freud had “a clearly satanic character,” but that this was nevertheless “still limited to a certain extent by his materialistic attitude.” Referring to Jung, however, Guénon speaks of “false spirituality” and of a “much more subtle confusion.”

Traditionally (i.e. according to Eckhart, Ibn ‘Arabī, and many other classical masters of gnosis), man is made up of three elements, as follows:

<u>English</u>	<u>Latin</u>	<u>Greek</u>
Spirit (intellect)	<i>Spiritus (Intellectus)</i>	<i>Pneuma (Nous)</i>
soul	<i>anima</i>	<i>psyche</i>
body	<i>corpus</i>	<i>soma</i>

The Spirit, although “created,” is supra-formal or universal, and directly touched by the Divine. It is the only supra-individual, “archetypal,” or objective element in man's constitution. Spirit and Intellect are the two sides of the same coin, the latter pertaining to Truth (or doctrine) and the former to Being (or realization). The soul, on the other hand, is formal and individual. The Spirit is therefore the “measure” of the soul; the soul can never be the “measure” of the Spirit.¹ Jung's error, in a nutshell, is his complete confusion of Spirit and soul, which in practice amounts to an “abolition” of Spirit. This is the “abolition of the Absolute” with a vengeance!

As for the second “wolf in sheep's clothing,” Teilhard de Chardin, his “ghost” may be said to have been the architect of the Second Vatican Council, and his is the most strident voice to date of the doctrines of materialism, evolutionism and progressivism. The late Titus Burckhardt commented on his central thesis as follows:

“Man possesses the capacity for objectivity, and it is on the basis of this that he makes judgments and assertions. If this capacity be no more than a phase in an on-going evolution — which, seen as a whole, is to be compared to a curve or a

spiral — then this phase cannot step out of the whole and say: I am part of a spiral. Anything that such an evolution-bound faculty could conceive or express would also be subject to evolution. It would thus lack any absolute character, and this is why it is completely incapable of satisfying the basic logical requirements of a normal man.”

It is because of the anti-Platonic, anti-Aristotelian, and anti-Thomistic character of the modern age, that one can say that its chief intellectual characteristic is “the abolition of the absolute.” Quite simply, it is an age of “nominalism,” existentialism, and error, in which relativism and subjectivism run riot, with catastrophic results for both the individual and society. The only antidote to the relative and the subjective is the absolute and the objective, and it is precisely these that are the contents of traditional philosophy or “perennial wisdom” (*Sophia perennis*), which says of itself: “From the beginning, and before the creation of the world, was I created, and unto the world to come, I shall not cease to be.” (*Ecclesiasticus*, 24, 14) Using the term “esoterism” (seen as the “total truth”) as a synonym for *Sophia perennis*, Frithjof Schuon summarily rejects subjectivism and relativism, and describes man’s true position, as follows:

“The prerogative of the human state is objectivity, the essential content of which is the Absolute. There is no *knowledge* without objectivity of the intelligence, no *freedom* without objectivity of the will, and no *nobility* without objectivity of the soul. Esoterism seeks to realize pure and direct objectivity; this is its *raison d’être*.”

Thus true “esoterism” is the only key to knowledge, freedom and nobility; it is the only source of the objective and the absolute, and the only antidote to error. Esoterism, as understood here, is identical with traditional philosophy (i.e. Platonism, Thomism, or any other venerable wisdom-system). It is not the enemy of revealed religion, as those familiar only with the many contemporary pseudo-esoterisms have found reason to suppose. Schuon continues, “Just as rationalism can remove faith, so esoterism can restore it.”

It was in this spirit that the majority of speakers at the Lima conference approached their brief. Faced with an already centuries-old deviation from the absolute and the objective, mocked and threatened by the shallowness, ugliness, cruelty, and absurdity of so much of the modern world, the contributors of the conference papers here collected together offer us a solid way of hope, reassurance, and release.

NOTES

- (1) Amongst the soul's faculties are: mind (or reason), will, affect (or sentiment), imagination, and memory. In everyday parlance, "intellect" is often misleadingly used to signify mind or reason. In traditional metaphysics, it is correctly used in the transcendent sense in which (as indicated above) it is virtually synonymous with "Spirit." There is no impenetrable barrier between mind (or reason) and Intellect: the relationship of the latter to the former is like the relationship of the pinnacle of a cone to its circumferential base.

A Message

Frithjof Schuon

To speak of tradition is to speak of continuity. In this continuity there is something absolute, as there is in tradition itself. In order to grasp the character of a tradition there is no need to seek out criteria that are inaccessible or beyond testing; it suffices to examine the essential elements — the constants — of the tradition.

The whole existence of the peoples of antiquity, and of traditional peoples in general, is dominated by two presiding ideas, the idea of Center and the idea of Origin. In the spatial world we live in, every value is related back in one way or another to a sacred Centre, to the place where Heaven has touched the earth; in every human world there is a place where God has manifested Himself to spread His grace therein. Similarly for the Origin, the quasi-timeless moment when Heaven was near and when terrestrial things were still half-celestial; but the Origin is also, in the case of civilizations having a historical founder, the time when God spoke, thereby renewing the primordial alliance for the branch of humanity concerned. To conform to tradition is to keep faith with the Origin, and for that very reason it is also to be situated at the Center; it is to dwell in the primordial Purity and in the universal Norm. Everything in the behavior of ancient and traditional peoples can be explained, directly or indirectly, by reference to these two ideas, which are like landmarks in the measureless and perilous world of forms and of change.

Modern science, as it plunges dizzily downward, its speed increasing in geometrical progression towards an abyss into which it hurtles like a vehicle without brakes, is another example of that loss of the “spatial” equilibrium characteristic of contemplative and still stable civilizations. This criticism of modern science — and it is by no means the first ever to be made — is made not on the grounds that it studies some fragmentary field within the limits of its competence, but on the grounds that it claims to

be in a position to attain to total knowledge, and that it ventures conclusions in fields accessible only to a supra-sensible and truly intellectual wisdom, the existence of which it refuses on principle to admit. In other words, the foundations of modern science are false because, from the "subject" point of view, it replaces Intellect and Revelation by reason and experiment, as if it were not contradictory to lay claim to totality on an empirical basis; and its foundations are false too because, from the "object" point of view, it replaces the universal Substance by matter alone, either denying the universal Principle or reducing it to matter or to some kind of pseudo-absolute from which all transcendence has been eliminated.

In all epochs and in all countries there have been revelations, religions, wisdoms; tradition is a part of mankind, just as man is a part of tradition. Revelation is in one sense the infallible intellection of the total collectivity, in so far as this collectivity has providentially become the receptacle of a manifestation of the universal Intellect. The source of this intellection is not of course the collectivity as such, but the universal or divine Intellect in so far as it adapts itself to the conditions prevailing in a particular intellectual or moral collectivity, whether it be a case of an ethnic group or of one determined by more or less distinctive mental conditions. To say that Revelation is "supernatural" does not mean that it is contrary to nature in so far as nature can be taken to represent, by extension, all that is possible on any given level of reality; it means that Revelation does not originate at the level to which, rightly or wrongly, the epithet "natural" is normally applied. This "natural" level is precisely that of physical causes, and hence of sensory and psychic phenomena considered in relation to those causes.

If there are no grounds for finding fault with modern science in so far as it studies a realm within the limits of its competence — the precision and effectiveness of its results leave no room for doubt on this point — one must add this important reservation, namely, that the principle, the range and the development of a science or an art is never independent of Revelation nor of the demands of spiritual life, not forgetting those of social equilibrium; it is absurd to claim unlimited rights for something in itself contingent, such as science or art. By refusing to admit

any possibility of serious knowledge outside its own domain, modern science, as has already been said, claims exclusive and total knowledge, while making itself out to be empirical and non-dogmatic, and this, it must be insisted, involves a flagrant contradiction; a rejection of all “dogmatism” and of everything that must be accepted *a priori* or not at all is simply a failure to make use of the whole of one’s intelligence.

Modern science cheerfully rejects the traditional wisdoms without taking account of the fact that this rejection comes up against an improbable disproportion between the intelligence of believers *qua* men and the hypothetical absurdity of their beliefs, as also against the no less impossible disproportion between the intelligence of the Sages and the supposed absurdity of their convictions and their intimate motives. Man is intelligence before all else, therefore he also is wisdom and contemplation and, by further consequence, he is tradition; to detach man from the latter, far from rendering him independent, is to deprive him of his human quality.

In a similar order of ideas, what answer should be given to the following question; why did Providence leave man in ignorance of certain things, on the plane of the sensible world, which he was bound to discover in the long run? Given that prevention is better than cure and that Heaven could not but foresee the disastrous repercussions, materially and psychologically, of the modern discoveries and inventions, it had every interest (so one might argue) in speaking to man about paleontology and molecular physics and in ‘situating’ these things in relation to the Absolute and immortality. Perhaps the best answer to this kind of question is that Revelation, always preoccupied with ‘the one thing needful’ and conscious, as it must be, of the uselessness and harmfulness of a purely external and quantitative form of knowledge, had no call to set the example of that which it wished to avoid or the coming of which it wished at least to delay.

When the modern world is contrasted with traditional civilizations, it is not simply a question of seeking the good things and the bad things on one side or the other; good and evil are everywhere, so that it is essentially a question of knowing on which side the more important good, and on which side the lesser evil, is to be found. If someone says that such and such a good

exists outside tradition, the answer is: no doubt, but one must choose the most important good, and it is necessarily represented by tradition; and if someone says that in tradition there exists such and such an evil, the answer is: no doubt, but one must choose the lesser evil, and again it is tradition that embodies it. It is illogical to prefer an evil which involves some benefits to a good which involves some evils.

Nevertheless, to confine oneself to admiring the traditional worlds is still to stop short at a fragmentary point of view, for every civilization is a "two-edged sword"; it is a total good only by virtue of those invisible elements that determine it positively. In certain respects, every human society is bad; if its transcendent character is wholly eliminated — which amounts to dehumanizing it since an element of transcendence is essential to man though always dependent on his free consent — then the whole justification of society's existence is removed at the same time, and there remains only an ant-heap, in no way superior to any other ant-heap, since the needs of life and in consequence the right to life remain everywhere the same, whether the life be that of men or of insects. It is one of the most pernicious of errors to believe, firstly, that the human collectivity as such represents an unconditional or absolute value, and secondly that the well-being of this collectivity represents any such value or any such end in itself.

Religious civilizations, regarded as social phenomena and independently of their intrinsic value — though there is no sharp dividing line between the two — are, despite their inevitable imperfections, like sea-walls built to stem the rising tide of worldliness, of error, of subversion, of the fall and its perpetual renewal. The fall is more and more invasive, but it will be conquered in its turn by the final irruption of the divine fire, that very fire of which the religions are and always have been the earthly crystallizations. The rejection of the traditional religious frameworks on account of human abuses amounts to an assertion that the founders of religion did not know what they were doing, as well as that abuses are not inherent in human nature, and that they are therefore avoidable even in societies counting millions of men, and that they are avoidable through purely human means; no more flagrant contradiction that this could well be imagined.

Man finds himself in space and in time, in the world and in life and these two situations imply two eschatological and spiritual axes, the one static and "vertical," the other dynamic and "horizontal" and more or less temporal; thus it is that contingency, in the mind of the contemplative man, is conceived in its relation to the Absolute, is attached to it, and leads back to it. But these various points of reference, in effect, only enter into consideration to the extent that the sage is necessarily conscious of contingent situations; they characterize his manner of taking account of his own relativity. Within this whole context, but completely independent of it, and not in any sense "localized," resides that mystery where knowing is being and being is knowing; in other words, these certainties of "succession" and "simultaneity," of "life" and "world," form the necessary framework of contemplation, representing points of reference which serve to free us from the world and from life, or which facilitate that liberation. Indeed exoterism, which is the necessary basis of esoterism, is in the last analysis centered upon these elements which concern our final ends, namely Heaven and God, or death, Judgement and Eternity, and our own terrestrial attitudes as conforming to these realities.

The important thing to grasp here is that actualization of the consciousness of the Absolute, namely the "remembrance of God" or "prayer," in so far as it brings about a fundamental confrontation of creature and Creator, anticipates every station on the two axes. It is already a death and a meeting with God and it places us already in Eternity; it is already something of Paradise and even, in its mysterious and "uncreated" quintessence, something of God. Quintessential prayer brings about an escape from the world and from life, and thereby confers a new and Divine sap upon the veil of appearances and the current of forms, and a fresh meaning to our presence amid the play of phenomena.

Whatever is not here is nowhere, and whatever is not now will never be. As is this moment in which I am free to choose God, so will be death, Judgement and Eternity. Likewise in this center, this Divine point which I am free to choose in the face of this boundless and multiple world, I am already in invisible Reality.

We have seen that the world, life, and human existence show themselves to be in practice a complex hierarchy of certainties

and uncertainties. To the question of what are the foremost things a man should do, situated as he is in this world of enigmas and fluctuations, the reply must be made that there are four things to be done or four jewels never to be lost sight of: first, he should accept the Truth; second, bear it continually in mind; third, avoid whatever is contrary to Truth and the permanent consciousness of Truth; and fourth, accomplish whatever is in conformity therewith. All religion and all wisdom is reducible, extrinsically and from the human standpoint, to these four laws: enshrined in every tradition is to be observed an Immutable Truth, then a law of "attachment to the Real," of "remembrance" or "love" of God, and finally prohibitions and injunctions; and these make up a fabric of elementary certainties which encompasses and resolves human uncertainty, and thus reduces the whole problem of earthly existence to a geometry that is at once simple and primordial.

Religion and Tradition

Victor Danner

The word “religion” evokes in our mind the beliefs and practices that bind Heaven and a community of believers together, while the word “tradition” has more to do with the actual transmission of those beliefs and practices throughout the ages. Confining our attention for the moment to religion, we can say that it comes into this world through a divine revelation, a message of celestial origin addressed to a particular humanity. Every religion, accordingly, has as its point of departure, historically speaking, that manifestation of the Divine Will called revelation, which has the salvation of man as its goal, although this can be differently expressed in accordance with the variety of messages. Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam are good examples of religions established in this world through initial revelations: the Vedas were revealed to the ancient Hindu rishis, the Christ is Himself “the Word made flesh,” while the Quranic message is “the Word made Book”; the Vedas are the foundation of Hinduism, the Christ is the saving reality of Christianity, and the Quran is the scriptural basis of Islam. Even the so-called primitive religions evolve out of revelations that descended in olden times, so that the Pueblo Indian religion in the Southwest of North America, for example, or the Maori religion of nineteenth-century New Zealand, or the ancient faith of the Yorubas of Africa, show the same general characteristics that one finds in the higher religions: there are the same attachments to the realm of the sacred, to the transcendent, to the supernatural, the same spiritual attitudes, and the same aspirations.

Beyond the simple definition of religion as a set of beliefs and practices having to do with the Hereafter, we might look more closely into the constituent elements of all the world religions, both archaic and sophisticated, in order to see what it is that they have in common as taxonomic features. In general, we

can say of all religions that they have four aspects: doctrines, ritual observances, moral rules, and arts. None of these is ever construed as being of human origin; quite the contrary, they all derive from the initial revelation that gave rise to this or that religion, and they are all concerned with the salvational goal of the faith, so that each element plays a vital and even irreplaceable role in the life of an individual or a community following a particular religious message. Given that we find them in all the religions, we would do well to examine each aspect separately to learn what function it has within the revealed message as a whole.

Take the element of doctrine. Each religion has a doctrine addressed to the mind of the believer and meant to act as a means of mental purification, to undo the obstacles, both psychological and spiritual, that the process of the Fall engenders in the souls of individuals and entire communities. The doctrine of *tawhīd*, for example, in Islam, means the affirmation of the Oneness of the Divinity. It is meant to dissolve all tendencies to affirm polytheism or to engage in associationism (*shirk*), which is the affirmation of things and beings on a plane of equality with God, or Allah. The entire metaphysical, theological, spiritual and cosmological perspective of Islam is based on that pure Oneness of Allah, who has no associates, no peers, no offspring, no parents and no rivals: the One without a second. The Islamic theory is that man is essentially monotheistic but has inherited, through forgetfulness (*ghaflah*), the tendency towards associationism (*shirk*), which must be rejected through the powerful affirmation of *tawhīd*, the Oneness of Allah.

Take the element of ritual observance. Rituals are said to be sacred acts that generate benedictions or graces; they are therefore means of grace, like the sacraments of the Church, the Five Pillars of Islam, or the *samskāras* of Hinduism. These are all revealed sources of celestial empowerment that give to the fallen will of the individual a regenerative grace, a heavenly reorientation. Just as the doctrine purifies the mind, enabling the believer to see things more clearly, so similarly the rituals purify his will, so that his efforts towards salvation are not mired down in the mud of corruption at all times: through the ritual observances, he receives supernatural help that allows him to attain his spiritual

goal either in the Hereafter or else here and now, depending on his aspirations.

Take the element of morality. One cannot imagine any religion devoid of a moral dimension, whether expressed in a code of commandments and prohibitions, as we find in the Talmud of Judaism, the Manava-Dharma-Shastra of Hinduism, or the *Sharī'ah* ("Law") of Islam, or expressed in an unwritten code, as we see in the Shinto tradition, similar in this respect to the Shamanistic cultures of North and South America. The loss of the Edenic state meant a natural propensity of mankind towards dissipation and imperfection and this in turn obliterated the practice of the virtues, which are an integral part of the moral life of an individual or a people. Whether one has in mind the morality of a mystic or the external, law-abiding conduct of the believer, it is always a question of certain principles of action, the only difference being that, for the mystic, the action unfolds in his mind, while for the general believer the action involves mostly external behavior, or the civic virtues. The moral life, in its deepest sense is the battle within the soul between the virtues and vices, a battle that can certainly seesaw back and forth, but that has as its ultimate goal the attainment of interior peace. Without this moral commitment of the individual, which engages his whole spiritual life, he can neither retain in his soul the graces deployed through ritual observances nor can he keep constantly in mind the fundamental teachings of his faith. Instead, his mind becomes scattered, his will weakened, and his inner life dispersed and attached to transient phenomena.

And finally, take the element of art. All of the primitive and higher religions have this element of art, without which they would all be stripped of their aesthetic dimensions or to put things more bluntly, of their beauty. The astonishing beauty of the sacred dances of the Pueblo Indians has been greatly admired, not only by anthropologists and the general public who have seen them, but also by many authors and painters of the Southwest, who were influenced by the mysterious presence they perceived in those dances. We need not mention the haunting beauty of certain cathedrals of Europe and of great mosques in the Islamic world, such as the Mosque of Cordova, or of outstanding Buddhist and Hindu works of art. All of these derive from prototypal

forms in the original revelation that introduced a given religion into this world. When the Christ celebrated the Last Supper, He did so with sacred gestures and words; there was an art to the sacrament which could not but be present then and which would inevitably flower later on in the various liturgical arts of the Church, and even in the very structure of the ecclesiastical edifices, for they were meant to house the sacramental life of the community and to impart to it a sacredness that clearly differentiated it from the worldly existence of mankind outside the Church doors.

In other words, the arts one finds in the different religions are aesthetic expressions, both visible and auditive, of the teachings and practices of those faiths. That they are indispensable in the life of all religious communities can be seen in the fact that there are no faiths without appropriate or characteristic arts. True, there is always a kind of evolution of forms out of simple germinal ones found in the original revelation, but no revelation as such is devoid of art in some way or another. The scriptural beauty and aesthetic dimensions of the Quran, both in its chanted and written forms, played a tremendous role in its widespread acceptance amongst the ancient Arabs in the times of the Prophet Muhammad; later on, as Islam became the foundation of a great civilization, the minor and major arts of Islam, from calligraphy to mosque architecture, were called upon to house the Word of Allah in increasingly complex forms of beauty.

Art, therefore, is one of the elements that go into the makeup of the world religions; this is a point beyond dispute, even though it is seldom taken into account in the usual definitions of religion. The role of art in the different religions is pedagogical, not in the doctrinal sense, but in the concrete, aesthetic sense. Art allows us to hear, see, touch, smell, taste and feel the Hereafter in the visual and auditive as well as in other forms of this world as expressed by the artisans and artists in the different traditional worlds.

What, then, is the relationship between religion and tradition? To answer this question, we must bear in mind the following causal chain: revelation, religion, tradition. Without a manifestation of the Divine Will towards a particular community in the form of a saving message, which is what we call revelation, there can be no authentic religion. Consequently, there is initially a ver-

tical projection downwards of a celestial message that reveals the Will of God to establish a particular religion, say, Islam, in the world of man. As a matter of fact, one of the terms for revelation in Arabic is precisely "descent" (*tanzīl*), meaning here the descent of the Quran into the heart of the Prophet Muhammad.

When he passed away, the Prophet had established the new faith on two solid foundations, the Quran and the *Sunnah*, which is the Norm of the Prophet. These two together defined the contours of the Islamic religion that he bequeathed to his followers, and to this day the Quran and the *Sunnah* reign supreme as arbiters of the faith. But the religion could not have perpetuated itself in time and space without a horizontal continuity called tradition, which transmitted, without betrayal, the salvational forms of the religion revealed to the Prophet. That transmission was not always purely horizontal or historical in character; otherwise it would have been simply a human reality that sooner or later would have dragged the religion down by the sheer weight of forgetfulness. Rather, we see that in the Islamic tradition, as in the others, there are also vertical dimensions, especially in the periods of spiritual reform or rebirth following on the times of decadence. In the lives of the great Muslim saints and sages, who were the prime movers of all spiritual reformations in the history of Islam, we see constant allusions to their union with Allah, and the fruits that such mystical experiences have on the world around them. It is as if, by virtue of their spiritual realization, they were like latter-day prophets who had come with new revelations, new vertical projections of the Divine Will into the Islamic community. It is through these vessels of election that the tradition regenerated itself from time to time, overcoming the natural tendency towards corruption that we see in all the historical forms of the different religions.

Thus, tradition implies both the transmission of forms, historically speaking, as well as their spiritual regeneration at different moments in the cycle of a given religion. There is a supernatural element in tradition which we tend to neglect in our emphasis on the merely historical transmission of teachings and patterns of behavior. It is this supernatural dimension that distinguishes tradition from, say, convention, custom or usage. Otherwise, neither Christianity nor Judaism would have relied on oral

tradition as embodying truths alongside the truths of Scripture. But while these two faiths limit tradition to its oral aspect, it is the total message, and even more.

We say "even more" because when a religion such as Islam, for example, came into the world, it no doubt had the four elements previously mentioned but it did not have the classical features that would characterize the great traditional Islamic civilization of later times. These would enter into the civilizational supports of the religion with the passage of time and as Islam came into contact with non-Islamic civilizations, such as the Byzantine, the Persian, the Hindu and still others. It drew into the structures of its own nascent civilization something from all of these age-old cultures, transforming them in the process so as to make them compatible with the presiding spirit of the faith, its guiding genius, which was the unitive perspective of *tawhīd*, the Oneness of God. Into this matrix of Islam came all the arts and architectures of the different worlds conquered by the Muslim armies, as well as the sciences and philosophies, the political, economic and social structures of those worlds; all of these things had to be assimilated and reworked within the context of the Islamic viewpoint, and that took time. Once it was all reformulated within the contours of the Islamic message, it became part and parcel of the overall tradition, which manifested itself in every single detail of the millennial civilization of Islam. It was not Islam, consequently, that created those one thousand and one different civilizational forms; they pre-existed the religion and had served the purposes of the Byzantine, the Persian, and the other civilizations with which the newly-born religion came into association. But once they were brought into the bosom of Islam, they were given a new inspirational orientation, which in turn manifested altogether novel and original expressions of Islamic art and architecture, philosophy, government, society, economics, literature, music, cosmology, theology, and the sciences in general. All were imprinted with the seal of the Islamic revelation in one way or another.

While Islam took the traditional structures that had belonged to other cultures and gave to them a new and powerful affirmation, those structures themselves went back in time to even more ancient ones belonging to traditions that had declined and died

out, like the Egyptian, the Babylonian, or the Sumerian. It was to the merit of René Guénon, the great French metaphysician and expounder of the universality of revelation, to have insisted on the causal connections between the primordial tradition of mankind—that of Edenic humanity—and the many traditions that later on would be formed by subsequent revelations. The Byzantine, Persian, and Hindu traditions, for example, that entered actively into the formation of the Islamic tradition, were themselves derivative. Their own religions had made use of pre-existing materials from other, more ancient traditions that had fallen on evil days and had reworked them in the light of their own celestial perspectives, and in doing so had given rise to their own magnificent solutions in the domains of science, art, architecture, and the like. As a result, when we talk about the Islamic tradition, we mean not only the transmission of those four elements that go into the composition of its religion, but also everything inherited by Islam from the other traditions and transformed into civilizational expressions of the faith. Like the more strictly religious core of the tradition, which can undergo decadence and rebirth, the overall traditional civilization of Islam can also pass through similar declines and regenerations sometimes coinciding with the religious ones, and this we see from time to time in the history of the faith.

Because the sense of tradition is so universal, in contrast with the more particular meaning of religion, it includes within its domain a variety of viewpoints and levels of understanding. To pursue the example of Islam, the religious authorities very often rejected Islamic philosophy as having nothing to do with the faith as such; yet, there can be no denying that Islam developed over the long centuries a host of traditional philosophical schools from the Aristotelian to the Neoplatonic, that attest to the intellectual vibrancy of the civilization—and, indeed, of the faith, because the great Muslim philosopher of the twelfth century, Averroes, was also the chief religious judge of Cordova, who insisted that philosophy was the esoteric complement to the exoteric Law of Islam. The possibility that the Islamic tradition could accommodate a host of different and even conflicting perspectives militates rather strongly against the notion that traditionalism and fundamentalism are one and the same thing. In the

past, within the all-embracing tradition, there was ample room for those of limited outlook, who clung to the literal meanings of Scripture; they could not impose their own limitations on everyone else because it was seldom that they came to power; the actual traditional nature of the Islamic world allowed for a rather rich tableau of perspectives in any case.

That is not the case nowadays. With the decline of all the traditional civilizations in the last two centuries or so, and even with the disappearance of some of them, the cultural traits of religion, especially the arts and architecture, the socio-political structures, and the intellectual formulations, have all gone by the board, leaving only the skeletal bones of the religion intact. Fundamentalism now is no longer surrounded by numerous works of art, by many schools of thought, by the beauty and majesty of the urban civilization of Islam. It is simply a totalitarian version of the Law designed to buttress the demagogical claims of this or that leader in the Muslim world. One thing it is not: it is not traditional, for even the traditional fundamentalists were utterly different from their modern counterparts.

We have just mentioned the decline and even the disappearance of the traditional civilizations that constituted the underpinnings of the great world faiths. What caused this decline? First of all, there is no doubt that all of them experienced an interior spiritual decadence, and this was most apparent in the Christian civilization of the Western world. Secondly, the rise of modern civilization took place in the West and led immediately to the destruction through the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, of the lingering traces of the old Christian civilization. Modern civilization was based on philosophical and scientific and later social, political, economic and artistic principles that were subversive to the entire traditional culture of the West. This modern Western civilization was later carried by imperialistic regimes to the four corners of the globe. None of the civilizations of the East, not even the still-living Japanese Shinto-Buddhist tradition of the first half of the nineteenth century, was spared. All succumbed, to a greater or lesser degree, to the modern world. When the West was forced to leave the East, the traditional cultures that remained were all in tatters; the end was in sight.

But if the traditional civilizations were all moribund, this meant that the religions could not be in too good a shape either, for they had all relied on their traditional matrix to ensure their continued well-being. Once that matrix was removed, the religions began to disintegrate also; and that is precisely what we see in our times. The solution to this problem today is the same as in the past. Whenever religion declined in the old days, a sage or sages would reaffirm the traditional teachings and practices without betraying the spirit of the initial revelation, even though there might be a novel or fresh perspective to the reformation. The monastic orders of Christianity, for instance, arose in response to the increasing worldliness of the times; and when those orders declined in their turn, saintly reformers appeared on the scene to set them right. As a result of the teachings and activities of such wise and pious men and women, a spiritual rebirth would take place that affected not only the believers in general but also the artisans in particular, and therefore the arts and architecture of the tradition were enriched by the reformers.

One thing the sages of Medieval times did not have to contend with was the creation of a surrounding artistic shell for the tradition. This was already in place when they began their missions; there was nothing in the way of art that they had to create from scratch; their regenerative work was the more easily accomplished in that the world around them was saturated with beauty, the glow of the truths they preached. Nevertheless, it was the traditional doctrines that were reaffirmed; one began with the teachings of the faith as the foundation of any reformation in society. What doctrine seeks from man is a spiritual response to the truth. Understanding the truth assuredly comes first, for one must know what one should be; then comes the spiritual response that allows one to be what one knows is true.

In our epoch, the artistic and architectural manifestations of tradition have for the most part disappeared from society around us, leaving the individual's home as the last bastion of the element of art in religion. But apart from that salient fact, which is grave enough, the reaffirmation of traditional teachings remains the categorical imperative of our days. We see this in the great teachers of the East in recent times, such as Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramana Maharshi, and others in India, or the great Sufi shaykhs

of the Islamic world, or the eminent teachers of Buddhism in Japan. In the West, apart from the numerous exponents of the *philosophia perennis* in the nineteenth century, we find impressive authorities in the twentieth century, such as the illustrious René Guénon, Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, Frithjof Schuon, Titus Burckhardt, and many others, whose writings have shed much light on the different aspects of traditional teachings.

Therein lies the wisdom and beauty of tradition: it supplies us with a powerful light, both of an intellectual and spiritual nature, with which to evaluate every single aspect and ideology of our present-day world. This we would never be able to do had there been no tradition; nor would we be able to fall back on religion had there been no initial revelation at the origin of all faiths.

The divine source of all celestial revelations is an ever-present and still accessible Reality to those who are bent on understanding and seeking it. To seek it, one must first understand the teachings, since these are the only criteria permitting us to discern the real from the unreal, the true from the false. They are the norms whereby we can appreciate the importance of religion itself. And finally, religion as such is the only way we can return to the celestial origin of all things; that is the whole point of religion, its unique and only reason for existing; and this we could never have known without tradition.

Tradition and Human Society

Gai Eaton

The hosts of this conference were kind enough to suggest five questions which I might attempt to answer today. These are good questions, and they give me a framework for the first part of my paper. In the second part I propose to ask myself a question: what relevance does the study of traditional societies have for us in the modern age? These societies have, on the whole, had little interest in useless study and unnecessary information. Why should we be interested in them? And assuming that we are aware of what has been lost and deplore the direction taken by modern civilization, what — if anything — can we do about it?

Let me start, however, with the first question posed by my hosts. What are the principles underlying a traditional social order?

There are some who would claim that this question is meaningless. The term covers almost every social order that has ever existed, with one important exception: our own. These patterns for human living have differed so widely, not only in their social structures but also in their beliefs and in their understanding of man's destiny in this world, that one may well ask what they can possibly have in common. It seems that every imaginable variety of social organization has been explored by one society or another, not least among the indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere. Can they all be described as "traditional?" I think they can, when compared with the civilization in which we live.

Almost forty years ago I read a book by an American anthropologist called Ruth Benedict. I remember nothing about it except for one quotation which has remained in my memory. A North American Indian sage had said to the author: "In the beginning God gave to each people a cup of clay, and from it they

drank their life." He added: "Our cup is broken!" This, I suggest, offers a key to one factor which all traditional societies have in common. Their principles, their beliefs, their social structure and their whole way of life are given. They were not acquired through abstract reasoning nor by means of human ingenuity. According to their particular perspective, the people concerned may claim that these treasures were given to them by God, by "the gods," by prophets and seers or by their own remote and semi-divine ancestors. What matters is the quality of "givenness" and the clear implication that all good things, including the guidance which makes it possible for us to find our way through our earthly lives, come from an Elsewhere which is invisible to us and yet which takes precedence over all that is merely human. This, together with the care taken to hand down what has been given from generation to generation, is what all traditional societies have in common. But there is a second principle which they all share. Each people was given one cup; not a variety of vessels, not one to contain their spiritual life, another for their work and their crafts, a third for their social organization and yet another for their personal lives. They were given but one cup; a container for every aspect of human living at every level.

In this context, then, what we are speaking of is wholeness, the inter-relatedness of every element in human experience from the highest spirituality to the most mundane affairs; religion in the strict sense of binding — the binding of man to God or to that which his perspective recognizes as ultimate Reality, reflected in the binding together both of the individuals who make up society and of the different levels which make up the individual personality.

A secular society — or can we say a decadent society? — tends to exploit certain opportunities for deviation present in the religion which gave it birth but which is no longer strong enough to protect it from deviation. Western Christianity made a sharp distinction between sacred and profane, a distinction foreign both to Judaism and to Islam. As has often been pointed out, there is no word for "religion" understood as a separate compartment of life in the Torah, and Muslims frequently object to the translation of the Arabic word *al-dīn* as "religion" on the grounds that it indicates a total way of life from which nothing can be excluded.

Perhaps the word "Way" will suffice, without qualification. What is true of Judaism and Islam is true also of so-called "primitive" societies. The anthropologist speaks of their religion, but what they have is a Way carved out for them and appropriate to all their needs. This might be illustrated in terms of usefulness. They have no use for luxuries which answer to no real need. Everything must have a use, and this usefulness makes nothing of the gap which we establish between the sacred and the secular. This is true, in the first instance, of the crafts, but it is true also of every normative activity, useful both for daily living in this world and for the soul's journey when it leaves this world. In a tribal culture, the gestures of a fisherman casting his net, a warrior throwing his spear or a house-holder building his hut are in accordance with the tradition. They are not individual or arbitrary. "We must do what the gods did in That Time." They take place here, but they imitate what takes place there, elsewhere, and time thereby reflects eternity. The traditional Muslim models every gesture upon what he understands to have been the gestures of the Messenger of God; here again, time is not cut off from eternity.

This is what we — in the post-Christian world — find so difficult to comprehend. It can even shock us. The mundane, they think, is "ignoble." To confuse it with the sacred is "sacrilegious." Unless we can rid ourselves of this perspective and of this conditioning, we shall never understand any traditional society, nor shall we understand the role of beauty in such societies and the role of dignity which is, after all, a form of beauty. One of the most curious features of the contemporary view of the world is the tendency to equate ugliness with reality, reality with ugliness. We see this only too clearly in modern art with its claim to delve beneath the pretty surface of things and discover the ugly underside. We see it also in the common belief that, when we discover the shameful secret which a man or a woman may have tried to hide from the world, we have discovered the truth about them; this blemish is seen as more significant than all the good they may have done. In other words, ugliness is considered to be in some way more real than beauty; and that is neither more nor less than the secular way of saying that the profane is more real than the sacred.

So here again — by contrast — we have found something else that traditional societies, whatever their outward differences, have in common. For them, the sacred is what reflects Reality and, in a sense, it annihilates or else absorbs the profane. Yet ugliness exists. Indeed it does, and its presence obsesses the modern world as does the presence of evil. But the priorities of man in a traditional environment are different from ours, and it is in terms of our priorities that we interpret what we see and what we experience. If beauty reflects the Real, then what can ugliness reflect other than the trace of nothingness, of deprivation, which runs through all created things? And the sane man gives his attention to what is most real.

Those of us who speak for a traditional perspective are accused often enough of idealizing the past or idealizing “primitive cultures”; and if we find some good to say of the European Middle Ages we are advised to pay attention to the inadequate sewage systems of that period; this, it seems, is what really matters — not the piety of Medieval times or the craftsmanship. Once again, it is a matter of priorities. In the same manner, we may be asked how we can ignore the blemishes, the crudities or injustices found in simple traditional cultures, blemishes which the European conqueror was in such haste to correct that he habitually killed the patient while attempting to heal him. We do not ignore these things. We surmise however that — in terms of the culture taken as a whole — these negative facets are less important than the positive ones.

To see things in this way requires that we place human societies in a much wider context than is provided by this contingent world with its narrow horizons. We have to place them in a meta-cosmic context, and indeed this alone can provide us with a scale of priorities. But can it be said that the members of a simple (I am trying to avoid the word “primitive”) traditional society are aware of this vast setting in which their brief lives are framed? The answer, I think, is both ‘No’ and ‘Yes’. They are not metaphysicians, obviously, and they are unlikely to think or speak in terms of Ultimate Reality. Yet they inhabit a cosmos which is filled with symbols of what lies beyond it. From this point of view their cosmos is already metacosmic, nature is already supernatural. And in this way Reality, without being conceptualized, is

experienced existentially. Mountains, rivers, forests, as well as the wind and the rain, contain messages from elsewhere; they are both what they appear to be so far as our physical senses are concerned, and other than they appear to be. Man completely cut off from the natural world and its great stream of messages lives — in Jacques Ellul's words — in an "inauthentic world."

It may be objected that, even if this is true of tribal societies, whether pastoral or agricultural, it can have no relevance to Medieval Islam, Medieval Christendom, or any other "civilized" traditional society. We think inevitably, not of cities in the ancient sense, but of mega-cities — London, New York, Lima — which insulate their people from any intimate contact with nature. But ancient cities were too small — one might even say too fragile — to provide such insulation. Not only was open country on the doorstep, but technology had not yet come to create entirely artificial environments. Consider but one example; the manner in which electric light insulates us from the starry firmament above. Consider also the materials — hewn out of the natural world — used then in the city's construction and compare them with the materials in use today.

Finally, something must be said about the organization of traditional societies. In the first place this is — as I suggested earlier — based upon a "given" pattern which reflects, without any human intervention or "planning," the principles contained in the "cup" which the people concerned received from Elsewhere. Secondly, it is rooted in the natural relationships, specifically family relationships, which are also "given." This is obvious in the case of simple societies in which structures of kinship are decisive. It has been true also — although in a far more complex manner — of the great traditional civilizations. Islam, for example, abolished tribal loyalties in favor of the supreme loyalty to the *Ummah*, the community of believers, but at the same time it emphasized the sacred character of family ties, and indeed the Quran condemns with particular severity the "breaking of ties of relationship." By way of contrast, we note the dependence of modern civilizations upon what might be called "unnatural" ties, with the result that society falls apart if there is no strong central authority to hold it together. Consider, for example, the hostility between workers and management or between senior civil ser-

vants and the ministers they serve, a hostility of which the general public may be unaware but which is familiar to anyone who has worked in government.

Natural relationships are an immensely strong binding force; unnatural ones — shall we call them “relationships of convenience?” — are weak and readily broken, and this is why a traditional society continues to function effectively even when the ruler or the government is feeble or corrupt, whereas modern societies collapse when the grip of government is relaxed or broken. A traditional society is self-sustaining, naturally cohesive. To say this is, in effect, to say that it possesses inherent unity rather than an artificially imposed unity. And to say that is merely to draw attention to the fact that its structure reflects, at however great a distance, something of Reality; and Reality is One.

And so I come now to the second question posed at this paper’s opening, which can be answered more briefly. How do the metaphysical doctrines of a religious tradition apply to the temporal and contingent circumstances of everyday life? We must treat the word “apply” with caution. We are accustomed in the modern world to considering principles and then asking how they may be applied, but the people who live — or lived — in traditional societies did not think in that way. They did not have to ask themselves how to apply God-given principles any more than we, when we walk from here to there, have to ask ourselves how to apply the principles of balance to the exercise of walking. We possess a sense of physical balance. We walk. That is all there is to it. And this has an important implication. If we lose that sense and are obliged to consider how to put one foot in front of the other, then we stagger and, very probably, fall. This, incidentally, is one reason why traditional societies have been so terribly vulnerable to the destructive impact of modern civilization. We have undermined their sense of balance, so they no longer know how to walk.

From this point of view, metaphysical doctrines do not “apply” to the circumstances of everyday life. The gap is too great to be bridged by human cleverness, but these doctrines are, so to speak, the invisible substratum of everything that happens within the traditional social framework which they have projected. Only a tiny minority of ordinary people are concerned with metaphysi-

cal principles, at least within the compass of recorded history; only a tiny minority asks — “Why do we do these things in this way?” Surely one of the comedies of the science of anthropology resides in the fact that the investigator is constantly asking his subjects, “Why do you do this?,” “Why do you do that?,” and then puts them down as stupid because they cannot answer him in his terms. Perhaps the correct answer to his question might be: “We do this because it is in the nature of things — as revealed to us or handed down to us — that we should act in this way.”

It is difficult enough to apply rational principles to the hurly-burly of daily life. Metaphysics is — as the word itself indicates — beyond the material realm and all that relates to this realm. Man cannot, therefore, make the connection on his own initiative. It has to be made for him, indeed this, in a sense, is precisely what “tradition” means and this is why mankind has need of religion.

So I come to the third question, and this will lead me into a digression which has none the less an important bearing on the main topic. How can the active life be integrated into the contemplative life? Clearly, this question does not arise in a truly traditional society in which the actions even of the least contemplative of men are integrated into the tradition which provides the link between the two domains. For the people concerned, the Reality which the contemplative perceives albeit from a pre-determined perspective — takes earthly shape in the rules and customs which govern the active life of the people.

But we — here, how, in the abnormal circumstances of the time — are not members of a traditional society, and the question has immediate relevance for us. Let me start by making a distinction between what I will call, for convenience, action and activity. By this I mean, on the one hand, what we are obliged to do in the normal course of our lives and, on the other, the initiatives which we may choose to take.

Unless we live as hermits (and even the hermit must seek food, draw water and find shelter), we are all of us involved in action, since we must deal with the circumstances which destiny brings our way and, in doing so, prove ourselves and reveal our characters. The world into which we have been born makes its legitimate demands upon us, whether we like it or not. There is, on the

other hand, such a thing as a specific vocation for the active life. There are people who are called upon not only to respond to circumstances but also to go out from their shelter and seek occasions for activity as leaders, warriors, reformers, teachers and so on. They are — in Islamic terms — called upon to engage in *jihād* understood in its outward sense; holy effort, even holy war. The word holy is significant in this context. Remember, if you will, that the Amerindian warrior purifies himself — clothes himself in the sacred — before going into battle.

Most people acknowledge that the vocation for the contemplative life is rare. Unfortunately, few people understand that the vocation for a life of activity is hardly more common, with the result that the world today swarms with men and women who think themselves qualified to change it, to reshape or reform it. These people, having mistaken their vocation — and overlooked the need for “purification” — are the destroyers, the well-intentioned slaughterers of the innocent. The reason is plain enough. Their actions are rooted neither in the wisdom and serenity of the contemplative life nor in the “given” ground of an authentic tradition. They demonstrate on a wide stage, in newspaper headlines and on television screens, what they are — and, above all, what they are not.

So — in a more private theatre — do those who simply respond to circumstances and act because they must. Even if we happen to be contemplatives, even if we have glimpsed the vast spaces which metaphysics presents to the enquiring mind, the way in which we deal with circumstances is unlikely to be planned in terms of what we have learned in contemplation or through the study of metaphysics. Whether for good or ill, our actions will reflect what is within us, our very substance; if they are “integrated” into our spiritual life, this will not be through deliberation or calculation; it will be because contemplation has gradually shaped us in a certain manner so that our natural — one might almost say “instinctive” — response to circumstances is in accordance with this shaping. Strike a bell with a hammer; it rings true or false according to its quality. The contemplative life has its rewards and its blessings if we consider it in isolation, but in fact it cannot be considered in isolation because the contemplative is a man or woman, tested in action and unable to escape

the necessity for action.

From this point of view, then, there is no problem because problems only arise when we are faced with a choice. The integration of the active life into the contemplative life exists prior to any choices we might make, and the quality of our contemplation is indicated by the quality of our actions. Each of us has his or her inward divisions and inconsistencies, but each of us is none the less one person, not several. We do not have to forge connections between different levels of our personality. A contemplative life which does not change the personality is either superficial or inoperative, a poor and self-indulgent substitute for simple obedience to a religious tradition.

The fourth question I wish to pose is, I think, a fairly simple one, although it might be seen to have some complex implications. What is the traditional relationship between the concept of vocation and Divine Justice? The concept of vocation, at least as I understand it, requires that in this imperfect world and in societies which, of necessity, are no less imperfect (however traditional they may be), each man and woman should be in their right place, their appropriate niche, doing what best accords with their individual nature, their talents and — in short — the possibilities inherent in their substance. This, I suggest, in so far as it may be achievable in any human society, reflects Divine Justice. Justice as such gives to each thing its proper place both in accordance with its particular nature and in accordance with a hierarchy of values inherent in Reality. So far as the social realm is concerned, if one man is fitted by nature to be a good master and another a good servant, then it is just that the one should be master, the other servant, and it is unjust if these roles are reversed. But this is not a definition of justice likely to please the adherents of contemporary ideologies.

I think it was Gustave Thibon who said, many years ago, that an abstract and purely quantitative notion of justice is at the root of most of the disorders of the modern world. That is why I suggested that this question may have complex implications; in answering it one is obliged to commit oneself to a political standpoint. The contemporary liberal or socialist ethos interprets justice almost exclusively in egalitarian terms. Since secular, quantitative equality is an unattainable goal, and since those who are

frustrated in their efforts to reach their goal readily turn to destructive violence, it is easy enough to see what Thibon meant. To say this, however, is not to deny that there are a great many societies in the modern world in which inequalities and injustice go hand-in-hand, societies in which those who are quite unfit to rule sit in the seats of power, in which the wealthy misuse their wealth, and merit is disregarded. But that, precisely, is the indication of a civilization which has lost all sense of priorities.

There have been traditional societies which were strictly hierarchical in structure, others which were egalitarian (although not altogether in the modern sense of the term); in either case, the social structure has been organically related to the people's perspective as a whole. There is always a perfect logic and coherence in such matters, and justice is satisfied.

The fifth question: How can a traditional social order maintain a high degree of stability and a recognizable traditional identity within the continuously changing river of time?

Time, we are frequently assured, is relative. So is everything in this world. But I think it can be said that the speed of the river which flows through us is, in a certain sense, relative to our perception of it and to our perspective. Time indeed brings about change but, so far as human societies are concerned, the pace of change will depend upon whether a particular society welcomes it or resists it. According to the contemporary view, it is certainly folly and possibly a sin to "live in the past" or to be much concerned with it; such a concern smacks of romanticism, nostalgia and reactionary politics, and change is welcomed because it is always associated with the belief in progress. This view overlooks one simple fact. The past existed; it therefore possesses a certain degree of reality and, since it cannot be altered, one might even describe it as a solid and enduring presence. The future, on the other hand, does not yet exist and — for all we know — may never exist. One can think of it only in terms of hope or of fantasy, in the sure knowledge that one's hopes will probably prove vain and one's fantasies absurdly inaccurate. To give our whole attention to something that has no existence, no certainty, is to risk losing contact with reality.

Traditional societies live unashamedly in the past in the sense that the guidance which has determined their structure and their

whole way of life was given long ago; it was revealed to ancestors who are assumed to have been both wiser and better than the present generation. This assessment allows for time's erosion but does not welcome it. The ideal, the model, the example to be imitated, is situated in the past, safe from change so long as it is faithfully remembered; the people know that they have been carried downstream but that an invisible thread, running through many generations, still connects them with a time which was, in a certain sense, a timeless moment. The work of time, therefore, is neither more nor less than the inevitable process of aging which afflicts all created things; it represents not a dynamic, ever-hastening movement towards a beckoning future, but a simple matter of wear and tear.

But perhaps the key to endurance in the major traditional societies is to be found in the realm of law; revealed and therefore basically unchangeable law. This is certainly the case with Islam. For at least a thousand years the world of Islam — or the greater part of it — retained an extraordinary inward stability, an enduring identity, despite many outward changes and despite successive political upheavals. This can be attributed to the *Sharī'ah*, the religious law derived from Quranic precepts and from the sayings and example of the Prophet. The essential principles of the law could not — and indeed cannot — be changed to satisfy any man's whim or even to please a ruler, precisely because they are not of human origin. Instead of adapting the law to circumstances, circumstances have to be adapted to the law; the relative and the ephemeral is required to conform to something that — if not in itself absolute and timeless — nevertheless represents the Absolute and the Timeless in this contingent world.

On the other hand, if laws are infinitely changeable in accordance with the fashionable opinions of the moment, as is the case in Western civilization, then society itself is never still and there is nothing to check the increasing pace of the river's flow as it approaches the end of its course.

And so, in a traditional society, identity is preserved — at least for so long as the nature of our world permits — by laws which cannot be challenged and by attachment to a model situated in the distant past. Even those today who are most critical of such societies and most anxious to drag them — “screaming” — into

the twentieth century, acknowledge that they possess (or possessed) the quality of stability, although this is likely to be described as "stagnation." Time does indeed bring about change but, in the natural order of things, this change is a slow process. The river erodes the rocks in its path, but it does so gradually. Rapid change results from human activity rather than from the passage of time, and it is due to the hasty activity of Western man over the past three centuries that the cups from which so many different peoples drank their life have been broken. Can they ever be put together again?

This brings me to the sixth question, the one I have put to myself concerning the practical relevance of the study of traditional patterns of life, and we must consider first if we can envisage any possible revival of tradition in the West or its restoration among non-Western peoples.

So far as our own world — the post-Christian world — is concerned, it would, I believe, require an act of God in the full sense of the term to produce such a reversal of direction. There are indeed some signs of a return to religion in rather a general sense, not least in the Eastern bloc, but there is no reason to suppose that this points the way to the revival of an integral Christian order. Traditional civilizations, once dead, cannot be resurrected. The case of Islam is rather different. Christendom was poisoned by forces generated within its own body; Islam, although certainly decadent so far as its social structure was concerned before the West broke in upon its world, had remained essentially true to its tradition up to that moment and there are many areas in which simple people live their lives much as they did five centuries ago; but the corrosive action of Western ideas and Western technology continues inexorably. The so-called "fundamentalists" who claim to be fighting a holy war to restore the true faith and reconstruct Islamic society are deeply influenced by secular ideologies and, for the most part, refuse to include modern science among the Western "poisons" which they denounce so stridently. In Iran we see an ugly travesty of traditional Islamic social life, rooted, not in holiness — and certainly not in contemplation — but in anger and bitterness. This is a dead end.

To speak of revival or restoration is, I suspect, to fall under the spell of contemporary fantasies. Reacting, as we suppose, against

the utopian illusions of "progressives" who dream of a new-minted world, a man-made paradise on earth, we may be tempted to dream no less hopelessly of travelling upstream and rediscovering a lost paradise. But what is gone is gone; the dead do not come back to us, nor do we find them again in this place; and this comparison is not as fanciful as it might seem. Traditional societies are comparable to living organisms.

But what of the broken cups of simple tribal societies? Can they ever be put together again? Let us consider a specific case, that of Black Africa where, over the past 30 years, there has been a serious attempt to revive traditional religion and, in most cases, combine it with a Christianity which most Western Christians would have difficulty in recognizing. That the Africans did have an authentic religion, identifiable in terms of the Universal Tradition, cannot be doubted. The pygmies of Zaire, for example, commonly regarded as the most primitive of the primitives, still sing:

*"In the beginning was God,
Today is God,
Tomorrow will be God!"*

and that is a metaphysical statement.

But this was destroyed, chiefly by Protestant missionaries who were more concerned with rooting out the people's faith than with teaching a new faith, but also by the administrators in the final years of colonial rule who were convinced that traditional patterns of rulership must be eliminated if Africans were to enjoy the full benefits of democracy after independence. We see today in a dozen African countries the results of this well-intentioned program of devastation.

In the midst of this vast area of spiritual and political ruin, innumerable cults have arisen, innumerable "prophets," "seers" and healers who have one thing in common. They have tried to marry half-forgotten vestiges of their tradition with half-understood vestiges of the Christianity brought to them by the missionaries. This has led to a proliferation of cults which are neither traditional nor Christian, ranging from the "Church of Jesus Christ on Earth through the Prophet Simon Kinbangu," which

numbers some four million adherents and boasts a College of Kinbanguist Theology in Kinshasa to tiny village groups assembled around the local worker of wonders or healer in the name of an African "Christ." One lesson, I think, may be learned from all this. The attempt to revive fragments of an ancient and total tradition and give it the kiss of life by grafting onto it elements of Christianity is not a viable proposition.

But does this mean that we are left to throw up our hands in despair? I think not. There is one principle we should always keep in mind, and this principle relates directly to the ephemeral nature of all that exists. Anything that is good or beautiful, above all anything that can be described as sacred, is worth preserving for a decade, a year, even for one more month, though we know quite well that its destruction cannot be long postponed. We do not turn our backs upon a flower, a blossom, simply because it will last but a day; it represents a value, however short-lived. And there is a saying of the Prophet Muhammad that is, I think, relevant here: he told his people that if a man were holding in his hand a palm shoot ready for planting when the last hour comes, he should plant it. A useless action by worldly standards, but meritorious in the sight of God. It is not for any of us to say: my work will not endure so I need do nothing; on the contrary, it is our way to do what little we can when we can, regardless of what is to come.

In this, already, there is a justification for traditional studies and for the cultivation of an understanding of tradition as it has found expression in different cultures and different societies. If there is something we can do to preserve for just a little longer the traditional way of life of a tribe or a village, we should do this; but we will only make bad worse if we do it clumsily, without understanding the principles involved.

That however represents a rare opportunity. What do traditional studies offer the citizen, the man or woman concerned with the welfare of their city, their country, their world? The answer, I believe is: a standard of value, a scale of priorities, and an understanding of events that is wider and deeper than that of most of their fellow citizens. Whether or not this understanding results in action is a matter of individual destiny and vocation. If it should happen that we have some influence, however miniscule, upon

the course of events here and now — and this influence is as likely to take the form of speaking or writing as by public action — then we may be called upon to defend the shoddy and the third-rate against still greater evils.

At the beginning of the last War an Irish poet wrote: “We fight for the bad against the worse”; and this line is worth bearing in mind. I suggested in a book I wrote some years ago that there exist three different types of society, and I think the classification has some validity. In the first place, there is the traditional society, with its total, all-embracing way of life, reflecting Totality. Secondly, there is its satanic, inverted image, the totalitarian society as the term is commonly understood; fascist, Marxist, and so on. A society which makes its secular — and, in most cases, atheistic — claims upon every aspect of the citizen’s life and imposes upon him a uniformity far more rigid — and infinitely less merciful — than that of any traditional society. Between these two extremes is what I have called the “neutral” society, irrational in its admixture of good and ill, inequitable in its structure and probably corrupt, lacking the coherence and the strength of the two alternatives, and constantly moved to and fro by the tides of public opinion. It is not very admirable, but it is all that most of us have and it is poised over the abyss of what is incalculably worse. It has one great merit. It leaves men and women free to seek what is better and to teach what is better; it leaves them free to seek what is better and to teach what is better; it leaves them free to love Tradition and to embody traditional values in their own lives. What more could we ask of the modern world than to be left alone to follow our Way?

I have been speaking of contingent things. What of the real? What of your ultimate destiny and mine? It is said: “The Truth shall make you free.” By the mercy of God there are many different approaches to the Truth. For some of us the study of Tradition in the most universal sense, and of traditional art and traditional societies, has been a key to the door which opens onto that infinite landscape. At first one may not even be aware that it is a key. Forty years ago I read Ananda Coomaraswamy’s *Figures of Speech and Figures of Thought*, never suspecting — when I picked the book up — that this would determine the course of my life; Coomaraswamy led to René Guénon, Guénon to Frithjof

Schuon. You never know that you have turned a corner until it is behind you.

I said earlier that the contemplative life, if it is well founded, changes a man — changes a woman — and is reflected in every reaction that the world provokes. Let me add now that the study of traditional societies and of the principles which they reflect can have a similar transforming effect. This is the real reason for such studies; this is their use; this is what matters.

We may be satisfied with the Way provided by our own religion through its teachings, its rites and its symbols, but the study of other traditions will still deepen and illuminate our beliefs. For those who are still seeking a Way it may provide both the impetus and the assurance they need. Our contemporaries devote great energy and more time than they can spare to trivial studies of no use to them in this life and of none when they face death. Here, in this hall, we are concerned with matters which merit the expenditure of our time and our effort, and offer a reward that will not melt away in our hands as do the prizes for which others contend. And if, as a result of such studies and of the understanding gained from them, we can be witnesses to the truth in a world which swarms with illusions, then we have done our part. The rest is in other hands.

Spiritual Personality Types: The Sacred Spectrum

Huston Smith

Characterology, the science of classifying persons according to their dominant personality traits, has been a universal parlor game, but more: in clinical psychology and psychiatry it is regularly used as a diagnostic instrument. In Freudian-based psychoanalysis we find hysterical, obsessive-compulsive, and schizoid types towards which (we are told) even we who like to think of ourselves as normal incline. In Jungian psychology we find the extrovert/introvert dichotomy, to which Jung added his four-fold matrix of thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuitive types. Before these modern classifications the West worked for over two thousand years with what Gordon Allport considered “the longest standing of all (western, we should insert) doctrines of human nature,” the theory dating from Empedocles, Hippocrates, and Galen that links four basic human temperaments (sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric and melancholic) to their respective natural elements (air, water, fire and earth) and bodily humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile):

Right down to today we speak of unemotional persons as phlegmatic, (phlegm-dominated); cheerful, unflappable ones as sanguine (blood-dominated); hot-headed ones as choleric (from the Greek word *khole*, for bile); and sullen, depressed ones as melancholic (from *melas*, black, and *khole*, bile). When Robert Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* proposed that anger-evoking bile derives from the gall bladder, the word “galling” entered the English vocabulary. In our own century William Sheldon shifted the search for somatic sources of temperaments from body fluids to body shapes; psychological differences, he argued,

derive from differences in anatomical proportions. Diagramming these differences as squares, vertical lines, and circles, he marshalled thousands of correlations to argue that persons with stocky, muscular bodies (mesomorphs) tend to be active and extroverted. Those whose frames resemble beanpoles (ectomorphs) tend to introspect and be reflective — “Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look; he thinks too much.” As for roly-polly endomorphs, they tend to be good-natured and cheerful, being, as the saying goes, able neither to fight nor to run.

These typologies are all Western, so to avoid the implication that characterology is a parochial interest we should glance at at least one other civilization, and psychologically disposed India is the logical choice. Her four *yogas* — paths to union with God designed for persons whose temperaments are, respectively, reflective, affective, active, or experimental — are now well-known in the West, but she devised two other sets of classifications that are less so. One of these resembles the Greek theory of the humours in classifying people according to the proportions in which certain qualities or essences (*gunas*) figure in their constitutions, though the Indian scheme works with three such essences instead of the Greeks’ four. *Sattva* is the ascending tendency, *rajas* the expanding, and *tamas* the descending, and in human beings this translates as follows: *sattva* makes for purity, lucidity, and calm, *rajas* for energy and assertiveness, and *tamas* for inertia and ignorance. *Tamas* predominates in inanimate objects — mountains, mud, and the proverbial molasses in January — and, through sluggishness and torpor, disposes living things in their direction as well. *Rajas* inspires action and assault — thunderstorms and persons who, being energetic and explosive, find courage an asset and anger a besetting problem. “*Sattvic*” persons, for their part, are calm and lucid; they see things clearly and are at peace with their worlds. For their counterpart in nature we might think of a pellucid summer’s day where sunlight reigns and no leaf stirs.

In India duty derives from nature, so the theory of the *gunas* contains prescriptions for conduct. What we should do depends on who we are, so each should follow his/her *svādharmā*, literally self-*dharma*, self-nature/duty, and engage in *swākarma*, the self-work that corresponds thereto; “the *dharma* of another is full

of peril,” the *Bhagavad Gītā* warns. The question of whether one should register as a conscientious objector to war, for example, would turn in good part on whether one’s temperament was weighted towards *rajas* or *tamas*. For “*tamastic*” types the decision to sit out a war would probably derive from the wish to do just that; camouflaging under pious pretexts, it would be a rationalization for laziness and fear. “*Rajastic*” persons would not have that problem. As their temptations come from a different quarter — their impulse to impose their wills on the world — promptings towards self-restraint and sensitivity to other would be more likely to be authentic: signals from the “*sattvic*” component in their natures that was working to enlarge its province. The guiding principle throughout is that *tamas* is overcome by *rajas*, and *rajas* by *sattva*.

Supplementing these *yogas* and *gunas*, Hinduism’s third approach to characterology works through the *varnas*. Meaning literally color and therefore suggesting that the classification can be traced back to the Aryan invasion of the land of the dark-skinned Dravidians, the *varnas* form the rationale for the caste system. It would be a digression to go into the caste issue here, but it is no digression at all to note that the *varna* typology can be separated from the societal use for which it was devised and applied to individuals. In a word, it can be deployed psychologically rather than sociologically. If (in keeping with Plato’s point that the children of silver parents cannot be counted on to be silver themselves) we bracket the issue of heredity, we find the *varnas* unfolding a typology that distinguishes persons according to the relative size of the worlds they inhabit. Spatially, “reality” for the *shudra* extends little further than his sense receptors and temporally not much beyond the immediate moment. By contrast the world of the *vaishya* spreads out to embrace spatially his primary community and temporally his entire lifespan; the wellbeing of family and friends makes a difference to him, as does the future — he can deny himself present gratification for the sake of future rewards. The parameters of the *kshatriya*’s world take another outward leap, expanding to include all mankind and its conceivable history — the plight of displaced “boat people” in Southeast Asia can bring him to his feet, as can issues such as environmental protection that affect generations yet unborn —

Karl Marx laboring forty years in the British Museum for a classless society he would never see comes to mind. One might wonder how there could be a larger world than this one which embraces all mankind, but one exists. It breaks through the confines of space and time completely, exchanging the first for infinity and the second for eternity. This, in principle, is the world of the *brahmin* who, in his heart of hearts, believes in neither time nor in matter, both being essentially privative.

I shall return to this psychological reading of the *varnas* for the introduction it provides to the characterology I shall myself propose, but we should notice in passing that our brief excursion into India, while in one sense enlarging the notion of characterology by giving it a cross-cultural cast, in another sense narrows it in our projected direction by shifting the focus from personality types in general — psychological personality types, we might say — to ones that are distinctively spiritual. Virtually everything in traditional India was religiously inspired, and characterology was no exception. “*Sattvic*” types are clearly more spiritually advanced than “*tamistic*” ones — they are “older souls,” as the Native Americans might say — while the *varnas* are stages we all traverse; in our cosmic odyssey we enter the human estate as *shudras* and, making our way up life’s ladder, step off it as *brahmins*.

Traditionally the Western theory of the humours had in common with religion at least its recognition of value gradations — sanguine persons were thought to be best, and melancholic ones worst — but with the emergence of psychology as a secular pursuit the normative, religious dimension of characterology dropped from view. If we define a religious characterology as one in which religious considerations are determinative, its categories having been devised for the express purpose of “cutting where the joints are” in the life of the spirit, we find in modern religious studies only stabs in their direction. We discount here typologies that attribute a psychological cast to collectivities — the characterization of Asian religions as “mystical,” say, or G. van der Leeuw’s designation of Christianity as “the religion of love.” We discount them equally when they introduce a timeline and argue that distinguishable mentalities emerge at the several stages of religion’s presumed evolution; one thinks of Hegel’s contention that at their start

religions are submerged in nature (those of Egypt, Syria, and Persia, he thought, provide examples of this, as do those of India and China right down to modern times); that they advance from there to a recognizably spiritual stature but one that is individualistic (Greek and Roman religions and Judaism); and culminate in a spirituality in which individuals and the community are equally balanced (Christianity). We can marvel at the omission of Islam in this world-historical scheme, as well as at its facile characterization of the religions it does include and the self-serving character of a vision that locates its author's faith at its apex, but the point is the one that has already been made in connection with the *varnas*.

Our study is not occupied with collectivities at all, be they ethnic, geographical, or historical; social psychology, we might say, is not its concern. Its eye is on individuals, whose differences in temperament modern religious studies has not much examined. What a moment ago I referred to as stabs in the direction of such a study can be found in allusions to priestly, prophetic, and mystical types, and in William James' dichotomies, first, between sick and healthy souls, the religion of the former being occupied with sin, guilt, and fear of damnation; and second, between the once-born and the twice-born, with the latter prone to dramatic conversions. But though these distinctions have their obvious uses, they are not full-fledged characterologies, for nowhere are they developed into rounded profiles. Having identified a single important trait, they drop the matter, leaving things at that. Western sallies into religious psychology, and until recently into psychology generally, remind one of China's into science. Time and again China came up with brilliant isolated discoveries, never to go anywhere with them. She felt no urge to identify their underlying principles and extend them into interlocking wholes from which inferences could be drawn.

What, then, are the religious or spiritual personality types we wish in this paper to propose. We can work our way into them as follows:

Anthropologists tell us that no society has been found that does not have two things, science and religion. By science they are obviously not thinking of modern science but simply of some working knowledge of the natural world: a wisdom, distilled from the experience of generations, concerning the season's

cycles, where game can be found, the pace at which food must be rationed against routine drought, and the like. As for religion, it can be taken here to refer to "another world" that is believed somehow to be more fundamental and real than the world of everyday experience.

Beginning with this two-fold division historians go on to point out that its religious half breaks in turn into three distinguishable wave-lengths — three bands of a spectrum, we might say to introduce the image that forms the subtitle of this paper. Viewed sociologically, in terms of their institutional expressions, these begin with folk religion which, though emphatically a group phenomenon, tends to be ad hoc, informal, and fluid, and is associated with what Robert Redfield has called "the little traditions." These lap around the edges of "the great traditions," roughly the great historical religions, which are formally structured in enduring institutions and grounded in sacred, revealed texts. The third category is that of initiatic orders which flow like arteries through the Great Traditions. Sometimes, as in the case of Shankara's order in India, these are fully legitimated, but in other cases their relation to the mainline "churches" that house them is an uneasy one and they must proceed in secret. One thinks of the Sufi orders in certain sectors of Sunni Islam.

When we turn from these external manifestations of religion which social scientists study to the beliefs that animate them, we find that these too fall into three standard categories: polytheism, monotheism, and a mysticism which, without deserting monotheism, is drawn towards its unfathomable, ineffable depths: the Tao that cannot be spoken, Buddhism's *nirvāna* and *Shūnyatā*, Hinduism's *nirguna Brahman* (God without, because beyond, distinguishable qualities), the 'Ein-Sof of Jewish Kabbala, the Godhead of Christianity, and Islam's Allah of the Supreme (and therefore silent) Name. And here we come upon something that is not only interesting but important for our study; namely, the precise way in which this three-fold theological division correlates with the social divisions we first lined up. The Little Traditions, or to use the more familiar designation, folk religion, are polytheistic. The Great Traditions are monotheistic — on its surface Buddhism looks like an exception to this, but on deeper inspection turns out not to be. As for the initiatic orders, their

cal. Being more other-worldly than the other two theologies, mysticism leaves fewer historical markers, exemplifying, we might say, Lao Tzu's point that "one can move so well that a footprint never shows." For mysticism one tends to look to individuals: Taoist sages, Himalayan *Saddhus* who "wander like the lone rhinoceros," or the desert *hanifs* who so impressed Muhammad. But when historical 'deposits' do crystallize, they tend to take the form of religious orders within the Great Traditions that plumb their intellectual depths.

This alignment between theologies and their institutional expressions can be schematized as follows:



As the arrows suggest, causation proceeds from theology to the structures it creates, from revelations to their institutional manifestations — this at least is the assumption. There is, to be sure, an answering flow; the sociology of knowledge gives its sole attention to the way social structures and their dynamisms shape concepts. In a scientific age this empirical etiology tends to get more attention, but the present study eyes the opposite drift. It begins from within. Scanning the deepest recesses of the human soul, it looks for the intuitions that tell actions how to proceed, which actions then, in consequence and aggregate, give rise to institutions. In the case at hand, it assumes that it is more plausible to think of different theological convictions giving rise to correspondingly different religious institutions than to suppose that societies found it functionally advantageous to proliferate diverse institutions which then generated their own theologies.

In any case, a fourth outlook is needed to round out our list. An inventory of religious personality types would not be complete without a place for persons who are not much troubled by religion at all. Man has been characterized as *homo religiosus*, an animal that is religious by nature, but this seems to be true on balance only; at the very least there are exceptions that prove the rule. In traditional societies these may have been few in number — the "village atheist" as crank and odd-ball — but even in tribal

societies there are probably persons who existentially, in practice if not in reasoned theory, live as if the manifest world is all there is; May Douglas tells us that the primitive world houses everything. In our own century, with the founding of the Society for Militant Atheism and the adoption of Dialectical Materialism as the official ideology of the two largest nations on earth, one in size, the other in population, this fourth, "a-spiritual" personality type incarnated itself with a vengeance; it has built bastions for homes. But this is a recent development. For most of human history, atheism, whether reasoned or merely lived, has been a private stance, leaving little in the way of social deposits for historians to take note of.

With the adding of this fourth type our triad becomes this paper's tetrad: the atheist, the polytheist, the monotheist, and the mystic. Already it has become clear that I am advancing this typology as a cross-cultural universal. The proportions of the four types may vary according to time and place, but there is no reason to think that the types themselves do not surface everywhere. At base, the unity of the human race must be taken for granted. Cultures differ importantly, but *au fond* they are alike in being, all of them, more human than otherwise. Regional emphases, such as the previously noted "mystical East," are precisely that; they are emphases — useful in calling attention to variations on common themes, but only if the themes themselves are not forgotten.

Because the universality of our types is an important part of our thesis, making this a human study, not one that is historical or regional only, we should linger over that claim for a moment, and a look at the just-noted posit of a "mystical East" provides a natural starting point for doing so. India has probably been the prime inspiration for that epithet, but on examination what do we find? After conceding that on balance she did make more room for the mystical temperament than did the West, we must immediately corset that admission with qualifiers. No individual Indian is more mystical than Dionysius the Areopagite and Meister Eckhart, and her population as a whole shows mystics to be in the distinct minority. If we confine ourselves to mysticism's tendency to gloss over the God/man distinction, we find *advaitins*, India's non-dual mystics in this respect, far outnumbered by

dualists who guard that distinction jealously. Monotheists like Madhava and Ramanuja have had far more followers than Shankara, while more numerous still have been the masses who know nothing of these philosophers and who function at the level of folk polytheism. Even atheists, though doubtless always in the minority, put in their appearance; Charvaka, the Indian school of materialism, has had a long history. Even the four ends of life that India identified and legitimated — pleasure, worldly success, duty, and liberation — look as if they were cut from the cloth of our tetrad. Hedonism, which takes *kama* or pleasure as its goal, appeals to atheists whose world is essentially the sensible one; as a Charvaka aphorism puts it, “As tomorrow I die, today I shall eat butter.” Polytheists, who take a definite interest in religion but mostly for this-worldly ends, tend to seek *artha* (literally wealth, but more generally success). *Dharma* or duty is important for theists, for though there is not space to argue the point here, ethical concern is a strong correlate of monotheism. There remains *moksha*, or liberation, as the goal of the mystics.

Carrying this spot-check for the four types beyond India and turning first to the West, we find in the Arabic tradition atheists who take Omar Khayyam (in his secular reading) as their spokesperson, while the three explicitly religious types appear in persons who stabilize in the three cardinal Islamic virtues read cumulatively. Those who are polytheistically inclined by virtue of being strongly tempted by gods in the plural, work against that temptation through *islām*, or “surrender” to the legal practices of exoteric Islam. Theists add to those legal requirements *īmān* or faith in an integral monotheism, while mystics interiorize that faith in ways that moves the accent to *ihsan*, the virtue that flows from it. Turning to East Asia and reversing our sequence, we find China housing mystics whose life blood is the “Tao that cannot be spoken;” then theists like Mo Ti and the worshippers of Shang Ti, the Supreme Ancestor; and then polytheists who rally around shamans and, far from revering Lao Tzu as a mystic sage, worship him (right down this day in Taiwan) as an oft-reincarnated personal savior. This leaves the atheists, whom we find exemplified by Realists like Han Fei Tzu and Kuan Tzu who scorned ritual and denied the existence of any law higher than brute force. Back to the West and pushing this time past Islam into Europe,

we find the Neoplatonists subsuming both mystics and theists in the class of pneumatics, but after that its psychics are our polytheists, and its hylics (the *hylikoi*) essentially materialists.

The types seem, then, to span space, but do they also span time? — can we assume that they present us with a pan-historical constant as well as a pan-regional one? The cases just cited suggest that they do, for in addition to being scattered across the entire Eurasian land mass they reach back in time to the early Christian centuries and before. Still, the impact of the biological theory of evolution on the history of religions has been so strong in our century that many still suppose that monotheism grew out of henotheism, which coalesced from polytheism, which in turn evolved from a primitive animism where soul was diffused and pervaded everything. As this would imply that the types too evolve, with polytheism predating monotheism, it is important to point out that since the 1930s the evolutionary view of religion — child of Comte, Spencer, Hegel, and with qualifications Durkheim and Weber — has been in retreat; we now see quite clearly the extent to which it was scripted less by evidence than by a misplaced Darwinism that assumed as a matter of course that human history must mirror natural history.

In the latter part of our century the pendulum has swung away from this view. Lévy-Bruhl's attribution of a distinctive mentality, participation mystique, to early man has given way to the presumption that the human intellect has been fully operative, and in the same fundamental pattern, since human society emerged. Savage and civilized cultures play the same game and play it equally well, Lévi-Strauss tells us. As for religion, obviously there are changes, most noticeably in the development from compact to differentiated symbolization; not only in their idea of God but in many other ways the monotheisms of the Great Traditions involve a much more complex relation to the ultimate conditions of human existence than do primitive religions. But "everything already exists in some sense in the religious symbol system of the most primitive man; it would be hard to find anything later that is not 'foreshadowed' there."¹ To take only the monotheism-from-polytheism claim on which missionaries and evolutionists joined forces a century ago, the most abstract and monistic hymn in the Vedas, the famous "Hymn to

Creation” whose tone can be gathered from these key extracts,

Non-being then existed not nor being...

That One by force of heat came into being...

The gods are later than the world’s creation turns out to be also one of its earliest. From 1912 to 1955 Wilhelm Schmidt published twelve volumes of documentation, his monumental *Ursprung der Gottesidee*, to support his claim that (to relate it to the example just given) that hymn is not an isolated case; behind polytheism everywhere one finds a “High God” representing monotheism in its local mode.²

Our thesis, then, is that the four types constitute a human constant. Their ratios may vary — we shall not go into that; we are not about to become statisticians — but all four types put in their appearance everywhere. This leaves us with the need for only one more move to complete our overview. The types need to be cosmically grounded; that is, linked to the amount of reality that each can comprehend. This linkage carries us back to India’s *varnas*, for that scheme too fixes on size-of-their-worlds as the criterion for classifying people. We recall that those worlds range from a minimal one that scarcely reaches beyond the senses, to one at the opposite end of the spectrum that opens onto the infinite and the eternal. In between lie the world of the primary community on the one hand, and of all humanity on the other.

This final step of anchoring characterology in cosmology — or as we could equally say, in ontology, metaphysics, or their referent, the world; for our purposes these terms are more or less synonymous — is not often taken. But unless it is, typologies must remain provisional. They may usefully tag certain human differences, but unless those differences correspond to differences in the world — indeed, to the world’s most important differences — it seems *a priori* impossible that they could be decisive. For as Buddhism’s *anatta* or no-self doctrine (read: no permanent, individual self) reminds us, no hard and fast line between self and world can be drawn. “I am a part of all that I have met,” Tennyson tells us, and it holds for us all. Subtract what we meet, which is to say the way the world comes to us —

our world — and no self remains.

We can go further. To this first point, that it is not possible to consider the human self in any depth without bringing in its world, we can add that the deeper the analysis probes, the more its accent will fall on the world. For of the three things that are important in life — what a self does (its behavior), what it is (its character), and what it sees (its vision) — it is the last that is the most important, if for no other reason than because it is there, through an altered self-image and estimate, that change can most readily occur. But what one sees by way of self-image is never the self in isolation; invariably it is oneself-within-one's-world. The interdependence of self and world cannot be broken. So though our focal interest here has been in personality types, we find that their analyses must remain superficial unless one brings in the worlds they respectively see.

In the end, therefore, psychology phases into metaphysics and depends on it. This means that for the search here inaugurated to continue, it would next have to take on the “post-Nietzschean deconstruction of metaphysics” — the argument, initiated by Nietzsche, “the man with the hammer,” and continued in their diverse ways by Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Deconstructionists, which charges that the metaphysical enterprise is a mistake; attempts to understand reality metaphysically, far from promising help, are part of our problem. This argument, so influential in our century, needs to be carefully considered and, I would think, rejected, but justice cannot be done it in a page or two at a paper's close. It must be postponed — tabled as theme for another voice, or song for another day.

NOTES

1. Robert Bellah, “Religious Evolution,” in his *Beyond Belief* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 21.
2. Schmidt's “everywhere” seems to be too strong; there appear to be exceptions. I think of the Sunday evening in 1961 when, in Sydney, Australia, I sought out a Catholic priest to learn what he had found in his research on an aboriginal tribe in the region. “I feel very sad this evening,” he began. “In preparation for your coming I went over my twelve years of field notes this afternoon, and Schmidt was wrong. Nowhere do I find evidence of a High God in the thinking of these people.” So Schmidt's claim faces

exceptions, but they seem to be ones that prove the rule. To cite but a single example of the typical pattern, "the Supreme Being, Nyame, the creator, the sky-god, the inexhaustible giver of help" of the Akan, a tribe in West Africa, is indigenous; "Ellis was mistaken in 1887 when he claimed that the Akan acquired a belief in Nyame from Christians or Muslims." As for multiple deities, "the Akan think of these *abosom* as intermediaries, messengers, between themselves and Nyame" (Christopher Vecsey, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, XII 3 (1931), pp. 163-64).

The Zodiac of the Soul

Observations on the differences
between traditional
and empirical psychology

Whitall N. Perry

Madness has always existed, but it has taken the modern world to make a cult out of aberrations. Contemporary culture has created a lot of sick thought, and then it has created a science to deal with this sickness. The difference between former times and now is that people used to know the distinction between sanity and madness; they still do of course, only the definitions have been blurred to the detriment of the former. What this means is that a science of psychology has been developed with multiple proficiencies for dealing with symptoms; what is missing is a discipline to deal with the causes.

In “normal times,” man was good, bad, indifferent, angelic, wicked, but always concrete and “all there”; it has taken “our times” to create a society where everything has been relativized, subjectivized, and rendered all shades of gray — and pink. As an extreme example, compare a Homer with a Proust, or, in purely worldly terms, a Michelangelo with a Picasso. One cannot imagine a St. Teresa of Avila, or for that matter a King Henry VIII — let alone a Crazy Horse — on the psychoanalyst’s couch!

The loss of religion as Center in the world has left a hole which psychology is trying to fill. One can have no bone of contention with that perdurable psychology which is neither ancient nor modern but merely therapeutic, being as it is a branch of medicine that handles with varying expertise the kinds of psychic disorders that are always cropping up in society. The mischief starts where psychology invades that portion of the soul which belongs to divinity and works consciously or unconsciously to discountenance the sacred and render it to all appearances nugatory, sterile, or void. This ultimately results in what

Frithjof Schuon calls “the psychological imposture,”¹ which concerns mainly those procedures inaugurated with differing emphasis by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. It may be argued however that the latter of these two, the Swiss practitioner, unlike his Austrian counterpart, devoted a major portion of his research to collating and validating phenomena from the sphere of religion, particularly as regards archetypes. But the evidence of his witness proclaims a murky vision, as though everything pertaining to dreams, myths, symbols, and archetypes was viewed in an inverted fashion through distorting mirrors. Archetypes are in reality crystalline essences and not their discarnate subaqueous gleamings as phantasmagoria peopling the sea of the subconscious psyche.

But how does one define a traditional psychology? The psychologists themselves are not of much help here, since they apprise us in their Darwinian manner that the idea of soul as an entity distinct from the body and capable of independent existence only arose around the fifth century B.C. with the Greeks.² It is apparently of no significance to them that the remains left by earliest man are almost invariably funerary, with ritual objects oriented in view of some kind of a future life.³ Man, then, by the pre-Christian era would have evolved a consciousness distinguished by its faculty for objectification: he could now posit the existence of a power outside of the body that governed human conduct. This perspective according to the psychologists was to prevail — with Platonic, Peripatetic, and Augustinian overtones — into the Renaissance, at which period the emergence of more sophisticated critical faculties would gradually enable the post-Renaissance psychologists to dispense with the supernatural artifice of a soul in favor of mechanistic explanations for human and animal comportment. Put succinctly, this construction would have us understand that early man was too dumb, and later man too smart, to believe in an immortal soul. By this appraisal Medieval man comes out sophomoric, as would befit the “Dark Ages.”



Traditional psychology — the term itself is a misnomer, since

the concept of psychology as a scientific discipline for the study of mental phenomena in the sense used today did not take root before the eighteenth century; using this expression, then, with all due reservations — traditional psychology can be said to begin with the crucial distinction, so often insisted on by René Guénon, between the psychic and spiritual domains. This is a differentiation known to all the great world cultures save our present one, and concerns the contrast between the plane of the subtle modalities of formal manifestation and the supraformal or archetypal plane wherein are situated the Intelligences and Powers — namely, the immutable prototypes that lend their essences to the world of appearances and becoming. Their spiritual fountainhead in turn is Pure Being and the Nonmanifested. The distinction here in relation to man is that between soul and spirit, *psyche* and *Nous*, the “two minds” expounded by Plato. According to Hermes, “God compacted (man) of ... two substances, the one divine, the other mortal” (*Hermetica*, Ascl. III.22b), and all the basic religions are unanimous in teaching that man’s ultimate purpose on earth is to distinguish between the divine and the mortal, and to concentrate his energies on the divine — a point constantly brought home in the works of Frithjof Schuon.

While “the application of both the empirical and the metaphysical psychologies is to a salvation,” in the words of Ananda Coomaraswamy, “the health envisaged by the empirical psychotherapy is a freedom from particular pathological conditions; that envisaged by the other” — which he says is really a pneumatology — “is a freedom from all conditions and predicaments, a freedom from the infection of mortality.” And what he means here can best be understood in the statement of the fifth century B.C. Greek Pythagorean philosopher, Philolaus: “The ancient theologians and priests testify that the soul is conjoined to the body through a certain punishment, and that it is buried in this body as in a sepulchre.” (Clement of Alexandria: *Stromat.* lib.3, p.413). “Furthermore,” continues Coomaraswamy, “the pursuit of the greater freedom necessarily involves the attainment of the lesser; psychophysical health being a manifestation and consequence of spiritual wellbeing (*Svetasvatara Upanishad*, II.12,13). So whereas the empirical science is only concerned with the man himself ‘in search of a soul’ (Jung’s expression), the metaphysical science

is concerned with this self's immortal Self, the Soul of the soul."⁴

Regarding those therapies "in search of a soul," a contemporary scholar in this field has remarked: "Quantity has become quality. The answer to all questions of 'what for?' is 'more'"; and he observes that "religion is where therapy leads when it takes on hope."⁵ According to Titus Burckhardt, the reason for the insufficiency in modern psychotherapy is that "the psychic cannot be treated by means of the psychic... By its own specific nature, (the psyche) is essentially unstable and deceptive, so that it can be cured only by resorting to something situated 'outside' and 'above it.'"⁶

Burckhardt states that "traditional psychology has ... one impersonal and 'static' dimension, namely cosmology, and another personal and 'operative' dimension, namely morality, or the science of the virtues, and this is necessarily the case because the genuine knowledge of the soul results from the knowledge of oneself."⁷

On the role of self-knowledge pertaining to traditional psychology, Schuon writes:

"What is called "examination of conscience" or, by the Muslims, "the science of humours" (*'ilm al-khawātir*), or "investigation" (*vichara*) by the Hindus — with a rather different slant in each case — is no less than an objective analysis of the nearer and more distant causes of those of our actions and reactions which we repeat automatically without knowing their real motives, or without discerning the real character of those motives. Man sometimes commits habitually, and blindly, the same errors in the same circumstances, and he does so because he carries within himself, in his subconscious, errors founded on conceit or traumas. If he is to be healed, man must detect these complexes and translate them into clear formulae; he must therefore become conscious of subconscious errors and neutralize them by means of contrary affirmations; if he succeeds, his virtues will be that much more lucid. It is in this sense that Lao Tsu said: 'To feel an illness is to have it no longer'; and the Law of Manu says: 'There is no lustral water to compare with knowledge,' that is to say, with objectivation by the intelligence."⁸

Plato is the source for much of the traditional psychology in

the West, with the emphasis on virtues that is found throughout his works, and the special stress on mnemonics. We must “remember” what has been dismembered in our habitual amnesia, “re-collect” from our dispersion into multiplicity, be “re-minded” or renewed in single-mindedness where we have hitherto been mindless. Another source is Aristotle’s *De Anima*, which defines the nature of the soul, delineating its faculties, powers, and functions. And in the Christian sphere St. Augustine’s *Confessions* has served as a model of introspective thought.

Later come the European mystics, with the Spaniards in particular elaborating on various categories of virtues. Their classifications are even surpassed in the Islamic world by the Sufic masters, whose meticulous tabulations of “stages” or “stations” (*maqāmāt*) and “states” (*ahwāl*) can become almost quantitative unless understood in a functionally opportune and symbolic perspective. It is these excesses that are aimed at in antinomian works like the *Mahasin al-majālis* of the Andalusian Sufi Ibn al-‘Arīf— who feigns to depreciate the “common run” of virtues in order the better to bring out the real spiritual essences behind these virtues, and the *Ruba‘iyyat* of Omar Khayyam, who teaches through moral and metaphysical paradox.

In the Hindu world the disciplines of Yoga deal with the interrelationship between the psychic and physical personality; and while the regimen of the *kundalinī* is not for everybody, it does demonstrate the extraordinary scientific penetration of the hierarchy of subtle centers realized by the Indians.

Buddhism emphasizes the importance of Awareness or Mindfulness, thus being a teaching on mnemonics in an Oriental idiom. And to cite an instance from China, the Confucian philosopher Mencius — contemporary with Plato — highlights the virtues throughout his works, not overlooking the importance of Recollection: “The object of learning is nothing else but to seek for the lost mind.”⁹

But returning to the statement of Burckhardt above, on the two dimensions of traditional psychology, nothing has yet been said about the “static” dimension, namely cosmology; and it certainly befits a forum addressing traditional cosmologies to examine a science that has been a mainstay for millenia in civilizations as diverse as the Egyptian, Babylonian, Orphic, Judean, Scandi-

navian, Persian, Indian, Chinese, Tibetan, the ancient American cultures both North and South, and the Islamic world, without this being exhaustive.¹⁰ The science in question is astrology, which until recent times was inseparable from astronomy. Probably no ancient body of knowledge, apart from its derivative, alchemy, is as little understood today as zodiacal cosmology, or understood only in a pseudo or occultist manner that simply invites the derision of the scientific community. Yet it is fatuous to imagine that astrologers were an international consortium of dunderheads transmitting stupidities down millenia; human nature and history do not work out that way.

The word Zodiac comes from the Greek, meaning literally circle of carved (animal) figures, and derives from the root words *zoe* = life, and *kuklos* = circle, wheel; hence the basic idea of Wheel of Life. This makes the word analogically akin — although at a very different level — to the Sanskrit *samsāra* (trans-migration) or Round of Existence. The actual Sanskrit term for Zodiac is *rasi-chakra* (constellation wheel).

The twelve constellations from which the divisions of the solar ecliptic receive their names are traditionally taken to represent the fundamental and immutable archetypal Essences or Powers determining the modifications of sublunary life. Due to the precession of the equinoxes, with the vernal equinox — Aries in the northern latitudes and Libra in the southern — as point of departure, the sidereal and the equinoctial Zodiacs are out of alignment by a margin nearing two signs, thus now positioning the boreal hemisphere on the verge of Aquarius, and the austral hemisphere at the threshold of the Lion. This does not invalidate the workings of astrology, but it adds an element of complexity and disorder in keeping with the advanced decline our world cycle of manifestation is passing through. Considering that the equinoctial displacement is at the pace of about one sign every 2,160 years, this would make the stellar and equinoctial Zodiacs coincident some 4,000 years ago; and it is logical to suppose that the astrological system that has come down to us dates from somewhere in the second millennium B.C., particularly as the current names of the constellations originate from Euphratean sources of the period. Moreover, if one traces back the skies much further in time, all rapports alter, with Draconis as the Pole

Star, for example, in 3,000 B.C., or Vega in that position in 13,000 B.C. Notwithstanding, the Chaldeans on the affirmation of Proclus, Cicero, and Diodorus Siculus kept star records comprehending the space of 370,000 to 473,000 years.¹¹

Against the static background of the Zodiac determined by the solar year there is the unceasing flux of planetary movement. The planets incorporate in their prototypal natures the contrasting coordinates basic to existence: Saturn being contraction, Jupiter expansion, Mars force or energy, Venus attraction, and Mercury discernment and differentiation. The Sun in this context is synthesis, totality, or center (spirit), and the Moon plasticity and receptivity (soul).

Astrologers are commonly thought to believe that the luminaries influence events on earth. No one of course will challenge the indispensable role of the Sun for maintaining life; although with a mentality matching that which they assign to "primitive man," modern people regard the Sun as nothing but a "ball of fire," in the same way that the Sun's microcosmic counterpart — the heart — while seen as equally necessary for sustaining life, is nevertheless limited in their eyes to just a "pump." A dead letter for them are the words of Proclus, who maintains: "The wholeness of the Sun is in the supermundane order. For there a solar world and a total light subsist, as the *Oracles of the Chaldeans* affirm." (*Tim.* p.264).

The Moon observably regulates the tides. And many people close to the soil but not yet exposed to modern techniques of agriculture still sow and reap by lunar phases. The other planets, however, for the majority of mankind, could just as well not be in the sky at all. But Hermes was not merely waxing poetic when he said:

"There are seven wandering stars which circle at the threshold of Olympus, and among them ever revolves unending Time.... To those same stars is assigned the race of men; and we have in us Moon, Zeus (Jupiter), Ares (Mars), the Lady of Paphos (Venus), Kronos (Saturn), Sun, and Hermes (Mercury). Wherefore it is our lot to draw in from the ethereal life-breath tears, laughter, wrath, birth, speech, sleep, desire. Tears are Kronos; birth is Zeus; speech is Hermes; anger is Ares; the Moon is sleep; Aphrodite is desire; and the Sun is laughter, for by reason

of his radiance laugh all mortal minds, and the boundless universe." (*Hermetica*, Exc.XXIX).

In the words of Marcelle Senard, "Orphic theology interpreted the mythological deities as being so many elements of the cosmic energy.... From the origins of mythology down to our days, the stars, gods, matter, energy, and consciousness are seen as having a close rapport, being expressions of a same principle.... Mythology, which is so little understood in our time, can be dissociated neither from symbolism, nor from astrology, nor from psychology. These parallel sciences complete one another as means for interpreting cosmic Laws and the relationship of forms that are continually changing through the transformative power of the creative Energy."¹²

This relationship exists because, to quote Plotinus, "the universe is one living organism." (*En*.III.ii.7). These denizens of Olympus are fixed and everlasting Exemplars, what in Islamic mystical theology are termed the Names of God — His Qualities or Attributes (*al-sifāt*). It is the interplay of their juxtapositions provoked by the revolutions of the cosmos that gives rise to the dramas of mythology, the tensions, wars, loves, and strifes between these entities, reverberating on the worlds over which they preside. Only when the Wheel ceases turning, in the "night of the gods" — the Hindu *pralaya* — does all subside into the indifferentiation of the Nonmanifested.

In the Vedic pantheon, Aditi is the supporter of the sky, and her children, the Adityas, represent the twelve signs of the Zodiac. According to the German Sanskritist, Rudolph von Roth, "They are neither the sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor dawn, but the eternal sustainers of this luminous life, which exists, as it were, behind these phenomena."¹³ The Egyptian skygoddess Nut, whom the Greeks identify with Rhea, holds manifestly the same function as Aditi, and is depicted with an elongated star-spangled body forming the arch of the heavens. On the temple ceiling at Dendera is an oblong Zodiac spanned by the outstretched form of Nut in two figures hemispherically counterpoised.

To come back to the matter of influences: so essential is the lunar aspect to creation, says Paracelsus, that even were the physical moon conceivably absent from the sky, the lunar qualities would still have their effect and play their apportioned part in the

zodiacal rotation of cosmic energies. Times, tides, and seasons work their effects inexorably, whether observed or ignored, and willy-nilly every creature bears the signature of his nativity from his birth onwards. "In the Soul is the spiritual circle or Zodiac, wherein is fulfilled what the twelve signs represent in the natural Zodiacal system of the Universe or Macrocosm," writes John Ward.¹⁴ Moreover, it should not be supposed that a being receives from the sky the aspects that happen to prevail at the moment he enters the world, as if delaying or advancing the hour could in any way alter his horoscope, when the case is just the inverse: it is the cosmic instant that calls into being the individual whose destiny corresponds to that particular configuration.



The mandate for zodiacal psychology originates with the Delphian inscription: *gnothi seauton*/"Know thyself." The self in question is twofold, partite and impartite, mortal and immortal, following the universal doctrine of the two selves in man — *duo sunt in homine* — made by Coomaraswamy the cornerstone of his exegesis. The passible self, spelled with a small "s," is equatable with the soul, the Greek *psyche*, Hindu *jiva*, and *nafs* in Islam; whereas the impassible Self, with a large "S," stands for the Spirit, *Nous*, *Ātman*, *Rūh*.

Self-mastery is the way to Self-knowledge, in keeping with St. Augustine's: "Man must first be restored to himself, that, making in himself as it were a stepping-stone, he may rise thence and be borne up to God." (*Retract.*I,viii,3). In casting a horoscope, an astrologer who is qualified for his task can determine what are the fixed and what are the mutable possibilities of the native, and inform him accordingly. There is nothing "fatalistic" about the stellar portrait beyond what is merely realistic; free will holds sway in those areas open to personal initiative. But no one, for example, can change his race, or his ancestry, or his moment in time, or in astrological terms become a Virgoan or a Sagittarian if he has the Sun, say, in Leo, with Taurus for Ascendant. And even so, given a person's essential centrality as a human being, he contains potentially all of the zodiacal possibilities within himself, just as he contains all of the races within himself, and all

of time. But this does not alter the fact that a Gemini is not a Capricorn.

What the accomplished astrologer can do, if he has an understanding of human nature and a gift for psychology, is to show the native his basic predispositions, the inborn strengths and the weaknesses, the potentialities to be developed and the liabilities to be dominated. Each horoscope is in the pattern of a maze: no two are alike, and there is not one without its egress, if once the proper clues can be found and followed. In traditional terms the ultimate goal to be obtained is that of spiritual liberation, which is both an escape in a vertical sense from the horizontal shackles of the horoscope in its aspect of fatality, and eventually a deliverance from the cosmic Round of Existence itself. All of this presupposes commitment to an accepted religion — an aviso that would have been superfluous in earlier times.

On the distinction between Necessity and Liberty with respect to the stars, Iamblichus (d.c. 330 A.D.), a disciple of Porphyry and the chief representative of Graeco-Syrian Neoplatonism, has this to say in his exposition of Egyptian Hermaic conceptions:

“Man, as these writings say, has two souls. And one, indeed, is derived from the first intelligible, and participates in the power of the Demiurgus; but the other is imparted from the circulation of the celestial bodies, to which the soul that sees God returns. These things, therefore, thus subsisting, the soul that descends to us from the worlds follows the periods of the worlds; but that which is intelligibly present from the intelligible, transcends the genesiurgic motion, and through this a liberation from fate, and the ascent to the intelligible Gods, are effected....

For the Gods, indeed, dissolve fate; but the last natures which proceed from them, and are complicated with the generation of the world and with body, give completion to fate. Hence we very properly worship the Gods with all possible sanctity, and the observance of all religious rites, in order that they may liberate us from the evils impending from fate, as they alone rule over necessity through intellectual persuasion....

For when the more excellent parts of us energize, and the soul is elevated to natures better than itself, then it is entirely separated from things which detain it in generation,... and gives itself to another order of things.”¹⁵

Iamblichus defends the legitimacy of astrology or “the genethliological science,” as he terms it, in declaring: “For whether these arts are known or are incomprehensible, yet, at the same time, the efflux from the stars distributes to us the (gene-siurgic) daemon, whether we know it or not.... Moreover, the observations of the celestial bodies through the whole of time, both by the Chaldeans and by us, testify that this science is true.”¹⁶

On a more outward and immediate plane, what is called Natal, Characterological, or Genethliac Astrology can aid a person towards a better understanding of himself and help an individual to acquire within his limits those attitudes and dispositions which best harmonize with his social environment. There is nothing rigid here: an astrologer has no means of foretelling the ways in which the character potentialities of a given subject will play themselves out, any more than he is able to foresee on what level the configurations in the horoscope will materialize; two roughly identical charts can produce widely divergent consequences, depending on the rectitude or infirmities inherent in the native, his fineness or grossness of stamp. What in both charts might indicate, among other things, a marked predisposition to sensuality, could in the one case exhaust itself in a life abandoned to licentiousness, while in the other be sublimated into creative genius of a high order.

It should also be emphasized that the accent in Natal Astrology is on psychology, in contrast to the purely divinatory kind, termed Judicial, or Mundane, Astrology, the latter having received a bad name for itself down the centuries through its striving for prescience in the matter of personal and political destinies. When the gods revealed to the ancients certain cosmic principles, they kept to themselves the part concerning prophecy, and no one may with impunity pry into the future. Even scriptural prophecies can only be situated correctly in the light of their occurrence. This does not exclude the possibility for astrology

and related sciences to predict with a fair measure of accuracy approaching circumstances, tendencies, and patterns in the lives of individuals and nations. It is the moment they presume to pinpoint specifics that the power of suggestion becomes an evil star to objectivity, producing situations that can leave anticipation confounded. Through half-truths the witches were able to seduce Macbeth into false interpretations, with the outcome wholesale carnage. Banquo's premonitions are pertinent here:

"And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
In deepest consequence."

The division of the Zodiac the Sun is passing through at the time of birth is called a person's Sun sign, whereas his Ascendant is the zodiacal degree rising above the eastern horizon at that moment. In a general way the former denotes the static essence in a person's constitution, while the latter represents the more dynamic aspects of his character. The first, then, is the more specifically spiritual configuration, and the second the more individual, in keeping with the concept of man's dual nature. Taking these two factors as the point of departure, the astrologer thereupon has to weigh in the rest: the planets and their Aspects (conjunction, sextile, square, trine, opposition, etc.), the twelve Houses (such as Childhood, Fortune, Travels, Health, Marriage, Friends, etc.), the Elements (Fire, Earth, Air, and Water), the Cardinal, Fixed, and Mutable Qualities, the Polarities (Male and Female, Active and Passive), Transits, Cusps, Decanates, and so forth.

The zodiacal Year commences with the vernal equinox, the sign of Aries, and progresses through the seasons, terminating with Pisces, the last winter sign. Viewed temporally, the cycle recapitulates a chronological pattern going from germination, through birth, maturation, aging, death, and resurrection. Each sign also represents a portion of the human body, starting with the head and ending with the feet — a factor determinative in medical astrology. It is from astrology likewise that the ancient and Medieval theory of the humors — sanguine, phlegmatic,

melancholic, and choleric — is derived.

Because of its interest for psychology, the following breakdown is given in barest synopsis of each sign's characteristic qualities. The signs called Cardinal are equinoctial or solstitial, introducing the seasons; their nature is dynamic, opening a new phase. Then come the Fixed signs (midseason) which expand and concretize the elements of the preceding sign. Lastly come the Mutable signs, closing a seasonal phase and preparing a mutation. All of the signs are fundamentally positive: superior people will manifest the essential qualities, average people the typical qualities, and inferior people what a sign contains in the way of potential for abuse. Morphology is entirely omitted on account of its many complex ramifications. Also, bodily correspondences are listed summarily: to say for example that Taurus governs the neck and throat means by extension the palate, larynx, tonsils, lower jaw, ears, occipital region, thyroid, cerebellum, cervical vertebrae, carotid arteries, and jugular veins.

Here, then, are the basic realities which subsist principally when all other horoscopolical elements are abstracted:

Aries (21 March-20 April. Ruling planet: Mars. Cardinal sign.

Element: Fire. Governs head and brain).

Archetype: Impulsion. Cyclical point: Seed. Resurgence of spring Sun. Rupture of equilibrium. Incandescent vitality. Impulsiveness. Martian aggressivity. A headstrong, choleric temperament with a pioneer spirit. Initiative and spontaneity.

Taurus (21 April-20 May. Ruling planet: Venus. Fixed sign. Element: Earth. Governs neck and throat).

Archetype: Substantiation; Cyclical point: Egg. Vegetation and fecundity. Earthiness and materiality; stability; obstinacy. A Venusian musicality and sensuality; can be egocentric with gross appetites. Bovine, plodding perseverant, dense. A psychic "ruminant," type melancholic. Also Dionysiac, instinctive, and volcanic.

Gemini (21 May-20 June. Ruling planet: Mercury. Mutable sign.

Element: Air. Governs lungs, arms, hands, nerves).

Archetype: Differentiation. Cyclical point: Mitosis. Leafing and

branching. Duality — interaction — versatility — polarization. A Mercurial temperament — clever, mobile, light, unstable, melancholic or sanguine depending on type. Adaptable, inventive, mutable, but easily fantastic. Intellectual brilliance, but elusive, contradictory, or visionary.

Cancer (21 June-22 July. Ruling planet: Moon. Cardinal sign. Element: Water. Governs breast and stomach).

Archetype: Reception. Cyclical point: Womb. Here we have conception, gestation, maternity, with fruit and grains forming. A Lunar and watery sign, emotional, sensitive, melancholic, romantic, tenacious, and covetous. Reserved and introverted, combining subconscious activity with mediumistic tendencies, irrationality with inspiration. A crepuscular possibility, seeking refuge like a crab in its shell.

Leo (23 July-22 August. Ruling planet: Sun. Fixed sign. Element: Fire. Governs heart and back).

Archetype: Individuation. Cyclical point: Birth. The season brings maturity of vegetation, plenitude. There is a Solar affirmation of self, of independence. A choleric and passionate disposition, leaning to generosity, honor, authority, spiritual grandeur, but also to egoism, pride, disdain, arrogance. Can be domineering, boastful, haughty, imperious.

Virgo (23 August-22 September. Ruling planet: Mercury. Mutable sign. Element: Earth. Governs bowels).

Archetype: Assimilation. Cyclical point: Maturity. Zodiacal nadir. The time of ripening fruit, reaping, harvesting. Mercury figures here in analysis, discrimination, reason, and logic. Great mental capacity. The native — a melancholic — shuns instinctual reflexes. Is disciplined, measured, conservative, tidy, diplomatic, methodical, practical. Can also be reserved, vacillating, pedantic, mediocre, critical. A flair — even mania — for classification, encyclopaedic detail and minutiae. Capable of hypocritical prudery.

Libra (23 September-22 October. Ruling planet: Venus. Cardinal sign. Element: Air. Governs veins and kidneys).

Archetype: Equilibrium. Cyclical point: Ripeness. Falling fruits, detachment, a balance between the outer and inner, the melancholic and the sanguine. Characteristics are moderation, poise, adaptability, harmony, delicacy, intuition, idealism, generosity, courtesy; Venus shows up in the arts and justice. The detrimen-

tal side manifests in vacillation, indecision, weakness of will, effeminacy, opportunism, excessive curiosity, and hypercriticism.

Scorpio (23 October-21 November. Ruling planet: Mars, secondarily Pluto. Fixed sign. Element: Water. Governs sexual parts).

Archetype: Transformation. Cyclical point: Dissolution. Fallen leaves and fruit. Decomposition — fermentation — putrefaction. Aggressivity. Eroticism — love — death — metamorphosis. This is the realm of Pluto, the infernal regions, the Descent into Hell, but the Scorpion can rise as the Phoenix, or become an Eagle. *Solve et coagula*. A choleric type alternating between impulsion/inhibition. Ruthlessness, regeneration, penetration. Tenacity, secretiveness. Powerful, magnetic, unfathomable, subtle, and resourceful. Intense and exacting. Susceptible, sarcastic, suspicious, given to crises.

Sagittarius (22 November-20 December. Ruling planet: Jupiter. Mutable sign. Element: Fire. Governs thighs and hips).

Archetype: Sublimation. Cyclical point: Unification. Season of hunting, taking possession, dominating animal nature. An ascending, transindividual sign, with the sublimation of energies, recollection, and fusion. A sanguine, Jovial nature, bountiful, expansive, social, honorable, open and optimistic. With feet on earth and head in sky, the perfect arbitrator. But tends to conventionality or overindependence, hypocrisy, hollow ceremony, material ambition. intolerance. Can be too assertive and outspoken.

Capricorn (21 December-19 January. Ruling planet: Saturn. Cardinal sign. Element: Earth. Governs knees).

Archetype: Crystallization. Cyclical point: Hibernation. Life hidden in frozen winter silence, with seed buried for future germination. Cold, Saturnine, grave, taciturn, austere, pessimistic, melancholic, introverted. Marked immobility, sobriety, impassibility, impartiality, perseverance. Dry, solitary, self-effacing, ascetic, apathetic, calculating, miserly, rigid. Has fixity combined with persistent obstinacy for ascension. Can be orderly, reserved, ambitious, or sacrificial.

Aquarius (20 January-18 February. Ruling planet: Saturn, secondarily Uranus. Fixed sign. Element: Air. Governs legs and ankles).

Archetype: Radiation. Cyclical point: Rebirth. Assimilation of grain in earth. Selflessness, collaboration, amity, detachment, fluid-

ity. Phlegmatic type — a sign that is light, ethereal, volatile, transparent, limpid, angelic, altruistic, independent, inventive, also aloof. Idealistic and futuristic, with a Uranian capacity for strangeness and eccentricity. Marked originality. Can be nonchalant, dreamy, erratic, skeptical, or mystical.

Pisces (19 February-20 March. Ruling planet: Jupiter, secondarily Neptune. Mutable sign. Element: Water. Governs feet). Archetype: Synthesis. Cyclical point: Involution/Evolution (represented by two fish contraposed). Zodiacal zenith. This is the watery realm of Neptune: humidity — thaw — flood. A sign of solution, fecundity, virtuality, limitlessness, unseizability, irrationality and suprarationality. There is a psychic plasticity, malleability, vulnerability, nebulousness, and irresolution. Can be clairvoyant, generous, unstable, incoherent, emotional, sensitive, compassionate, impressionable, mediumistic, dissipated, or charitable, depending on type. A melancholic with vivid imagination and strong leaning to inwardness, but may be indecisive, vacillating, morbid, or confused.¹⁷

There, then, in varying equations, is the opportunity as likewise the challenge confronting each soul coming into the world. In other words, man born with free will has a tremendous birthright, and a tremendous responsibility.

People today are every whit as fascinated with the skies as were their pagan ancestors; the difference is in their approaches. Formerly, the intention was that of participation in a known Reality extending from the highest dimensions of Being down to the physical universe; now the idea is to try to find with the aid of the telescope and other means where life began, and to get on with the exploration of outer space. To phrase it differently, perspectives have descended from the suprarational to the rational level, and are fast dropping towards the infrarational in the obsession with everything from unidentified flying objects, to fantasies of creatures on neighboring galaxies beaming messages of cosmic solidarity.

Savants come up with any number of measurements to discover that the builders of Stonehenge or Machu Picchu's Torreon or the Bighorn Medicine Wheel in Wyoming, despite their "primitive" mentality, somehow had an uncanny fix on the solsticial

points, whereas any child with a view of the horizon and some luck with the sun can easily line up the solstices — one every six months. Yet the only way in which these ancient stone monuments can begin to be understood is in terms of zodiacal configurations, and the rituals connected therewith. The purpose of the worshippers at these sites, moreover, was not to “adore” and “propitiate” the powers of the sky as such, but to put themselves into a liturgical receptivity and “functional reciprocity” with them.

Another idea, smugly promulgated around Christmastide nowadays, would have it that the Star of Bethlehem was very possibly an extraordinarily bright stellar-and-planetary conjunction: a notion that violates all logic, if only for the simple reason that the Magi — who after all were “Wise Men” — reputedly came from the East, renowned for its astronomy, and would have known of the conjunction in advance. But even imagining the contrary, the gradual disaggregation of the stars on the following evenings would have shamed them into silence. The foregoing, moreover, disregards the fact that the star stood still above its destination.

In his writings on the symbolism of world centers, Guénon devotes an article, “La Terre du Soleil” (“The Land of the Sun”),¹⁸ to traces indicating a prehistoric Zodiac at Glastonbury, Somerset, being a circular conformation of giant mounds combined with natural topography, and of which the stellar positions if exact would indicate an origin of some three thousand years B.C. According to local traditions, the pre-Reformation monks of Glastonbury conserved the site intact through a knowledge inherited from their predecessors of its significance as a sacred center, adumbrating among other things the Arthurian Round Table with its twelve chief knights, this location being where Joseph of Arimathea reputedly founded a monastery upon his coming to Britain with the Holy Grail. Guénon points out that the sign of the Balance appears to be missing at Glastonbury (what replaced it is not mentioned), which he says could be explained by the fact that this sign was originally not Zodiacal but Polar, the Great Bear and the Little Bear representing the plates of the Balance in the constellation Draco, which confirms what was said earlier in this article about Draconis being the Pole Star 5,000 years ago. The Chinese called this configuration the Balance of Jade; in

Sanskrit, moreover, the word for balance is *tula*, linguistically cognate with the hyperborean Thule. The celestial axis at the time of the “stellar temple” under consideration was pictured as a serpent’s head or dragon, which relates to the Celtic conception of Uther Pendragon, the father of King Arthur. The name Arthur itself in Celtic is *arto*, bear, from the Greek *arktos* (bear, Arctic, North, or North Pole). Arthur would therefore because of this axial centrality be equatable with the Logos.

That this septentrional symbolism has a shamanistic connection is attested to by the Greek traveler Aristeas Proconnesus, who journeyed into Scythian territory in the seventh century B.C., where he met nomads from the fringes of Central Asia telling of a race corresponding to the mythical Hyperboreans, a happy, virtuous, and peaceful people with Apollo as their god.¹⁹ This name in Celtic becomes Ablun, Belen, or Avalon, by which latter designation Glastonbury or the whole of Somerset was sometimes known.

The primordial connotations of all this fall better into perspective in the light of rituals performed for millenia by the Emperor of China — Son of Heaven — to maintain an equilibrium between Heaven (*yang*) and Earth (*yin*). Lin Yutang gives us the following account: “There is no more august ceremony of worship than the worship of Heaven. This privilege was reserved for the emperor alone. In it he acted as High Priest and Intercessor for his people.... It is neither Confucian, nor Taoist, nor Buddhist, but antedates all of them. The worship of a monotheistic god, Shangti (Supreme Ruler) goes back to the early beginnings of Chinese history.... The ceremonies of the worship of Heaven were not interrupted for four thousand years.... Heaven is the only God before whom the emperor bends his knee (outside his ancestors) and ... this is the only time when he faces north to worship instead of facing south to receive worship.”²⁰ It is recorded in the *Analects* that Confucius investigated unsuccessfully the origin of these rites, claiming that if he but knew their ancient forms, “it would be as easy to govern the world as to turn the palm of one’s hand.” When the imperial city of Peking was built, these rituals were continued in the Temple of Heaven (dating from 1420), which is constructed along the lines of a huge Zodiac. Again citing Lin Yutang:

“Tradition and astrology influenced the conception of an imperial city. In the city of (Peking) today one can see in the south the Temple of Heaven, on the north the Altar of the Earth; just outside the east gate is the Altar of the Sun, and just outside the west gate is the Terrace of the Moon. In the centre is the Polar Forbidden City (Chyincheng is often mistranslated as “Purple Forbidden City”), its name referring to the north Polar Star around which the firmaments move. The Polar City symbolizes the power of the Dragon Throne. The concept was developed and its symbolism taken seriously by the courtiers, for they believed that the influence of the stars was powerful and ever-present.”²¹

As Guénon points out in *La Grande Triade* (*The Great Triad*) every country established as a spiritual center was a reflection of the “Center of the World,” and in this the Chinese Empire was no exception, being partitioned in a way that constituted a representation of the Universe. This extended to the Emperor’s residence, the Ming-tang, or “Temple of Light,” a rectangular edifice (a shape determined by correspondences between dynasties and cyclical periods) of twelve exterior openings for the twelve months of the year, these openings being grouped in threes on each side for the four seasons, and serving as twelve zodiacal stations of ritual performances for the Emperor, who circumambulated them sunwise.

The Judeo-Christian analogy of this is clearly found in the foursquare Heavenly Jerusalem of the Apocalypse, with its twelve gates — three for each direction of space — named for the “Twelve manner of fruits” yielded “every month,” by which can be understood the virtues attaching to each zodiacal sign.²²



Sacred art is a vehicle for the more esoteric aspects of a tradition, and cosmological themes were often the ornamental motifs in Medieval architecture. The Great Rose Window (13th c., partially restored) of the Lausanne Cathedral is a veritable cosmogony, based on Vincent of Beauvais’s *Mirror of Nature* and *Mirror of Doctrine*. In the center is God, surrounded by scenes of the Creation of the World; and in the quatrefoils are the zodiacal signs grouped by seasons, starting with the spring

(right), and rotating counter-clockwise. Among subjects in the other medallions are the Sun and the Moon, the Four Rivers of Paradise, the Seasons and the Months, the Four Elements, the Eight Winds, certain divinatory sciences, and so forth.²³

At Chartres Cathedral the Zodiac is portrayed by figures carved in the left bay of the Royal Portal (12th c.), alternating with images depicting the activities for each month of the year; Pisces and Gemini however have been moved to the right bay, possibly the result of a restoration. The theme of this right door, devoted to the Virgin, is the Descent of Christ; the Ascension of Christ is the theme of the left door, while on the middle tympanum is Christ in Majesty. The Door of the Virgin also presents the Seven Liberal Arts, both symbolically in feminine guise, and historically, in the personages of renowned sages like Pythagoras, Aristotle, Euclid, Ptolemy, Cicero, Priscian, and Boethius. Commenting on this, Burckhardt explains that for Medieval theologians, "the Virgin Mary, by virtue of the innate perfection of her soul, possessed all the wisdom of which man is capable," and that the seven sciences "were the expression of so many faculties of the soul, faculties demanding harmonious development." In Dante's *Il Convito* (II.xiv) the Seven Liberal Arts are put in correspondence with the planets: the Trivium of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric attaching to the Moon, Mercury, and Venus respectively; and the Quadrivium of Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, and Astronomy to the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Thus on the West Portal of Chartres "the whole cosmos is represented, in its three great divisions: spiritual, psychic, and corporeal."²⁴

Astrology as we have seen takes account of the negative as well as the positive qualities of existence, and this comes out in the Seven Deadly Sins, being an inversion of the virtues: *corruptio optimi pessima*. Traditionally, "*superbia* (pride) corresponds to [a perversion of] the Sun, *avaritia* (avarice) to Saturn, *luxuria* (lechery) to Venus, *invidia* (envy) to Mercury, *gula* (gluttony) to Jupiter, *ira* (anger) to Mars, *accidia* (sloth) to the Moon."²⁵ It is in this sense that the degrees of Hell and Purgatory in Dante's great work can be considered as negations of the planetary qualities that the Florentine poet equates with the circles of Paradise.

The Ptolemaic view of the Universe followed in Medieval Christianity and Islam reflects the ontological order of Being in a

hierarchy ranging from the higher to the lower states of existence. The planetary circles in the *Paradiso* are thus considered as proximate degrees of closeness to the Supreme Reality, or what the Hindu Vedanta defines as Absolute Being-Knowledge-Bliss. Inversely, the circles in the *Inferno* correspond to degrees of distance from Reality, culminating in the "Outer Darkness" or disintegration into Chaos.²⁶ Dante calls astrology the highest and noblest of sciences because of its subject (the movement of heaven) and its certainty — the possibility of error being uniquely with the practitioner (*Il Con.*II. xiv.13), and he credits the stars for his own inspiration, and more especially the configuration of his Gemini Sun (*Paradiso*, XXII).

Although unable to sanction astrology because of the abuses to which it is prone, neither could the Church condemn it categorically, because of its sacred origin; and St. Thomas Aquinas, who says: "The movement of the heavens must be the cause of all other movements," cites with approval the words of St. John Damascene: "The various planets produce in us various temperaments, habits and dispositions" (*De Fide Orth.*, II,7), as likewise of Ptolemy: "The soul of the wise man assists the work of the stars" (*Centiloquium*, verbum 8).²⁷ Since Islam has just been mentioned, it can be added that this religion discountenances astrology for the same reasons Christianity does theologically, but as well bid the dunes vanish as tell the desert-wise Arab to disregard the night canopy of the heavens: his astrology (Ibn 'Arabī's notably)²⁸ is based on Quranic refrains in the tenor of, "I swear by the Lord of the rising-places and the setting places" (LXX.40), and "it is We Who have set out the Zodiacal Signs in the heavens" (XV.16).

In the Ptolemaic world system, the universe is understood as a comprehensible totality in which man is a responsible participant; in the Copernican view, man becomes a cipher seeking a truth regarded as billions of "light years" away. If this proves anything, it is that modern man has locked himself into a uniquely physical dimension — a closed system or "one-world syndrome" that is as completely as possible shut off from other levels of Reality.

Astrology entered the Renaissance mainly under cover of Hermetic-Kabbalistic organizations, but however hidden its traces, they are there for the discerning. As an example, Leonardo da Vinci's famous late fifteenth-century mural of the "Last Supper" in the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan has caught the attention of critics for its departure from the conventional treatment of this theme as observed by other painters of the period such as Domenico Ghirlandaio and Andrea del Sarto, where it was customary to isolate Judas on the opposite side of the table; critics also note that Leonardo heightened the drama by grouping the disciples in threes. What according to a Swiss astrologer they have failed to perceive, and which is the whole key to the fresco and its lifeblood, is its representation of the Apostles as personifying the twelve signs of the Zodiac grouped around Christ as the Sun.

The arrangement in threes goes by the seasons, beginning with Aries on the right, where Simon as the Ram has his high bald head accentuated, along with the thrust of his profile. Thaddeus, next, is distinguished by his Bull neck, after whom comes Matthew, characterizing the Twins in his youthful exuberance, with his right arm stretched full length while he looks in the opposite direction.

Composing the following trio we have, first, Philip with the sensitivity of the Crab portrayed in the soft contours of his face, and both hands tucked inwards on his breast; then comes the Lion, James the brother of John, with his leonine mane of hair, leaning, arms back, with his bosom (seat of the heart) thrust out, in such manner that all the weight is on his spine. Adjoining him is Thomas, the logical Virgin, his finger uplifted in clarification, ordering, and reason; this gesture could also signify the sheaf of wheat traditionally figuring in the images of Virgo.

Christ in the center is a presence apart. The halo of evening light on the hills through the windows behind him indicates on a diurnal scale the autumnal equinox, midpoint of the twelve signs — the zodiacal Balance moreover being the symbol of Judgment. Jesus has his left hand outstretched from his blue cloak, palm up towards the six boreal signs, which are the ones in the sky above the ecliptic; his right hand emerges from the sleeve of his red robe, palm down towards the six austral signs. By another symbolism pertaining here uniquely to Christ's function as Pan-

tocrator, the up-down position of his palms can refer to the separation at the Last Judgement of the Sheep from the goats; also, to the two solstitial doors, *Janua Coeli* and *Janua Inferni*.

It is John, self-effaced in meditation to Christ's right, who actually stands for *Libra*, doubling here in the Scales for his Master as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Logically the *Scorpion* should follow *Libra*, yet the head practically touching John's is that of the *Sagittarian*, Peter, after whom comes Judas, who has recoiled back from Christ, while clutching his bag of silver. But a closer look reveals that Peter's place setting is in the right order, that he has abruptly left his seat and is leaning across behind Judas to whisper to John while still indicating his plate with his knife, which here signifies the Archer's arrow. By this animated transposition the artist conveys a discontinuity between the archetype *Scorpio* itself and its unworthy representative, the traitor.

In the final group the sign of the Goat is well distinguished in the saturnine, lantern-jawed elder, Andrew, holding up the palms of his hands in a gesture of wintry emptiness. James the Less as the Water Bearer, accented in angelic profile, leans a friendly *Aquarian* arm on Andrew's shoulder. Lastly comes Bartholomew, with the lymphatic physique associated with the Fish; one sees his sandaled foot — the only foot visible in the entire painting — highlighted beneath the table. This last detail is lost in some of the reproductions made after the lower portion of the mural had deteriorated.

Integral reproductions also clearly show the four table legs, divided like inverted Vs gravitating the eye towards each group of Apostles. A preliminary sketch by Leonardo for the Last Supper reveals that his original intention had been to follow the conventional portrayal of the subject; in addition to Judas being across the table, even the seating of the company is differently arranged in the drawing from the order in his final masterpiece.



Post-Renaissance astrology crops up as an adjunct to alchemical writings; it is a "pillar" in the medical system of Paracelsus; and Shakespeare's plays abound with suggestive ref-

erences to the stars. The planetary properties and their metallic counterparts as relating to the vicissitudes of the human soul form the spiritual drama of Jacob Boehme's *Signatura Rerum*. Says the Silesian mystic:

"In the kingdoms and dominions upon the earth ... every lord bears his high title, respective name and office: so likewise do the stars in the firmament, which are altogether one only dominion in power under them, where the great stars bear the name and the office of the forms in the mystery of the seven properties, and the other after them, as a particularity of houses or divisions, where every one is a peculiar harmony or operation, like a kingdom, and yet all proceeds in one harmony; like a clock-work, which is entirely composed in itself, and all the pieces work mutually together in one." (*Sig.Re.XVI*; Law's ed.)

In the William Law Memorial edition of *The Works of Jacob Behmen* [Boehme] (London, 1764-81) there is a colored design attributed to Law that is called *The Tree of the Soul*.²⁹ It pictures a palm growing through four vertically superimposed circles, with its fronds branching out in the upper two. The first sphere is named the "Dark World," and represents the material universe. The next higher is the "Fire World," or subtle state. Then comes "Paradise," connoting supraformal manifestation; and lastly, the "Light of Majesty," being the Supreme Reality. The base of the tree is marked "Soul," and it divides into two trunks called respectively "Will" and "Will Spirit." This is a manifest reference to the two selves in man, as defined earlier in this article. The "Will" trunk, on the right, concealing a winged dragon with barbed tail, dissipates into the "Fire World." Kneeling on a branch of the main trunk, the "Will Spirit," is an image of the Virgin — the pure soul — under a shaft of light from "Paradise"; she is receiving the Annunciation. A sign on the tree rising above her reads, "Solar World."

What is crucial about this astrologically, its motivating key, is a Zodiac composed of a silver girdle with openwork forming the signs, that encircles the two trunks; the planets are floating around it. Each person's horoscope is like a Wheel of Fortune; the right "play" puts one onto the trunk leading to liberation; the wrong "throw" carries one astray on the barren shoot.

As this paper is addressed to a colloquium taking place in the southern hemisphere, to which a number of its participants belong, the question logically arises: how does one reconcile the zodiacal correspondences with the seasons in that half of the world where exactly the inverse occurs? While we in the north, for example, are enjoying an explosion of spring in Aries, our southerly confreres are quietly watching the fruit come down as though they for all the world were under the sign of Libra. Books on astrology tend to ignore the subject, one even high-hattedly dismissing the issue with the remark, "This is an important field of study in which much research remains to be done...."

A solution might be to pretend with Dante that the world under the equator is uninhabited: *di retro al sol, del mondo senze gente* ("the unpeopled world behind the Sun") (*Inferno*, XXVI.117), but Dante was basing this on the Medieval belief that the whole of Africa and Asia (South America not yet being on the map) was north of the equator. Another expedient is to say that astrology — like the human race — originated in the northern hemisphere, and write it off as a case of *expressio unius est exclusio alterius* ("the expression of one thing is the exclusion of another").

Actually, there are several answers to the question. First of all, the innate characteristics of the twelve zodiacal signs are sovereign and in no way subject to their earthly contingencies. Secondly — and this follows from the first — a person's horoscope anywhere on earth is determined absolutely by the placement of the Sun, the planets, and the signs on the ecliptic, and nothing else. Thirdly, without two hemispheres at a tangent to the ecliptic, a rotation of seasons would be an impossibility purely and simply. A symbol by definition is a reflection of a higher reality, and can have no more than partial and limited cohesion in its outward form. Seasonal differences, for example, lose their sharp distinctions at the poles and the equator. Fourthly, the qualities of each zodiacal sign are contained germinally in a reciprocal or "yin-yang" manner in their opposites. Thus, Taurus contains Scorpio characteristics *in potentia*, and vice versa. We see this in a phenomenon like autumn planting, or in the case of the

Ice Saints, those God-fearing ancients with bone-chilling names like Epimachus, Mamertus, Pancratius, and Pachomius whose feast days come in mid-May — a time notorious in Europe for unseasonal cold. The pendant to this is the warm spell coinciding with Martinmas that is called Indian Summer.

The Incas, while observing the standard Zodiac with but few minor modifications, nevertheless readapted the seasonal interpretations to fit with the cycles prevailing in their region. Hence, Huakra-Onkoy, the Scorpion, was regarded as a bearer of pestilence in keeping with the return of miasmatic jungle weather associated with the austral spring. And Aquarius, the Water Bearer, was named Miki-Kikiray, period of the Waters, because of the torrents cascading from the high Andes in February.³⁰

As already demonstrated, however, the North Pole is considered traditionally to be the axis on which the world turns; and in this respect the South Pole is not a second center, but rather a continuation of this axis. The Antarctic, precisely, is not another Arctic, but that which is opposite to it. No matter where one is on earth, the compass still points north.

Having thus gotten the denizens of the southern latitudes safely over this hurdle, we can now briefly touch on one last subject, namely alchemy as the handmaid of astrology.



Spiritual alchemy — based on the theophanic concept of matter's inherent "nobility" — was a technique for integrating the elements of the soul by objectifying the inner work in terms of chemical processes. The adept considered himself as the "oven," with the heart the "vessel," the spirit the "fire," and the substance of the soul the raw "*materia*" which had to be purified and transmuted through "Mercurial" or spiritual influences into the final "Stone" or "Power," capable in turn of transforming "base metals" into "Gold" — an operation serving as the hallmark of the alchemist's realized state. Alchemy recognized Twelve Processes on the order of the Zodiac as follows:

Aries:	Calcination
Libra:	Sublimation
Taurus:	Congelation

Scorpio:	Separation
Gemini:	Fixation
Sagittarius:	Creation
Cancer:	Solution
Capricorn:	Fermentation
Leo:	Digestion
Aquarius:	Multiplication
Virgo:	Distillation
Pisces:	Projection ³¹

Themes based on these processes are represented in sculptures on the West Portal of the Cathedral of Notre Dame at Paris.³²

Planetary qualities for their part had their correspondences in the metals, Gold being of the Sun, Silver of the Moon, Copper of Venus, Iron of Mars, Quicksilver of Mercury, Lead of Saturn, and Tin of Jupiter. Gold was the only metal considered to be in a perfect state of wholeness, the other metals expressing so many ruptures of this primordial equilibrium, which with the alchemist's aid they were "striving" to regain.³³ Hence the justification for, and possibility — in theory at least — of transmutation, a miracle that could happen exceptionally by way of token — never as an end — and which has more than once been documented in the annals of alchemy.

These concepts were familiar to the intellectual aristocracy in Elizabethan days, and when they attended a play like Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the alchemical overtones were not lost on them.³⁴ They knew that Montague, dressed in black, represented Saturn, while Capulet in purple stood for Jupiter; that the violent Tybalt, in scarlet (or orange and black), had to be Mars, and the blue Mercutio, Mercury, leaving Paris, clothed in white (alternatively green), the type of Venus. The main protagonists themselves, interchangeably playing soul and spirit, incarnated the two great luminaries. To the educated audience it was inevitable that the successive "coagulations" and "solutions" in the turbulent drama would result in the final "fixation" where the former adversaries, joining hands, pledge to immortalize the "ill-starred" lovers in statues of "pure gold."

The colors for costumes have — with slight variations — descended as a tradition in Shakespearean theater, without, how-

ever, it probably being known that the origin for their association with the planets can be traced back as far as the great Ziggurat of Borsippa, near Babylon, a temple built in seven stages for the Planetary Spheres, each bearing the symbolic color given above, and starting of course with the Sun at the top, in gold, and then the Moon, in silver. This was the Temple of Nebo, "god of wisdom" (of the heavenly movements); who was identified with the planet Mercury, and with the star Aldebaran in the constellation of Taurus.



To situate the meaning of Taurus here, an additional remark is necessary on the precession of the equinoxes. It has already been seen that the zodiacal year commences with the vernal equinox, and this irrespective of whether we mean the standard equinox-Zodiac, or the stellar fixed-star-Zodiac. The former rotates on an annual basis, whereas the latter or Great Year completes one revolution approximately every 25,800 years, during which period each stellar sign as pointed out earlier successively remains for some 2,160 years in this inaugural equinoctial position, and imparts its specific character to the span of time over which it reigns. In all likelihood the worship of Nebo corresponded with the sway of Taurus, the same period when the ancient Egyptians honored the sacred bull, Apis, and their pharaohs wore a headdress bearing the emblem of Uraeus, the sacred asp, standing here for the Scorpion, in opposition to Taurus. This was an era marked by massiveness and gigantism in the architectural monuments of the Egyptians and Assyrians — an era at the predawn of our present zodiacal nomenclature.

When the primacy of Taurus in the cosmic rotation was replaced by Aries, the Bull became an object of idolatry — the "Golden Calf" — with the sacrificial victim now the Ram. This was the era of legislation, the Mosaic Law and the Law of Manu, in keeping with the Scales in opposition.

Upon the advent of Pisces, the Christian symbol of the Saviour becomes the Fish, and we have the inauguration of baptism by water, and the substitution on fast days of fish for meat. In religion the emphasis on law is replaced by devotion to a per-

sonal God, whether Christ, the Buddha, or Krishna (whose cult in the *bhaktic* mode as practiced today took form in relatively recent times). The sign opposed to Pisces is Virgo, and it is the *Shakti* that predominates, whether in Marian devotion or the Tantric worship of the Divine Mother. On a material plane the era of Pisces is notable for discovery on the seven seas, with water and steam at the base of industrial power.

And now with the approach of Aquarius we see man taking to the skies and the airwaves, the rise of nuclear power, a Uranean confusion in the social order, and the falsification of religion. The pendant to this is the Lion, who exploits the corruption of humanity in its present state with revolutionary and terrorist incursions.³⁵ The same as with the microcosmic Zodiac, the qualitative level at which any sign plays itself out macrocosmically is determined by the purity or decadence of the human collectivity under its aegis. For the rest, the whole question of the interplay of greater and lesser cosmic cycles is something that can only be summarily alluded to here.



This paper is not advocating a return to astrology, its purpose being limited to exploring the phenomenon of traditional psychology, from which overtones of the sidereal science can hardly be dissociated. Its prevalence in former times is attested to in these words from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (14th ed.): “Chiefly under Greek influences, the scope of astrology was enlarged until it was brought into connection with practically all of the known sciences: botany, chemistry, zoology, mineralogy, anatomy and medicine. Colours, metals, stones, plants, drugs and animal life of all kinds were associated with the planets and placed under their tutelage.” But the unsigned author of this passage distinguishes himself for his ignorance in concluding that “the entire realm of the natural sciences was translated into the language of astrology with the single avowed purpose of seeing in all phenomena signs indicative of what the future had in store.” The superficiality of this remark is on a par with the assumption that the aim of ancient alchemy was the fabrication of gold.

Given the decadence of our present world, it is in any case providential that the conservation and transmission of these hieratic sciences are virtually lost, for were they still integrally intact, the practitioners thereof would be harassed for their gold and hounded for their prophecies.

It is observable moreover that people drawn to astrology and other arcane pursuits nowadays are frequently marked in one way or another with a certain eccentricity, which — when not purely congenital — comes from exposure to cosmic forces of a subtle order against which they have no safeguards, being without any spiritual protection. In traditional societies this was not a problem, as people could not enter hermetic organizations without the proper qualifications. Such orders as repositories of sacred sciences are now extinct.

The Truth, however, is not subject to change, and basic realities, while they may be partially obscured, are not essentially vassal to the tyranny of time.

In the Preface to his book, *Psychologie zodiacale (Zodiacal Psychology)* (Paris, 1983), a French astrologer, Robert Dax, makes some pertinent remarks along these lines. The author asks why a civilization as erudite as our lacks a correspondingly profound psychological culture, and he answers that the whole stress of our learning has been in the unilateral direction of quantitative analysis, thus essentially neglecting the qualitative dimension of synthetic or unitive knowledge, so indispensable for understanding the intrinsic values of the human personality.

Not, he says, that the modern disciplines of psychiatry and psychoanalysis have failed to penetrate the unconscious and expose therein the play of certain mechanisms; but the accent has been on the systematic exploration of the pathological and the morbid by way of analysis and dissection, thus blinding us to the specific structure of human nature itself and preventing us from integrally grasping its normative essence. In fact, he goes on, the psychological wages of our technical prowess have evidenced themselves in cerebral hypertrophy and a “drying out of the soul,” which tends progressively to become “a center of arrogant incompatibility.”

He points out that what we arrive at is thus a sort of cerebral levelling that engenders a uniformism of the human personality,

whose moral and social sense of responsibility is atrophied and ultimately betrayed. "Man lives more and more on the surface of himself," becoming thereby a stranger to the intrinsic values of his soul. The importance of zodiacal astrology, he concludes, is in its affirmation of essential and enduring human norms.



Man is the Centerpiece in the harmony of the Universe, and it is only when psychology builds on this foundation that it can lay claim to be of lasting significance.

NOTES

1. See his article by this title, in *Tomorrow*, Spring 1966.
2. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed., article on "History of Psychology," by George Sidney Brett, University of Toronto.
3. See Jean Servier: *L'Homme et l'invisible*, Paris, 1964.
4. "On the Indian and Traditional Psychology, or Rather Pneumatology," in *Coomaraswamy 2: Selected Papers, Metaphysics*, ed. Roger Lipsey, Princeton, 1977.
5. Philip Rieff: *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, New York, 1968, pp. 65 and 176.
6. "Cosmology and Modern Science," by Titus Burckhardt; in *The Sword of Gnosis*, ed. Jacob Needleman, Baltimore, 1974, p. 158. 7. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-7.
8. *Tomorrow*, *op.cit.*
9. *Bk. VI. xi. 4*; tr. James Legge.
10. See M. Senard: *Le Zodiaque: Clef de l'ontologie appliqué à la psychologie*, Paris, 1948, 1978, ch.I. 11. Iamblichus: *On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians*, tr. Thomas Taylor, London, 1821, p.318.
12. Senard, *op.cit.*, *loc.cit.*
13. J. Muir: *Original Sanskrit Texts*, London, 1868, V. 56.
14. John Ward (1781-1837): *Zion's Works; New Light on the Bible from the Coming of Shiloh, the Spirit of Truth*; Edinburgh, 16 Vol., 1828-37; II.p.238.
15. Iamblichus, *op.cit.*, Sec. VIII, Chs. VI-VII.
16. *Ibid.*, Sec.IX, Chs. III-IV.
17. The foregoing portraits are based on the following sources: Colin Evans: *The New Waite's Compendium of Natal Astrology*, New York, 1976; Mar-

- cia Moore and Mark Douglas: *Astrology, The Divine Science*, York Harbor, Maine, 1978; Andre Barbault: *Traité pratique d'astrologie*, Paris, 1961; Robert Dax, *Psychologie zodiacale*, Paris, 1983; M. Senard, *op.cit.*; Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, Paris, 1969.
18. René Guénon, *Symboles fondamentaux de la science sacrée*, ed. Michel Valsan, Paris, 1962.
 19. Stuart Piggott, *The Druids*, London, 1968, p. 95.
 20. Lin Yutang, *Imperial Peking*, London, 1961, p. 116.
 21. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.
 22. René Guénon, *La Grande triade*, Nancy, 1946, Ch. XVI. See also Guénon, "Le Zodiaque et les points cardinaux," *op.cit.*, note 18 above.
 23. See Emmanuel-Stanislas Dupraz, *La Cathédrale de Lausanne*, Lausanne, 1958.
 24. Titus Burckhardt, "The Seven Liberal Arts and the West Door of Chartres Cathedral," *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Summer, 1969.
 25. Martin Lings, "The Seven Deadly Sins," *ibid.*, Winter, 1971.
 26. See René Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity*, London, 1953, Chs. 38-9.
 27. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III.82,84,85.
 28. See Titus Burckhardt, "Une clef spirituelle de l'astrologie d'après Mohyiddin-ibn-Arabi," *Études Traditionnelles*, Paris, 1947-8.
 29. See Roger Cook, *The Tree of Life*, London, 1974.
 30. Dr. H. Girgois, *El oculto (Magia)*, np., 1901.
 31. C.A. Burland, *The Arts of the Alchemists*, London, 1967, p.209.
 32. See Fulcanelli, *Le Mystère des cathédrales*, Paris, 1957.
 33. See Titus Burckhardt, *Alchemy, Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, London, 1967.
 34. See Paul Arnold, *Esoterisme de Shakespeare*, Paris, 1955.
 35. Max Heindel, *Astrologie scientifique simplifiée*, Aubenas, 1981, p.184; Dr. Jacques Michaud, *Medecines ésotériques...Medecine de demain...*, Paris, 1976, p.88.

The Fundamental Nature of the Conflicts Between Modern and Traditional Man

Often Called the Conflict Between
Science and Faith

Rama Coomaraswamy

It is often said that there is an irreconcilable conflict between science and religion. I shall in the following discussion show that the conflict is not so much between science and religion as it is between the attitudes and beliefs of "modern" and of "traditional" man. Confusion arises because the former is often incorrectly labelled "scientific," while the latter is said to speak from a "religious" or "faith" position.

In the following discussion I shall characterize "modern man," be he scientist, philosopher, politician or theologian, as holding to certain specific attitudes. Dominant among these is the idea that man has "evolved" from some primitive state to his present condition, and that, thanks to "progress," he will continue along this path indefinitely. Beyond this modern man's outlook can be characterized by such terms as "scientific," "rationalistic," "liberal," "democratic," "humanistic," "relativistic," "egalitarian," and "self-determined." Despite the fact that these labels are subject to a variety of interpretations and may at times even be antagonistic to each other, they have a certain substratum in common. I shall summarize these for the sake of discussion as 1) evolutionist and progressive; 2) anthropomorphic, centered on man rather than on God; 3) lacking any sense of or need for the sacred; and 4) ignorant of metaphysical principles.

As opposed to these, the traditional viewpoint is theocentric. It is based on the principle of a "fall" from a state of grace in

which man directly communicated with God, the need for and gift of a revelation by which man can return to his primordial and sacred condition, and a metaphysic which explains the nature of God, Truth, Reality and the very essence of man. I prefer the word "traditional" which means "handed down" to "religious" because the latter term has, in our days, become associated with a plurality of values — a modernist or pantheist can call himself religious while clearly he is in no way traditional. The traditional position can be said to look back to a "Golden Age" when the gods lived among us, while the modern attitude necessarily looks ahead towards some future Utopia. Needless to say, not only our spiritual lives, but even our view of the world we live in, our politics and our sociology, will be influenced by which of these two sets of principles we adhere to.

Now these two extremes are bound to find themselves in conflict. This conflict is often posed as one between science and faith, but this is not so. Rather, it is a conflict between two views of man, his nature and his destiny. It will, I hope, become clear that this issue is central to the problems which contemporary Catholics face. I say this because those responsible for Vatican II attempted to reconcile a Church rooted in tradition with the outlook of modern man as outlined above. Despite all the fanfare, the attempt has failed as indeed it had to. The result is a Church divided, a Church that speaks with two voices. The traditional Church always knew what it stood for. The new or "contemporary" Church knows neither where it is coming from nor where it is going. I shall try to give some of the reasons why.

A FALSE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN SCIENCE AND FAITH

A great deal depends upon just what we mean by the words we use. The modern mind, while demanding exactitude in scientific terminology, considers the thinking process so indefinite that precision in language science apart is no longer required. Words, like contemporary art, have lost their symbolic quality and become so psychologized that in common parlance we no longer say we "know" something to be true, but rather that we "feel" it so. For all our communication we have forgotten that the *raison d'être* of the voice is to incarnate in a communicable form the

concept of Truth, and that the formal beauty of the precise expression is that of the *splendor veritatis*.

If we then are to communicate at all, we must come to a clear-cut understanding of certain basic words. The four words or phrases that I wish to define from the start are "science," "faith" in its traditional meaning, the "modern scientific outlook" and "faith" as moderns understand it.

Science, whatever its original meaning, is currently, according to Webster's Dictionary, "a branch of study concerned with the observation and classification of facts." The scientist, if he is honest, knows that his field of endeavor deals with nothing other than measurable phenomena and that the closest approximation to truth that he can attain is no more than a statistical average. The laws of science, however useful, do nothing more than summarize past experience. Even supposing an infallible operation of the reason such as may be granted to mathematics, such a methodology can never establish absolute or objective certainties, but only predict with a very great probability of success that what has happened repeatedly in the past will occur in the future. As Bertrand Russell stated, "Physics is mathematical not because we know so much about the physical world, but because we know so little: it is only its mathematical properties that we can discover." And this is because, as Arthur Koestler put it, "All we do in fact know is what we read with our instruments — the number or clicks in the Geiger counter or the position of a pointer on a dial..."

When the scientist departs from the measurable, when he reasons or speculates, he defines the results as a "working hypothesis" or a "theory." As more facts are measured and observed, theories are modified and even radically changed. The truths of science are never stable, but rather can be described as a constantly changing "consensus." They are "objective only in so far as they can be quantitatively demonstrated, but never "universal" in the sense that they are absolute or applicable throughout time and space. Those who doubt this have but to look at the innumerable and rapidly changing cosmological theories proposed for our consideration over the last 50 years. Needless to say, those who adhere to the traditional viewpoint can have no argument with measurable fact.

Faith, properly understood, also deals with facts, though not of a measurable or quantitative order. Again, we must be clear in how we use the word. By faith, traditional man and the pre-Vatican II Catholic understand the conformity of the intelligence and the will to a body of revealed truths. Faith is belief when the volitive element predominates over the intellectual; it is knowledge when the intellectual element predominates over the volitive. This explains why it includes both the character of fervor and certitude. However strongly we may feel about what we believe — and feelings have their legitimate role to play — such truths are by their very nature “objective” and “universal.” They are objective because they are stable (unchangeable) and can be examined by the light of reason; they are universal because being true, they apply always and everywhere. Thus it is that traditional Catholics in making an “act of faith” state “O my God, I firmly believe in all that your Holy Catholic Church approves and teaches, since it is you, the Infallible Truth, who has revealed it to your Church.” Among these teachings is the validity of man’s reasoning powers and the fact that the Church can teach nothing that goes against reason. Understood as so defined, there is no room for conflict between science and faith.

Unfortunately current usage has distorted the meaning of these terms. For modern man science is not a specialized kind of knowledge about the material world we live in. On the contrary, it has become an almost “mystical” term, for encompassed within it are all his most cherished convictions; his belief in evolution, progress, and that all reality is subjective, measurable, and centered on man *qua* man. Indeed, for him, what science cannot measure and explain with its limited methodology simply does not exist — all that is knowable is encompassed within its domain. Everything modern man believes in — be it socialism or modern psychology — is described as “scientific,” an adjective which seemingly endows its subject with the quality of truth and objectivity.

As for the scientist, modern man has elevated him from the rank of student to that of a knight in shining armor who seeks to unravel the mysteries of the universe and who selflessly works for the betterment of mankind. Indeed, as Auguste Comte predicted, the scientist has replaced the priest and his deliberations,

the “hocus-pocus” of our age, are considered on a par with revelation. It is to science that we are directed in seeking a solution to all our problems. Nor is the scientist himself free of such illusions. Even if he recognizes the limitations of his discipline, he is nevertheless a human being with personal feelings and beliefs, with a “*Gestalt*” that reflects the dominant utopian patterns of thinking prevalent in our times. For the sake of clarity I shall distinguish this *Gestalt* of modern man from science as such and call it the “modern scientific outlook.” Now, what is extraordinary is that modern man believes in this modern scientific outlook with a faith that seemingly would move mountains. This faith, however, is vastly different from the one that tradition enjoins upon us — its dogmas are man-made and cannot stand the scrutiny of reason. But then modern man also has a different understanding of the meaning of faith.

Modern man understands faith, not as the acceptance of a given body of doctrine, but rather as a hazy “feeling,” emptied of every specific object; a sort of sublimating aspiration that lifts the believer up into a state of euphoria — an immanentist awareness finding its source in the subconscious and producing an experiential or visceral sort of belief. He would agree with William James who described religion as “the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.” Such a view of faith of course demands great tolerance. If everyone’s beliefs are subjective and personal, or to use the currently fashionable jargon, “experiential,” how can one speak of universal truth that we are free to accept or reject? Other problems follow: if our beliefs as to what is right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust are also rooted in the subconscious, how can we speak in a rational manner of building a better world or of converting our concept of “justice” into social or economic practice? In our egalitarian society, everybody’s faith is of equal value and the only way to avoid chaos is to accept in the public domain those elements of faith which the majority of individuals agree upon and to relegate everything else to the private realm.

While revelation can have no argument with science as such, it is diametrically opposed to the “modern scientific outlook.” A modernist faith, however, can easily accommodate itself to such

a *Gestalt*, for it is in fact rooted in the same soil and nourished by the same illusions. “*Aggiornamento*” — the *leitmotif* of Vatican II — demonstrates this well. Let us see how.

Vatican II sought an *aggiornamento*, not with science, but with the modern world. Now other religious bodies, specifically the Protestant sects, had already traveled this dusty path. If the Catholic Church was to “catch up” with them, it had to develop a unity of belief with Protestants and other “ecclesiastical communities” holding to a wide variety of opinions. To do this it had to abandon its traditional and hard-line position and to accept a modernist view of faith alongside its own traditional one. Lacking this, there could never be a “dialogue on an equal footing.” The result has been a new doctrine on “religious liberty”; the encouragement of “*communicatio in sacris*” or common worship with heretics; the teaching that those who are clearly outside the Catholic Church, even those who deny the existence of God, have access to “the community or salvation,” and the denial of any society or government the right of proclaiming itself Catholic and of protecting itself from the insidious teachings of what we euphemistically call “our separated brethren.” Of course, post-Conciliar Catholics can still make an “act of faith,” but they can also describe their faith as a “experiential,” or, to use a phrase of John Paul II, as a “dialogue with God.” Of course, many Catholics still retain the old faith, or at least significant parts of it. But at the same time, as Andrew Greeley pointed out in 1973 — some 12 years ago — 46% of bishops and 69% of priests hold that faith is “primarily an encounter with God rather than an assent to a coherent set of defined truths.” And of course, the Oath against Modernism had to be abolished.

I have said Vatican II sought an *aggiornamento*, not with science, but with the modern scientific outlook. Its acceptance of the idea that those outside the Church have access to the community of salvation is but a minor part of this. Far more significant and illustrative is its acceptance of evolution and progress, for modern man’s belief in these two ideas is as pivotal as is their opposition to traditional thinking. Let me stress once again that evolution and progress are not science, but an essential part of the modern scientific outlook. Let me also say that they are no part of revelation. Belief in them requires a blind and totally

modernist faith.

THE TRANSFORMIST ILLUSION

Evolution and progress are two sides of the same coin. According to these ideas, not only is man at the apogee of a long evolutionary process, but evolution itself is a fundamental law of nature. By this I mean that evolution as a concept is not limited to the biological realm, but manifests itself in every aspect of life. After all, if man himself is a product of evolution, if man's mind is but highly organized matter, then all man is involved with, all that has resulted from his efforts, must reflect the evolutionary process. It follows that the "forces" of evolution — called "progress" by some and "historical determinism" by others — must play a dominant if not totally controlling development. As a result of evolution and progress, mankind is still developing and advancing towards some higher condition wherein all men will be united (globalization) and where strife and conflict will be eliminated and a "new humanism" achieved. If religion is to remain a relevant force, it must also take cognizance of such advances and adapt itself to them.



I have tied the idea of "progress" to evolution. I assume we can all agree that by "progress" we are not talking about the development of better mouse-traps or ice-boxes. Rather we are concerned with the "advancement" of mankind towards some higher state. In point of fact, the idea of "progress" used in this sense pre-dates Darwin by decades if not centuries. One finds it used for example during the English Reformation where the "Recussants" — those who refused to abandon the Catholic faith: state-enforced Protestantism — were "progressive." The concept was further developed during the so-called "Age of Enlightenment" when people like Rousseau, Voltaire and Diderot dreamed of creating a perfect society without God. Kant for example embraced it in his *Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmopolitical Plan*, a text in which he taught that history followed predetermined laws and revealed what he called "a regular stream or tendency" which demonstrated a "natural purpose" which would

end in a “universal civil society.” Spencer spoke of the “law of progress” and defined evolution as “a change from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity through continuous differentiations and integrations.” He went on to teach that “the operation of evolution is absolutely universal... Whether it be in the development of the earth, in the development of life upon its surface, in the development of society, of government, of manufactures, of commerce, of language, of literature, science, art, this same advance from the simple to the complex, through successive differentiations, holds uniformly...” Hegel taught that humanity was driven ceaselessly upwards by an all-powerful, all-rational “It,” and that the path of the ascent was an eternal, immutable, predestined zigzag — his thesis and antithesis always resulting in a higher synthesis. Certainly, from the time of the French Revolution progress and evolution have become almost interchangeable terms that are mutually supportive and pervasive influences in our lives.

Let there be no doubt about the fact that the Second Vatican Council accepts and promulgates these views. According to the Document entitled “The Church in the Modern World”:

“The human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic evolutionary one... To a certain extent the human intellect is also broadening its dominion over time... Advances in biology, psychology and the social sciences...bring men hope of improved self knowledge... The exact sciences sharpen critical judgement to a very fine edge. Recent psychological research explains human activity more profoundly. Historical studies make a signal contribution to bringing men to see things in their changeable and evolutionary aspects... Thanks to the experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture, the nature of man himself is more clearly revealed and new roads to truth are opened... It is a fact bearing on the very person of man that he can come to an authentic and full humanity only through culture, that is, through the cultivation of natural goods and values.... In every group or nation, there is an ever-increasing number of men and women who are conscious that they themselves are the artisans and the authors of the culture of their community... Through his dealings with others, through reciprocal duties,

and through fraternal dialogue, man develops all his gifts and is able to rise to his destiny... Thus we are witnesses to the birth of a new humanism, one in which man is defined first of all by his responsibility towards his brothers and towards history... Little by little, a more universal form of human culture is developing, one which will promote and express the unity of the human race..."

THE AGGIORNAMENTO WITH EVOLUTION

In my opening comments I distinguished between the different outlooks of the modern and traditional schools of thought. I doubt that anyone would controvert my placing the Catholic Church before Vatican II in the traditional camp. I then proceeded to discuss the distinction between science as such — the study of measurable phenomena — and the modern scientific outlook which is a philosophical position that clothes itself in scientific terminology. It is this outlook that the Church before Vatican II rejected, and with which Vatican II proclaimed an *aggiornamento*. I have further pointed out that this modern scientific outlook is not a matter of science, but of faith. And as faith, it is not a matter of doctrinal statement, but rather one of visceral commitment. We believe in evolution not because it is science, not because it is revelation, not because it is rational, not because one iota of evidence has ever been presented in its favor, but because we feel it must be true. If ever one wanted proof of the fact that the post-Conciliar Church accepts a modernist view of faith, it is to be found in the fact that evolution has become part of her Solemn Magisterium.

Let us be clear as to what evolution is. Evolution is not scientific fact, but a "theory" which attempts to explain how certain scientific facts hang together. It is a fundamental part of the modern scientific outlook. Evolution holds that at a certain point in time disparate atoms combined to form complex molecules, and these in turn combined to form a living cell. Step wise, through a series of processes such as natural selection, the survival of the fittest, genetic alterations, sexual attraction, chance, or whatever, these developed into still higher forms of life to form the various phylogenic strains and species. Algae became fishes, fishes crawled out of the sea to become lizards and eventually

dinosaurs; these in turn climbed trees and became birds. Finally, one of these various evolutionary ancestors developed into apes, hominids and man. Implicit in this theory is that even human consciousness is derived from matter — indeed, that it is a particularly refined or “evolved” kind of matter.

I have said that evolution is not science. Despite over 100 years of intensive search, there is not one measurable piece of evidence that can be culled in favor of evolutionary theory. Every species found in the fossil record arose *de novo* and those that are still surviving have in no way changed since their first appearance millions of years ago. Not one transitional form between two species has ever been found. Despite the fact that generations of flies and fleas have been subjected to every conceivable stimulus, not one transitional form has been developed. And beyond this, the very concept of evolution violates every known scientific principle. Science teaches us that nothing happens without a cause. Modern man tells us evolution is the cause — not only the intermediate cause, but the ultimate cause. Science teaches us that nothing happens by chance. But evolution postulates a series of extraordinary chance events, and ignores the fact that chance is but a way in which we express our ignorance of cause. Science tells us that what is greater cannot come out of what is less. Evolution teaches the opposite. Science tells us the earth is running down, but evolution tells us it is running up. Mathematical theory tells us that the possibility of one evolutionary step occurring is so remote as to be impossible, but evolution tells us it happened and happens repeatedly.

I challenge anyone of you to show me one piece of evidential proof in favor of evolution. As Yves Delage, Sorbonne professor of Zoology, states “I readily admit there is no absolutely definite evidence that such a thing has ever taken place.” Many eminent scientists who remain atheists have abandoned evolutionary theory completely because as Jean Rostand has said, “the world postulated by transformism is a fairy world, phantasmagoric and surrealistic.” Others continue to believe in it with what is truly a blind faith. Yves Delage, quoted above, tells us that despite the lack of proof: “I believe evolution to be just as certain as if it had been objectively proven.” Actually to call this “blind faith” is a kindness. As the well-known psychiatrist Karl Stern says:

“such a view of cosmogenesis is crazy. And I do not mean crazy in the sense of slangy invective but rather in the technical meaning of psychotic. Indeed such a view has much in common with certain aspects of schizophrenic thinking.”

If evolution is not science, perhaps it is theology. It will be argued that many Catholics believed in evolution prior to Vatican II and I concede the point. But such belief was never officially sanctioned, and indeed orthodox theologians like Ludovico Billot and Garrigou Lagrange clearly rejected it. By and large, Catholic evolutionists of that era can be divided into two groups. First, those who believed evolution to be a fact and held that God has always worked, and continues to work, through evolution. In so far as God established order in the universe, they argue, He is responsible for the laws of nature. One of these laws is that of evolution. He wound down the clock, so to speak, and ever since it has been winding itself up. Examples of such ideation are to be found in Giordano Bruno who lived between 1548 and 1600, and more recently in Teilhard de Chardin. The former was burned at the stake, the latter has been all but canonized. The second group, typified by George Mivart, Pierre Leroy, Monseigneur Louis Duchesne, Alfred Loisy and F. Bergert, held that man's body was a product of evolution, and that God, at some point in history, infused this soul-less body with a soul. Pius XII's *Humani Generis* is often quoted in support of this position. What is forgotten, and indeed rarely noted, is that Pius XII in this encyclical allowed for discussion of the matter but expressly stated that no Catholic was allowed to teach as an established fact that man's body was evolved from pre-existing matter, or to ignore what the Bible says about the origin of man. He further implicitly excluded an evolution from the time of Adam.

Whatever view of evolution one takes, one is faced with irresolvable dilemmas. Those who hold to the holistic view tell us that at some point in time man made an “evolutionary jump” to consciousness and assure us that either matter is spirit or spirit is matter. Those that hold to the mitigated view must explain to us, not one, but two evolutionary chains. They certainly would not be willing to explain sexual differentiation on the basis of Adam's rib. And whatever happened to the other “humans” who

were not ensouled? Perhaps they are still wandering. Well-known theologian Pohle Preuss put it: "It is a *de fide* teaching of the Church that the spiritual soul is the immediate substantial form of the body. According to Scripture, the dust becomes a living being, a human composite, by virtue of the creation of the soul." Finally — the impossible conundrums are by no means exhausted — if this theory is correct, why does not our body continue to live when we give back our souls to God for judgment?

I have said that orthodox theologians opposed this theory from the start. They examined its postulates with their reason and rejected them. They further recognized its intrinsically atheistic and anti-traditional character and agreed with the assessment recently stated by Professor Robert Jastrow of Princeton University: "Either life was placed here by the Creator, or it evolved out of non-living molecules in accordance with the laws of chemistry and physics. There is no third way; it must have been one or the other." It may interest you to know that evolutionary ideas are by no means new. St. Thomas Aquinas rejected them in his *Summa*. "Creation," he taught, "does not mean the building up of a composite thing from pre-existing principles: but it means that the composite is created so that it is brought into being at the same time with all its principles." So also that great scientist, St. Albert the Great: "It is neither suitable nor possible that the body of the first man should have been made otherwise than by God, as we are taught by the writings of the saints and the Catholic Faith... For man, even according to his body, is in some way the image of God, and therefore it obviously belongs to the same power to make man according to the soul and according to the body." And again, the great Hindu authority Shankaracharya who also wrote in the twelfth century: "the universe, as described, cannot possibly be thought of as having its origins etc. from any other factor which is insentient, or from atoms... Nor can it originate spontaneously; for in this universe people have to depend on specific space, time, and causation." Now if evolution is not science, and not theology, then what is it? I submit that it is superstition. Allow me to give you the Webster Dictionary's definition of superstition. It is: "the irrational object of mind... proceeding from ignorance, unreasoning fear of the unknown or mysterious morbid scrupulosity, a belief in mag-

ic or chance, or the like; misdirected or unenlightened religion or interpretation of nature... a fixed irrational idea, a notion maintained in spite of evidence of the contrary..."

THE CONSEQUENCES OF A BELIEF IN EVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLES

It will seem to some that I have spent an inordinate amount of time on the subject of evolution. I would however suggest to you that such is far from the case. Our fundamental belief in evolution carries with it a host of consequences. It affects our view of man, of society, and of religion. Let us briefly consider each of these in turn.

THE EVOLUTIONARY VIEW OF MAN, AND OF HIS NATURE

I have said there are two evolutionary views of man, the Teilhardian or holistic evolutionary view which holds that both his body and his "higher faculties" are derived from lifeless atoms in accordance with the laws of evolution, and the mitigated view which holds that at some point in time God infused a "soul" into the evolved body. Those who hold to this latter view — irrationality apart — also accept as "fact" that this "soul" has continued to evolve. I put soul in quotation marks because I am not at all sure just what these evolutionary theologians understand by the term. The statements which I have quoted from the documents of Vatican II seem to leave themselves open to either interpretation.

What then is the evolutionary view of man? Is man made in the image of God, or is he made in the image of some primitive protozoa? Evolutionary theory has no hesitation in opting for the latter, for if God, being perfect by definition, cannot evolve, his image is hardly likely to. Evolution holds that man is a higher form of matter, and indeed, at the present time, its highest form. Now man is distinguished from the lower animals which are his supposed ancestors because of his intellectual abilities. It follows then, and indeed such is postulated, that animals also have intelligence, and that this faculty is more highly developed in man. Darwin held that "animals have an intellect of different propor-

tions,” and that man’s “intellectual faculties have been mainly and gradually perfected through natural selection... I see no difficulty,” he said, “in the most intellectual individuals of a species being continually selected, and the intellect of the new species thus improved... I look at this process as now going on with the races of man; the less intellectual races being exterminated.” It is but a small step (*quod absit*) between the ability of a bird to build a nest or to follow the stars in his migratory flights, and that of man to hold a hammer. Everything falls within this aegis.” As Huxley said, “nature’s great progression is from the formless to the formed — from the inorganic to the organic — from blind force to conscious intellect and will.”

In order to fit human intelligence into the evolutionary stream, both Teilhardian and mitigated evolutionists reduce spirit to mind, mind to brain, and brain in turn to anatomical structures. Thinking is but a “neuro-chemical” process, or as the evolutionist Wilson says, “an epiphenomenon of the neuronal machinery of the brain,” which they will be able to alter and/or improve as their understanding grows. Modern psychologists, imbued with evolutionary ideas, tell us that the intelligence consists of reason, the ability to deal with abstractions, the capacity to learn and the ability to handle new situations. Of these functions, only reason is specifically human. Hence it follows that for modern scientific man reason is our highest function, an attitude that implicitly denies all that lies above it.

But let us be careful. He does not understand reason as the orthodox theologian does. Rather he reduces it to a logic that can only deal with sensory or emotive experience. And born of this latter dogma is the much vaunted “scientific methodology.” All that cannot be studied in this manner is either ignored or denied. Only what this methodology can handle is real and valid. Out goes revelation. Out goes intellection. Huxley expressed this clearly: “As our race approaches its maturity, it discovers... that there is but one kind of knowledge and but one method of acquiring it.” Having used reason to limit the capacity of reason — a dogma that is as illusory as it is inconsistent — modern scientific man proceeds to tell us that computers will soon be capable of “thinking” more accurately than man. He forgets that the computer, which is little more than a fancy abacus, will never be able

to do more than compute; that if it can produce a mathematical logic, it will still require that the scientist provide it with the necessary premises moreover of a purely quantitative order.

Implicit in evolutionary theory is that man has no free will. After all, how can something — notice, I do not use the word “someone” — which is the product of rigid laws, laws which still control his future development, and who has no freedom to step outside the evolutionary process, be responsible? Here one comes upon another conundrum, for evolutionists also tell us that man is “free” to help the evolutionary process on its way. Consistency is not required of a modernist faith. But how does the evolutionist explain man’s motivations and beliefs. Since nothing higher than truncated reason is admissible, the solution is man’s “sub-conscious,” a sort of cesspool of evolutionary memory. It is here that we must seek for both motives and beliefs. Man’s ultimate motives are, they say, a search for security, pleasure, or what they call “self-activation” through the meeting of “meta-needs.” Truth becomes what is true for the individual; beauty what gives us pleasure; and love the fulfilling of “biological urges.” At the cost of denying both logic and experience, all that is qualitative in man is declared to be genetically determined and is reduced to the measurable and thus to matter. If one can accept these premises, then it is easy to be persuaded that man is but a higher form of matter, the penultimate result of a still incomplete evolutionary process (superman is on the way). Those who think otherwise are dismissed as “dreamers” — as if matter could dream — who for all their efforts produce nothing materially beneficial.

But it may be asked, do evolutionists live in the real world? Surely, in the practical order every individual sees himself as a being who knows and wills and loves, a being who is responsible for his acts and for the intended consequences of his acts, a being who, because he is responsible, merits praise or blame, a rational creature who can conceptualize and — if not infallibly, at least sufficiently — discriminate between what is true and false, good and evil, right and wrong. Above all he sees himself as a creature capable of love, not merely with the seeming obsequiousness of tame beasts which scarcely know how to will, but with devotion

and self-sacrifice. To admit this is to say man has the certitude of his own consciousness and being and that he is more than matter. Certain consequences inevitably follow. To say love is to say knowledge, for one cannot love what one does not know. To say know is to admit of truth, for one cannot know what is false, but only that it is false. And to say love, knowledge and truth is to say something immeasurable, something of the spirit. These faculties pertain to the "heart" — not the physiological organ which bears this name by analogy — but to the very core of our being — that which theologians call the soul. Man who knows and loves, and who has the certitude of his own consciousness and being, cannot be reduced to chemical and physical elements — elements which are in reality only concepts of his own mind imposed upon the natural domain. Either man loves the poor because he sees in them an alter Christus, or he loves the poor because the evolutionary course of his genetic development leaves him no alternative. If one chooses the latter, then one cannot criticize those who hate the poor, much less those who exploit them.

Ignored by evolutionary theory is the fact that the intellect and the will — called the soul by traditional theologians — is a non-material or spiritual substance, and that this intellect can remove itself from the evolutionary stream and reflect upon that stream. Ignored is the fact that the intellect can know its own being (self consciousness), can make judgements, can arrive at certitude, and can know God. Ignored is the doctrine of *Synteresis* and the fact that God can dwell within the human soul. Ignored is the fact that love resides in the will and that the will is free — free to reject the truth as well as to accept it. Ignored is the fact that the body without the soul is no longer a living person and that man — both body and soul — is made in the image of God.

EVOLUTIONARY EPISTEMOLOGY

Born in 1290, William of Ockham is credited with being one of the earliest of those who misunderstood the function of the higher intellect. He and his followers, usually labelled "nominalists," claimed that all ideas are really images; that is to say,

impressions in the imagination originating in sensual perception. The error — it is one shared by all modern philosophers and psychologists — is that nominalists confound the individualized image of the imagination with the concept or idea which resides in the intellect. According to St. Thomas, the difference between images and ideas consists in the fact that images are representations of things in their singularity, particularity and concreteness, whereas ideas are representations of things in their universality. The acceptance of nominalism inevitably results in denying the good and the beautiful which are clearly ideas or concepts rather than images. It is also pertinent that Ockham denied free will.

Now, to deny the reality of concepts is to deny their objective validity. Man by his very nature seeks to know the truth, or, one can say, to know the nature of his being — the why and wherefore of the world, the soul and of existence. Nominalism precludes this possibility, for being experiential and hence dependent upon phenomena, it can only approach certainty by means of statistical approximation. Obviously experiential knowledge has its place and function, but once it is declared to be the only legitimate source of knowledge, man is deprived of the absolute and has no access to the nature of his being. He is forced to turn from revelation and intellection to individualism and rationalism. Cut off from what is “above,” he has to turn to what is “below.” It was Descartes who epitomized this deviation in his *cogito ergo sum*. The individual consciousness of the thinking subject (or more precisely, his ephemeral ego) was proclaimed to be the source of all reality and truth; the knowing subject — man — was henceforth bound to the realm of reason and separated from both intellection and revelation, neither of which was considered admissible as a source of knowledge of the objective order. It is but a short step from this to the radical doubt of Hume and the agnosticism of Kant.

The inevitable outgrowth of nominalist thinking is that all truth must be verified by experience, i.e., by observation, and that all phenomena will eventually be explained by a unitary theory based on measurement. Such is the definition of scientific methodology, and its sin lies in its refusal to accept anything outside its self-delimited realm. Ontology is discarded and all thinking is reduced to reason. But this reason is further reduced to log-

ic as applied to what can be measured or experienced. The net result is "rationalism."

Here once again we come upon a conundrum, for the miracle of reason or the ability to discourse from premises to conclusions presupposes a higher intellect. Man possesses reason, and with it language, only because, unlike animals, he has access in principle to a suprarational vision of the Real. It is this that gives him metaphysical certitude and the ability to judge whether what reason points out is true or false. Truth does not depend on reasoning, for obviously reason has not created it. Rather, truth reveals itself and becomes explicit with the help of reason. Thus it is that we do not say something is true because it is logical, but rather the reverse, that it is logical because it is true.

Now reason is a discursive faculty which requires both correct premises and proper logic in order to come to a valid conclusion. But reason requires something higher than itself to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Reason can receive its content — that which it reasons about — from above and from below, from within and from without. It can receive its premises from revelation or the senses, from intellection or from the subconscious. These various factors, either individually or in combination provide reason with its "food." But the nominalist prejudice limits reason to only one of these possible sources — namely sense perception or what can be measured, or so-called "experience." This explains the validity of his reason within the field of pure science and the preposterousness of rationalist conclusions outside this realm. Reason, to the extent that it is artificially divorced from all that is above becomes autonomous, a situation which inevitably engenders individualism, arbitrariness and pride. It is only in such a setting that evolutionary theory can find a home.

Just as evolutionary theory denies the historical fall of man from a state of grace, so also does it deny this fall on the plane of the individual. As St. Thomas Aquinas put it, "*duo sunt in homine*," a teaching that finds its fullness in St. Paul's, "I live, not I, but Christ within me." It is the attaining of such a state which makes real that kingdom of God within us. Cut off from this inner kingdom, man remains committed to, or more precisely, imprisoned in, his fallen state.

It is this commitment which leads modern psychology to attempt to rid us of guilt and to damn our souls with serenity. It is this commitment that makes modern man "democratic" — by this I mean, to believe that all authority has its source in himself or the human collectivity — in the "people" rather than in God. It also explains his "egalitarianism," for on what basis within this outlook can anyone speak of a hierarchy of values or achievement. And if man is the source and end, the alpha and the omega of all there is, then everything is indeed relative. It also makes of man an "economic" creature whose well-being is seen in terms of comfort and security. Such a compendium of ill thought out ideas is often termed "humanism" — a philosophy which officially defines itself as being concerned with man "independent of his supernatural character."

And so it is that the modern scientific outlook is, as I said in my introductory paragraphs, anthropocentric or centered on man, lacking any sense of the sacred, and void of metaphysical principles.

MAN'S EVOLUTIONARY DESTINY

We shall consider this on two levels — the personal one, or what is in it for us individually, and the "communitarian" one, or where so-called "civilization" is heading. Julian Huxley, the third generation in a family of ardent Darwinists, has no hesitation in assuring us that "the destiny of man on earth has been made clear by evolutionary biology." At the biological level Huxley stresses natural selection as the process responsible for progress towards higher forms of existence. In psychosocial evolution, he tells us, the struggle for existence has been replaced by the struggle for fulfillment. Fulfillment means "the realization of inherent capacities by the individual and of new possibilities by the race; the satisfaction of needs, spiritual as well as material; the emergence of new qualities of experience to be enjoyed, the building of personalities. Whatever permits or promotes "open development" is good; whatever restricts or frustrates it is wrong.

On the larger plane he tells us that, "Man can now see himself as the sole agent of further evolutionary advance on this planet, and one of the few possible instruments of progress in the

universe at large." Social and cultural institutions, including the state, are instruments for enabling individuals to fulfill themselves. So, too, is evolutionary science. Eugenics can promote human progress by strengthening physical vigor, preventing hereditary defects and diseases, and raising the general level of intelligence and aptitude. He admits that the more immediate problems of war, famine, disease, exploitation, and ethnocentrism present great difficulties, but assures that they too will eventually be brought under control by evolutionary science guided by what he calls "the morality of evolutionary direction." Man is in the process of becoming "business manager for the cosmic process of evolution." He does not however explain how man, the product of the cosmic process of evolution can become its business manager. I would suggest to you that in this conundrum we are face to face with the original seductive promise: "Ye shall be as gods!"

Eventually, man, with the help of evolutionary theory, will solve the problem of evil. He will create that perfect world in which man will no longer have to strive to be good. George Gaylord Simpson, Professor of Paleontology at Harvard, gives us further insight into this future paradise. "Not only are all men brothers; all living things are brothers in the very real, material sense that all have arisen from one source and been developed within the divergent intricacies of one process." Alfred Russel Wallace, an evolutionist who turned to spiritualism, tells us that we are as yet children, but that we must consider it a duty to

aid ourselves and our successors in our course towards the noble goal that lies before mankind.... Each one will then work out his own happiness in relation to that of his fellows; perfect freedom of action will be maintained, since the well-balanced moral faculties will never permit anyone to transgress on the equal freedom of others; ...compulsory government will have died away as unnecessary (for every man will know how to govern himself)... mankind will have discovered that it was only required of them to develop the capacities of their higher nature, in order to convert this earth... into as bright a paradise as ever haunted the dreams of seer or poet.

Once again many internal contradictions are ignored. How

can chance and purposeless forces work — as Darwin claimed — for “the good of each being” and how, despite natural selection and the survival of the fittest can “all corporeal and mental endowments tend to progress towards perfection?” How can man who is a product of such forces himself become their director? And how can evil be eliminated from society unless man evolves into a creature incapable of evil? Be that as it may, evolution postulates the perfection of man *qua* man, and the perfection of society in some utopian paradise that will eliminate all evil. The new Garden of Eden will have neither snakes nor God! Either that, or when point Omega arrives, we will all be lost in the nousphere.

THE RELIGIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF A BELIEF IN EVOLUTION

Despite the attempts of modernist theologians to blend their beliefs with evolutionary theory, the fact remains that for most people a clearcut alternative remains — either God or evolution. As Professor R. Lewontin of Harvard explains, the reasons for this is that “either you think that complex organisms arose by non-natural processes,” that is by divine intervention, “or you think that they arose by natural phenomena. If they arose by natural phenomena, they had to evolve. And that’s all there is to it... unless you invoke supernatural causes, the birds — and by implication, all higher animals — could not have arisen from muck by any natural processes. Well, if the birds couldn’t have arisen from muck by any natural processes, then they had to arise from non-birds. The only alternative is to say that they did arise from muck — because God’s finger went out and touched that muck. That is to say, there was a non-natural process. And that’s really where the action is.” Professor D.M.S. Watson of England says much the same thing. Evolution “is a theory universally accepted, not because it can be proved by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible.”

Consider the possibility that God in fact has worked through evolution to make the world and all that in it lies. Remember, that as Simpson says, “man is the result of a purposeless and materialistic process that did not have him in mind. He was not

planned.” Surely it must then be asked if a purposeful God would choose to work by means of chance to create man. One can hardly on this basis claim that man is God’s special creation, for chance, God forbid, might just as well have resulted in our being made in the image of Satan!

Again, what kind of God would use “natural selection” to achieve His ends. Natural selection proposes that the ill or otherwise unfitted — physically or psychologically — be denied an existence in favor of the stronger and perhaps more brutal forms which can “elbow” their way to the fore or otherwise match their environment in a better manner. As Darwin said in the closing paragraphs of the *Origin of the Species*, “the production of higher animals” can only proceed “from the war of nature, from famine and death.” The “less vigorous,” the shy, the retiring, the sickly, etc., are simply trampled underfoot in this struggle. To accept evolutionary theory is to accept that the “law of the claw” is moral and indeed willed — however remotely — by God Himself. How can one who believes in evolution advocate charity towards his neighbor. Indeed, did not evolutionary theory come to the fore in a period when philosophers and economists were advocating *laissez-faire* economics and international economic imperialism. Indeed, once accepted, one can justify almost anything with evolutionary theory. As Huxley put it, “those who take honors in Nature’s university, who learn the laws which govern man and things and obey them, are the really great and successful men in this world. The great mass of mankind are the “Poll” who pick up just enough to get through without much discredit. Those who won’t learn at all are plucked; and then they cannot come up again. Nature’s pluck means extermination.”

An evolutionary God, a God who set the process going and then left it to work itself out is not a personal God, nor a God who can perform miracles — much less a God that can be prayed to. After all, the sick child is such because of the forces of evolution, and nothing would be better for the human race than to have the sickly child die. How could an evolutionary God ever intervene in such a situation? And what of “grace?” Where does grace fit into the evolutionary picture?

Thus it is that most evolutionists, even if they call themselves “deists” and describe God as “The Great Architect of the

Universe,” are in the practical order either agnostics or atheists. Julian Huxley openly states that “any view of God as a personal being is becoming frankly untenable... Man’s knowledge has left no room in the universe for such an idea. Creation of earth and stars, plants, animals and man — Darwin swept the last vestiges of that into the wastepaper basket of outworn imaginations, already piled high with the debris of earlier ages.”

Consider then what results when our children are taught, not only in Russia where such is *de rigueur*, but in our Catholic schools and colleges, that evolution is, not a theory, but a fact. Children often see things more clearly than adults. How does the historical coming of Christ fit into evolutionary theory? What happens to the Genesis account of creation? I will tell you what happens. They conclude that, as the *Encyclopedia Britannica* states: “Darwin did two things: he showed that evolution was a fact contradicting scriptural legends of creation and that its cause, natural selection, was automatic with no room for divine guidance or design.” Lest you have any doubt about this, let me inform you that according to a recent survey: “A number of reasons were given why people no longer go to church, but a total of 46.9% attributed it to the difference between the theological and scientific explanations of creation.” And so, for the majority of individuals, the first and perhaps most important result of a belief in evolution is that they become agnostics, if not atheists. But there are other spin-offs for those who would retain some belief in Christian teachings.

I would have you consider what evolution does to the doctrine of Original Sin. Does man have a fallen nature in need of redemption, or is he irrevocably progressing towards some higher state of existence. If evolutionary theory is true, is not man inevitably redeemed? And if so, what need do we have of a Redeemer?

And what about sin in general? If evolutionary theory is true, there is no objective basis for determining right and wrong. Even if one believes there is a God, one can hardly argue that He is personally involved in His creation; that He will judge us for our personal lives, deeds, or misdeeds. If as Huxley says, “the fundamental proposition of evolution” is that “the whole world, living and not living, is the result of the mutual interaction, according to

definite laws, of the forces possessed by the molecules of which the primitive nebulosity of the universe was composed," how can man's will be free? If there is no free will, if in fact, as evolution teaches, the entire human person is a product of natural forces, how can we possibly be guilty of anything other than of doing the impossible — that is to say, of opposing the forces of evolutionary progress.

BACK TO MODERNISM

Finally, the acceptance of evolutionism in any form turns us into out and out modernists. As George Santayana said, "Modernism... is the love of all Christianity in those who perceive that it is all a fable. It is the historic attachment to his Church of a Catholic who has discovered that he is a pagan... It is the last of those concessions to the spirit of the world which half-believers and double-minded prophets have always been found making; but it is a mortal concession. It concedes everything; for it concedes that in Christianity, as Christians hold it, is an illusion." Remember, modernism is a heresy that places us outside the Church — at least outside the traditional Church. What is the essence of modernism? According to Pius X, it involves a belief in progress and evolution, a belief in agnosticism — the idea that human reason is confined entirely within the field of phenomena, vital immanence, or the fact that what we believe is not based on Revelation, but on some interior sense whose roots lie in the subconscious, and finally in the need of religion to adapt itself. Let us consider these four aspects of modernism. Clearly we have all become believers in progress and evolution for Vatican II assures us this is true. Implicitly tied to evolutionary theory is the idea that reason is a product of evolution, that reason is a quasi-mechanical ability not dissimilar to computer logic, and that, as with the computer, we can only deal with what is measurable. But evolution is itself not science and not theology. As I stated earlier, we can only believe in it because of a certain visceral certitude. And so we accept it as a product of vital immanence. And finally we must come to terms with the modern world. If there is no evolution and no progress, there is no need for *aggiornamento*. But what does Vatican II teach us?

“Let them blend modern science and its theories and the understanding of the most recent discoveries with Christian morality and doctrine. Thus their religious practice and morality can keep pace with their scientific knowledge and with an ever-advancing technology.”

CONCLUSION

What then are we to conclude? I think the following points are pertinent: 1. Evolution is neither a scientific nor a theological position. It is in fact a superstition with no basis in either discipline. Faith in evolution and progress is a “blind faith” that is based on visceral convictions or vital immanence, and violates all that is reasonable. You have all heard the fairy-tale of the frog who became a prince. Well, evolution says this is reality. 2. There is no intrinsic conflict between revealed religion and science as such. There is however, and indeed, there must be, an irreconcilable conflict between traditional religion and the modern scientific outlook with its belief in progress and evolution, its commitment to so-called scientific methodology as the only legitimate means for attaining knowledge, and its associated philosophical prejudices. 3. A belief in evolution and progress inevitably carries in its train a) a belief that man *qua* man is perfectable without reference to his supernatural nature; b) that man has no higher nature or capability than that which has evolved from matter; c) that man has no free will and hence cannot sin or have a “fallen nature”; d) given time society will perfect itself to the point where man will no longer have to be good; e) that all valid knowledge must be attained through the so-called scientific methodology, and that what cannot be measured has no reality; f) that religion must constantly adapt itself to the latest stage of evolution and progress and that only by reading the “signs of the times” can man know what God wishes for us; and g) that the main purpose of religion is to help man on his evolutionary way. If we accept the evolutionary hypothesis as true, the human phenomenon — man’s ability to love, to know, to will and to be responsible — is inexplicable; all “higher” communication is impossible, and man, lacking free will, can never reach above himself — can never strive to be perfect, even as his Father in Heaven is perfect. 4. Vatican II attempted an *aggiornamento*

between traditional religion and the modern scientific outlook — a reconciliation which is intrinsically impossible. The result has been that the Church now speaks with two voices — the voice of tradition which is becoming increasingly faint, and the thunder of the modern world clothed in theological language which is all but overwhelming us. The whole idea of bringing the Church up-to-date compromises her beyond repair. It is no wonder that conversions are reduced to a trickle, that the clergy and religious are deserting in droves, that the majority of Catholics are confused and that fewer and fewer people are willing to take the Church seriously.

I would remind you of the story of the prodigal son. It is a paradigm for our times. Vatican II, instead of insisting that the modern world should return to the bosom of the Father, has actually told us that we must “get with it”; that we must join the prodigal son in eating the husks fit only for the pigs. It forgets that it is not those who believed in the kingship of Christ that created the modern world, but those who, in the name of a false “progress,” a false “liberty” and a false “equality” cried out “*non serviam*.”

Evolutionary theory promises us a perfect society, the totality of knowledge available through scientific methodology, and the perfection of man without personal effort on his part — a Garden of Eden without a snake, and without a God. All it asks is time. And is this not also the promise made to us by modern psychology, socialism and communism? But let us pause a moment and ask — is this not the old Satanic promise? Is this not the proverbial apple dressed in the phraseology of the modern scientific outlook? It is not traditional religion that is the “opiate of the people.” It is the only sane answer to life. It is evolution and progress that are the “opiates of the people,” promising us that we will be as the gods. It is an old promise and as seductive in our days as it was when first offered. One is horrified to think that large segments of the Church have bought it. The faithful are being offered, not bread, but stones, or perhaps I should say, a scorpion.

Traditional Economics and Liberation Theology

Rama Coomaraswamy

Those who adhere to the traditional position are obliged to speak to the problem of destitution prevailing throughout so much of the world. What are its causes? Are there any traditional socio-economic principles? How do traditional values relate to socialism and liberation theology? And can traditional values offer modern man any realistic solutions to his dilemmas?

From the traditional viewpoint poverty, unlike destitution, is not an evil. Witness to this that, while our Lord healed the lame, gave speech to the dumb and made the blind to see, he never once made a poor man wealthy. Indeed, if we take his words seriously that the poor are blessed and will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven — then poverty is a state to which we should all aspire. Who then are the poor? According to the spiritual authorities of all the great traditions, they are the pure of heart, those free from attachment to the things of this world. On the economic level this principle is reflected in those who, having adequate food, clothing and shelter, seek not wealth, but are content to live within their station of life. As Eric Gill once said, “the poor are not those who have been robbed, but those who have not robbed others... poverty is not privation, it is strictly speaking precisely the opposite.”

Involuntary destitution must be distinguished from poverty and almost always reflects the sin of injustice. Man has a God given right to live, and providing he is willing to work, to his necessary sustenance. When a given society fails to make this possible, that society must be condemned as un-Christian and abnormal. According to the teachings of the Fathers, a starving man has a right to take food from any source in order to sustain his life, just as a drowning man has a right to climb into any available boat, even though he does not own it. Such an act is not

considered theft or robbery — the expropriation of another's private property, whether by cunning or force, whether by state or individual, is condemned by all the traditions. Christ pardoned the good thief, but in no way condoned his sin. Injustice can no more be rectified by injustice than can sin by sin.

WHENCE COMES THE PREVAILING DESTITUTION?

Clearly it is the result of the application of modern socio-economic principles to society. These by and large are based on the supposition that evolutionary man is but a higher form of animal whose drives are primarily directed towards the satisfaction of his material and psychological needs; an economic animal that will work only for the sake of gain; and that the gaining of wealth is a self-evident virtue. Given these assumptions, it is argued that, if the desire for gain be given fair play, the competition between producers will ensure that all men will receive sufficiently, and that good quality will prevail. These concepts, often called "the profit motive" and "*laissez faire*" economics, fundamentally hold that man can live by bread alone.

I have not used the word capitalism because of its emotional connotations. Simply understood it is the investment of capital with the intention of gaining some benefit, a procedure which any small craftsman — the shoemaker or restaurateur — can undertake without exploiting his neighbor, creating economic distress, or otherwise violating the laws of God. Far different is the industrial-capitalist system tied to international finance and modern banking. Through the control of credit and what is euphemistically called "social engineering" such organizations as the IMF and Trilateral Commission increasingly control the economic life of continents, nations, and indeed, of each and every individual. It is totally unjust to accuse religion of supporting such powers and principalities, for their very existence is an outgrowth of the waning of the influence of tradition on mankind. In order to understand why this is so, let us consider the nature of traditional economics.

TRADITIONAL ECONOMICS

Traditional or normal economics is based on two fundamen-

tal principles: (1) Perfection belongs to God alone. All creation, having its source in Him is good, but in so far as this same creation is other than God, it lacks perfection. The Garden of Eden was not without its serpent, and as Scripture tells us, there is no perfection this side of the Sun. (2) Man is by nature created in the image of God. Endowed with an intellect, he can, with the assistance of grace, both know and love his Creator. The very *raison d'être* of any traditional civilization is to make this pursuit — man's highest aspiration — possible. At the same time man is endowed with a free will, and as Scripture says, has a certain inclination towards evil. It is within his power to deny the truth and reject the beautiful. Each generation, and indeed, each individual must make such choices. No amount of progress or evolution can change the essential nature of man, and hence it follows that man *qua* man is not perfectible and utopian dreams of a perfect society based on "organized naturalism" and so-called "humanistic" principles are illusory and impossible. A "just" human society must take these facts into consideration and provide for both the spiritual and economic well being of its members. It must as St. Thomas says, "order the life of the people so as to help fit them for eternal happiness."

Traditional societies, following the divine injunction that we must seek first of all the Kingdom of Heaven, attempt to apply metaphysical principles to contingent circumstances. Now all creation manifests a hierarchical relationship to its Source. Heaven is a hierarchical society in which each rank of angel has its place and function — all joining in unison for the glory of God who reigns as King. The earthly reflection of this is seen in the Church, in the State, or as it was once called, "the Kingdom," in the family, and in each individual soul.

The family is the foundation on which all society is built, and indeed, the very word *economia* means to "manage a household." Marriage is not a civil or secular affair, but a holy state initiated with sacred rites, and such is only natural, for it is within this structure that the majority of mankind must live and sanctify itself. Now the family is a hierarchical structure. At its head and bearing responsibility for its members is the father. In him resides authority — a limited authority — for he rules "in God's name" and not his own. Obedience is due to him providing he does not

command those under him to sin. The child, its most precious product and a "person" just as valuable as the father in God's eyes, is in no way equal to the parent as an "individual." Each member has his or her appropriate duties, and the family as a unit functions best when all do what they are meant to do to the best of their ability. Tradition holds that women find their greatest dignity within the home as wife and mother — their exemplar being the Blessed Virgin herself. Indeed, it is said that a mother who brings up her child in the faith will enter heaven before any philosopher, sociologist or theologian.

Society is made up of families. In this view of things, following the distinctions made by St. Thomas, men, like members of a family, are equal as "persons," but not as "individuals." As a person, every human being is ordained directly to God, and as such, society exists for him, that is, it must subserve his spiritual and eternal interests and at the same time provide him with the necessary means of existence. As a consequence of his personhood, he has certain prerogatives; the right to life, to bodily integrity, to obtain the necessary means of existence; the right to tend towards his ultimate goal in the path to which God calls him; and the right to possess and use property. As individuals, however, persons must serve society or the common good, and society — that is a normal or traditional society — has a right to coerce him when he refuses without cause to do his duty. But if as persons all men are equal, they are not so as individuals, for individuals have different abilities, different heredities, and hence different vocations. Not every man is meant to be a priest, and however saintly a street-sweeper, his calling is less than that of a carpenter. Thus it is that men as persons have a right to live comfortably within their station in life, have the right to consider their homes as their "castles," but do not as individuals have the right to demand that everyone should live like a king in a palace. Such a class structure must not be seen as a horizontal stratification — only a society that bases a man's worth on money or the ability to wield power develops along such lines. Rather it is a vertical structuring, for each entity has access to what is spirituality above and the appropriate means by which to fulfill his eternal destiny.

Given these premises, it is clear that the seeking after wealth

as an end in itself was discouraged by both Church and State. The purpose of man's activity was never profit, for as St. Thomas said, "the need for gain considered in itself knows no limit and tends to infinity." St. Antonio, Bishop of Florence in the 16th century, and one of the Church's greatest economists, expressed this principle well. "The object of gain," he said, "is that by its means man may provide for himself and others according to their state. The object of providing for himself and others is that they may be able to live virtuously. The object of the virtuous life is the attainment of everlasting Glory." All members of such a society are productive and as such are entitled to a "just wage" for their efforts. Consider the surgeon. For him to practice his craft for profit is contemptible. For him to practice it for the love of God is ideal. But the surgeon is not an angel. He has a family to support and must live within his station in life. And so it follows that he is entitled to a "just wage" and must ask for his services, charity apart, a "just price." The same is true of the carpenter and priest. It is only in such a society that defrauding the worker — that is, refusing to pay him a "just wage" — is considered equivalent to willful murder, a sin, as the older catechisms put it, "crying out to Heaven for vengeance on earth."

In a similar manner property is owned, or rather held in trust by a system of fealty. The serf owed fealty to the lord and the lord to the king. But the king also held his post in trust, for he was there as Christ's representative in the temporal order. Each and all within this hierarchy could be deprived of their trust by the spiritual authority or the Church, but here also the Church had to answer to Christ for its actions. Granted the system fell short of perfection — the spiritual and temporal authorities — the "two swords" as they were labelled — often falling into conflict. Human nature being what it is, such was inevitable. As long as the good of souls was the primary concern of both, these problems were resolvable, but when either acted on its own authority — that is, in its own private interests — they became competing despots. The principle applies on all levels. If man has been given dominion over the earth, it is not as a despot, but as the vice-regent of God. As for wealth — and many kings have been raised to the altars of the Church as saints — that in excess of what one needed for one's station in life was also held in trust. One had to

obtain it honorably and one had to answer to God for its proper use. Such may seem platitudinous to us, but not to those who believed in a final judgement and the possibility of an everlasting sojourn in hell.

On the individual level, every member of a traditional society is an artist, that is, a maker of things by art. This was/is as true for the carpenter as it is for the surgeon or the priest. Under such circumstances each man follows a calling — usually hereditary — and does what he likes best and is most suited for. He, as it were, imitates God in his creative activity, for as St. Thomas puts it, “Art imitates nature in her manner of operation.” By this of course, he did not mean that art copies any visible part of the environment, but that the artist worked, as Plato said, “according to nature” — “mother nature.” Where such an attitude prevails, there is no such thing as “fine art”; all things made for use are made well and nothing is made for mere aesthetic pleasure. In such a system each craftsman is intellectually responsible for what he makes, and the pleasure he takes in his work helps perfect the result. Only when an individual’s body and soul can participate in his work — something never possible in a factory — can the medieval principle that *laborare est orare* fully apply. This explains why even the simplest products of such societies are beautiful enough to grace our museums and why the modern concept that pleasure and so-called “culture” can only be achieved in man’s leisure time is intrinsically abnormal.

Craftsmen were gathered into guilds which prevented unjust competition between members, provided funds for the sick and aged, and guaranteed the quality of the work produced. Thus for example, no craftsman could work after dark, no craftsman could “corner the market” or buy raw goods discounted because of the size of his order, or take on extra apprentices while another qualified craftsman had insufficient work. The prices charged for goods were also limited by the principle of justice and scarcity never justified an increase. Most guilds placed themselves under a spiritual director and took as their model some saintly exemplar.

The serf or farmer was also protected. While he owed fealty to his lord, he could not be forced to bear arms or be put off his land for any cause whatsoever. Nor could he be taxed for what

he produced on his land for his own use — only what he brought to market was subject to levy — and this at very limited levels regulated by custom. The obligations he owed to the manor — apart from the fact that they indirectly also benefited him — were far less onerous than the burdens of modern taxation. The so-called “liberation” of the serf that our history books speak of was in fact, his expulsion from his land and his “freedom” to go to the city and look for work. History is always rewritten by the victors.

How did the merchant fare in such a society? Trade was seen as a necessary but somewhat risky means of earning a living. It was in St. Thomas’s view, justified if by means of it the merchant sought to maintain his household or benefit his country. Merchants were also gathered into guilds which aimed at regulating practice and preventing abuses. With this in view the activities of “middlemen” and “monopolizers” — those who bought goods locally, especially food, and hoarded it till it could be sold at a profit — was strictly prohibited. Such activity involves cunning rather than labor. It was a matter of principle that whenever possible the farmer and craftsman had to sell his goods directly. The kingdom provided places for the storage of grain at cost to protect against famine, but it was still the farmer who stored his grain and sold it. Where goods were transported to distant communities, the merchant was entitled to add to their value his labor and once again the principle of a just price was invoked. He also was controlled at both ends — buying and selling — by local guild regulations.

Above all usury was forbidden, and indeed, no man guilty of this sin could receive a Christian burial. Even his children were required to make restitution. As Pope Innocent said in 1139, “we denounce that detestable and disgraceful rapacity condemned alike by human and divine law, by the Old and New Testament, that insatiable rapacity of usurers, whom we hereby cut off from all ecclesiastical consolation... usurers are to be regarded as infamous and shall, if they do not repent, be deprived of Christian burial.” The Lateran Council held in 1179 repeated the proscription and added that “no priest shall accept their alms.” Usury is incidentally forbidden by every orthodox religion known to man. Aristotle considered it contrary to the nature of things. Cicero and Seneca

likened it to homicide! Even the early Protestants like Luther condemned it. It was Calvin with his Protestant work ethic who first gave it his blessing under the name of "interest" and shortly afterwards this subtle distinction was approved by the Renaissance popes.

What is usury that it should once have been subject to such universal condemnation? Usury is the idea that money is fecund and hence capable of reproducing itself, rather than an "exchange media invented by the art of man to facilitate the exchange of goods" (St. Thomas). If money is fecund, he who lends it has a right to its return with profit. Traditional economists hold that lending money to one who is in desperate need is an act of charity, one in which the obligation to return it is dependent upon the borrower's improved condition. To contractually force its return, to take possession of home and property, of one's neighbor's necessity, was unjust. On the other hand, his failure to return it when capable was considered equally unjust. Lending money to someone who wished to establish a business was legitimate, for this was considered a "partnership" in which the lender shared the risks and responsibility and hence had a right to share in any justly acquired benefits. Certain other limited conditions were also allowed for. But lending money without risk, money that had to be returned with interest regardless of what happened was considered usury. For example, when a bank lends money to a worker to buy a home it takes no risk, for the bank owns the home as "collateral." During the course of 30 years an individual can end up paying the bank 3 to 5 times the actual value of the house. If the borrower falls on hard times, the bank forecloses on his property. At best, such a system takes away part of the worker's just wage. Combined with excessive property and inheritance taxes required by the state to pay interest/usury on its debts, the average person is progressively deprived of his property and security. While traditional economics encourages the widest possible distribution of property, usury results, over the course of time, in just the opposite. Thus it is that no man who lives by usury can consider himself as "poor" and that the Church once included in its petitions after Mass the prayer that God protect the faithful from usurers.

Traditional societies are almost always organized around a

king/caliph who relates to his realm as God does to creation, as a father does to his family, and as does the "heart-intellect" to the individual microcosm or soul. Whether designated by God or chosen by man, the ruler is invested by the spiritual authority with holy oils and functions to maintain "order" and "harmony" in the realm. Thus it is that "justice" is the highest quality in a ruler and its enforcement his primary obligation. Deriving his authority from God whose representative he is on the temporal plane (and hence "ruling by 'Divine Right'"), he knows that all sin — be it social or individual — is a departure from order. Hence he functions to enforce those laws that reflect on the social plane that order established by Christ — the Logos — the Universal Law Giver. As St. Thomas says, "the order of the universe embracing natural and voluntary things alike, manifests the Justice of God." Perhaps this in some degree explains the hatred of the modern world for royalty and its dreams of establishing a revolutionary "*novus ordo saeculorum*."

Over the course of time the Church acquired a great deal of property in the form of bequests. This, however, worked no injustice, for while abuses unquestionably existed, such lands were held in trust for the people. Monastic communities, apart from their primary function as a spiritual leavening, provided education *gratis*, whether it be in agriculture, the crafts or letters. Consider the great universities she established — Oxford, Cambridge, Salamanca, Paris. Consider the hospitals she supported, many of which still exist today in secularized form. Hers was the care of the poor, the aged and the infirm, and history witnesses that she did this better and at less cost than any modern society. She, like everybody else, owned her lands in trust.

Such then are the principles that underlay the socio-economic system prevailing in the western world from the fall of Rome to the end of the Middle Ages. While it did not create a perfect society — the nature of man being what it is — it did foster the preservation of spiritual values, the integrity of the family and the just distribution of goods. The restrictions on "middlemen" and modern banking with its usury and double-entry bookkeeping, the insistence on gold and silver currency as a fixed value exchange medium, the prohibition against "adulterating the coinage," and the encouragement of guilds by both Church and

kingdom, tended to create what has been termed a “distributive society,” one in which there was the greatest possible distribution of property. Why did such a system fall apart? It is often said that it died because it did not work. I shall show you that such is not the case. It died — the process was a slow and progressive one — because men increasingly lost their faith in the principles which underlay it. Let us follow the course of history.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WESTERN WORLD?

The breakdown of Christendom closely followed upon events at the end of the 13th century. The “bifurcation” of man introduced by Ockham on the philosophical level increasingly manifested itself socially. As the “spiritual authority” became weaker, and the spirit of secularism spread within and without the Church, new forces came to the fore. The details varied from nation to nation, but the pattern was the same. A new breed of men began to control the power structure, men who sought power and wealth for its own sake. People still professed themselves to be Christian, but religion was more and more displaced from the public forum — became a private affair — and had less and less to do with the “real world,” the world in which men lived.

As a result, the old feudal aristocracy was either eliminated or fell into line. One of the first steps was the enclosure of public lands — those fields used in common by all members of the village communities. This was rapidly followed by the secularization of monastic lands, lands which really belonged to the people and which were held in trust for them by the religious orders. The next step was to push the peasants off their ancestral lands — the so-called “liberation of the serfs” being in fact the destruction of their hereditary rights and the expropriation of their properties. The destruction of the guilds and the expropriation of their “chantries” — their churches and insurance funds — followed suit. Those familiar with William Corbet’s *History of the Reformation in England* will find my statements accurate. Prior to the Reformation there were no “poor laws” in England. After the Reformation, paupery became so prevalent that during the reign of Queen Elizabeth men, if twice convicted of this “crime” were hanged — and by the thousands!

Those who controlled the wealth of the nation soon either replaced the ruling houses with “democratic systems” dependent upon them, or else persuaded the surviving monarchs to work with them. Kings, once a “buffer” between the poor and the rich, became the pawns of a new “monied aristocracy.” As economic success increasingly became the goal of man, these new forces sought out ways to still further augment their ill-gotten gains. This meant two things: (1) the control or subversion of governments, and by means of this, the creation of modern international banking, and (2) the creation of a proletariat and the development of modern industrial techniques. Let us consider each in turn.

Banks of course had always existed as cooperative agencies functioning within a traditional framework. They were subservient to the king, dealt with gold and silver currency, and functioned to facilitate trade. They charged a small sum for their services as part of the just wage principle. Modern banking however dates from the 15th century. Through a system of double-entry bookkeeping they lend money they do not possess at usurious rates. Let me explain. When you borrow money from a bank they place a certain sum in your account. When you purchase tools and pay for them with this money, the bank simply transfers the same money into a third account. The entire process, and it can be extended indefinitely, costs the bank nothing but the expense of bookkeeping. Most banks are only obliged by law to cover this system of loans at the 10% level which means that 90% of the money circulating only consists of figures on paper for which the bank collects interest. The actual reserve level is controlled by Federal Reserve Banks that, by means of lowering or raising this figure, effectively control the amount and value of money in circulation. Banks not only control credit, because they demand collateral; they also, over the course of time, control increasing amounts of property. Small banks are controlled by larger ones, and these in turn by so-called “Federal Reserve” institutions. These latter are not “government” banks, but private institutions directly tied to international finance. It is estimated that at this point in history, the annual interest payments and principle retirement on world debt to international finance is over 5.86 trillion dollars a year, a figure in excess of the annual estimated worth of all the physical goods output of the advanced sec-

tor nations as a whole. It is but a matter of time before more money is owed to these powers than the world is worth!

The anonymous individuals in control of international finance wield tremendous power. They do not see themselves as evil men but rather see themselves as using this power to create a better world — better being defined in terms of their own personal vision. By control of credit they decide what each part of the world should produce and where the flow of wealth should go. Through the control of education and communications they mold the thinking and the attitudes of the proletariat and middle classes. By providing grants and professional chairs, they control the teaching of economics at the universities. They owe no loyalty to any nation and are indeed behind the current push for “one world-ism.” They carry on financial dealings with both “democratic” and “communist” governments, and when they find a given state uncooperative they have no hesitation in “toppling” it. They live by no revealed moral code. They answer to no man, and certainly not, while in this world, to God. Those who doubt this analysis would do well to read Carrol Quigley’s *Tragedy and Hope*.

Financial manipulations do not however increase the gross national product. Large amounts of money, unless put to work are useless. And so it is that the capitalist-industrial system required two more things. In order to maximize profits it required a constant and inexpensive source of labor; and it required machinery that could make things cheaply, if not well. Consider labor: slavery could work on farms, but was impractical in the factory situation. But if the profiteer could not use a whip, he could either purchase or usurp the property of the laborer. The enclosure of the common lands, the liberation of the serfs and the destruction of the guild system already pointed out the way. If the worker has no property, he is forced to work for the owner with the sanction of starvation. And so, by purchase, by stealing, by law, by force, a modern property-less “work force” was created.

To make this work force efficient, by which of course one means “profitable,” they had to be provided with machines and placed in factories. Machines are not simply better or more complicated kinds of tools. They are not implements designed by workmen to help them make things. They are just the opposite,

for they are instruments designed to enable their owners to make things in great quantities in order to make great quantities of money, regardless of their effect on the laborer. Those of you who have worked on assembly lines — be they in factories or offices — know well that the ability to rapidly repeat the same motion makes of the worker little more than a machine. It requires agility, but no “skill” in the sense of a craft. The worker is never an artisan; he has no control over what he makes, or even over how well it is made. He takes no delight in his labor, but must seek pleasure in his “free time.” Working for money rather than the “good” of the work, he is reduced to the subhuman condition of intellectual irresponsibility. The factory further compounds this situation. No matter how comfortable and clean, the worker is forced to live in an environment more fit for termites than for man, a world of machinery and therefore of metal, noise, hidden and treacherous forces, a world of incomprehensible comings and goings — an insect-like existence carried on in the midst of ugliness and triviality; above all, a world impermeable to spiritual realities. The system may feed the worker, and it may even be profitable, but it also dehumanizes him, for as Ruskin said, “manufacture without art is brutality.”

Who are the proletariat? During the French Revolution, it became clear that not only was there a “third estate,” but a “fourth” consisting of those who had no skills and no possessions. This fourth class was named after the most miserable group in ancient Rome, men who had no skills and whose only value was their ability to produce children, their *proles*. The proletarians today are primarily factory workers and the hosts of clerks and minor executives of the government and business world. These are men who have no skills and no choice as to calling. They are forced by the nature of things to earn their living by the performance of meaningless acts in an atmosphere of ugliness and noise. They are in every sense of the word “wage slaves,” who either accept their lot or starve.

The “progressive” nature of these economic forces is clear. Allowed to continue — despite cycles within cycles that modify the process — it will eventually reduce all of us to property-less proletarians totally dependent upon the “powers and principalities” of this world. All this has come about, not because of some

formal conspiracy, but rather because greed, under the guise of “profit,” has become respectable. As Emmet Hughes says, “the liberal society was born of a decisive change... a revolution in men’s conception of their nature and of their place in society... the completed structure of Liberalism embodies an autonomous, self-sustaining conception of man’s relationship to his God, his universe, his society.” Tawney says much the same in his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*: The difference “between the conception of a society as a community of unequal classes with varying functions organized for a common end, and one that regards it as a mechanism adjusting itself through the play of economic motives... between the idea that a man must not take advantage of his neighbour’s necessity, and the doctrine that ‘man’s self-love is God’s providence’; between the attitude which appeals to religious standards to repress economic appetites, and that which regards expediency as the final criterion — there is a chasm which no theory of the permanence and ubiquity of economic interests can bridge...” He further notes that “So merciless is the tyranny of economic appetites, so prone to self aggrandizement the empire of economic interests, that a doctrine which confines them to their proper sphere, as the servant, not the master of civilization, may reasonably be regarded as among the pregnant truisms which are a permanent element in any sane society.” Traditional economics could only exist in a society in which men had “not learned to persuade themselves that greed was enterprise and avarice economy.” And so we have a system which as Cicero said “is more contrary to nature than death, than poverty, than pain, than any other evils which can befall our bodies or external circumstances.”

IS THIS MARXIST ANALYSIS?

Despite certain parallels, all this is a far cry from Marxist analysis. On the contrary, it is that found in the Papal Encyclicals promulgated between 1890 and 1950 which delineated the “enormous evils” and “despotic economic domination” which resulted in “tragically hard, inexorable and cruel” sufferings for the worker. The popes of this era further noted that “the greed of men” and the “accursed internationalism of finance or international imperi-

alism” with its “devouring usury” had placed “a yoke almost of slavery” over the majority of mankind. Pius XI summed it up well in stating that the Church, “having surveyed the present economic system... found it laboring under the greatest of evils.” Such statements make it clear that accusing the traditional Church of supporting the present economic system are both unjust and hypocritical. Those who are interested in a clear-cut exposition of the traditional Church’s analysis and recommendations are referred to the writings of such individuals as Father Denis Fahey, E. Cahill and Eric Gill.

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

And so we are brought back to the immediate problem: an ever enlarging proletariat and an economic situation that leaves much of mankind destitute. With complete ignorance of traditional economic principles, modern man is assured by both religious and secular institutions that his only choice lies between the present system and socialism. Let us consider this latter option.

There are seemingly many socialisms: Shavian socialism, Fabian socialism, national socialism such as Hitler and Mussolini advocated, modified socialism which can mean whatever the “modifier” wishes, and Marxist or “integral” socialism which claims “to have no enemies on the left.” Now socialism as such must be distinguished from the sentimental desire for a more just distribution of the world’s goods so often labeled with this title. Socialism is neither the banding together of individuals to share some of the means of production, nor the involvement of the state in public works, for these activities have been with us since history began. What then do the various socialisms have in common? The answer is that, apart from thriving on the cry for justice, they all accept in varying degrees the Marxist analysis of man and economics. Their classical manifestation is the communist or “integral” variety, for it is this form which existed until recently in the former Soviet Union; it is this form which is being pandered to the South Americans as a solution to their problems, and it is precisely this variety which liberation theologians such as Fathers Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonard Boff, and Juan Luis

Segundo would propagate under the guise of “up to date” Catholicism.

What then is “integral” or “Marxist” socialism? It is a doctrine growing out of the ideas crystallized and propagated by the French Revolution — a belief in progress and the autonomy of evolutionary man coupled with the idea of his perfectibility in the natural plane. It holds out to us the promise of a perfect society in which, thanks to science and industry, work will be minimized and men will have “leisure” to create his own “culture.” Catering to man’s desire for a Lost Paradise, it promises to relieve us of the evil effects of the profit motive and usury. Not original sin, but “private property” is the cause of these evils. And hence, once private property is eliminated, sin will also disappear. Where does socialism get its authority? Why of course, from the people. Their freedom is only limited by “social contract” and the government reflects the will of the majority. Intimately tied to these ideas is a belief in progress and evolution. Mankind is inevitably advancing towards a socialist perfection by means of a Hegelian dialectic called “historical determinism.” To be “progressive” and “socialistic” are almost synonymous in the Marxist dialectic. This process involves, according to Marxist analysis, a “class struggle” in which the proletariat is pitched against those who exploit their labor for profit. It is the function of those who “understand” the nature of this pseudo-reality — almost always the poorer bourgeois — to “conscientize” the “masses,” the ever-enlarging proletariat, and bring them to the point of rebellion — and to make them realize that they have the power and ability to force a change and bring about a perfect society.

It must be emphasized that socialism and communism are one and the same socio-economic doctrine, the former being but a stage on the path to latter. The inevitable cruelties and excesses of socialism cannot be dismissed as “deviations” and indeed, forthright Marxists admit that they are necessary if the final result is to be achieved — the end in view justifies the means. The Soviet Union did not consider itself a fully developed “communist society” — it called itself the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics — and communism was the perfection towards which it strived. If we will but imbibe the socialist apple, *quod absit*, then when the perfect communist state is created, each man will

produce according to his ability and will receive according to his needs. All men will be free, equal, brothers, and the resultant society will be “classless.” There being no need of the state, it will wither away. Dialectic will no longer function, for perfection cannot breed its opposite. In the interim, despite the ultimate inevitability of the process, the function of the state, or of those who infiltrate government in the still democratic nations, is to both lead and coerce men into the necessary mold — to create a new kind of man, socialist man — and to create a new kind of culture under the title of a “new humanism.” These principles are to become effective on a world wide basis, and all mankind is to be welded into a single people — “globalization.” Anything and everything is justified because of the ultimate goal in mind. And when this is achieved, peace and plenty will reign throughout the world.

There are other ideas advocated by this world view that are often played down in “backward” (less progressive) parts of the world for fear of “turning off” potential converts. One of the most important of these is that socialist man will no longer be family oriented. Indeed, love, like everything else, will be free. The children will be brought up in state nurseries (where they can be most effectively educated or “brain washed”) so that woman can be “productive” outside the home. It is the community and ultimately the state that will replace the family unit and children will be taught to give their loyalty and obedience to this entity rather than their parents. And such is only reasonable if the source of all authority resides in the state as representative of the mythological “people.” All this of course is called “scientific” for the “gods” of our age must be given their due respect.

Where does God fit into this picture? Marxist socialists of course are evolutionists and atheists. Religion in their view, is the enemy of “progress,” the enemy of socialism, and hence the enemy of “the people.” After all, how can evolutionary man believe in God? As Lenin said, “Religion and communism are incompatible in theory as well as in practice.” Where they are in control atheism is enforced with rigor. Being skillful Machiavellians and holding that the end justifies the means, they are perfectly willing to infiltrate and/or use religion for their own purposes. Thus it is that the Russian Orthodox Church and liberation theology

became to a large extent but tools in their hands.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Liberation theology is not a South American phenomenon.¹ It is rampant throughout the religious orders, especially among the Jesuits, the Maryknolls and the White Fathers. It is taught in American and European universities under Catholic auspices and fostered on the laity under a variety of disguises such as RENEW. It is not limited to the Catholic Church and is fostered in most of the Protestant denominations and above all by the World Council of Churches. It has its parallels in the other great religions such as Hinduism and Islam. Always it is an attempt to blend Marxist ideology with the most superficial of religious values, and always it proclaims itself as "the religion of the future." In the present essay we shall draw most of our illustrations from the South American scene.

Liberation theology openly proclaims itself to be Marxist socialism. Father Boff tells us it aims "to replace the capitalist system and move towards a new society, a society of the socialist type," and Gutierrez speaks of "the concrete historical march forward in the direction of socialism." Now what does "a society of the socialist type" mean? Does it mean individuals working together to create a more just society? Hardly, for such has been the aim of men of good will since time immemorial. Does it mean a society in which the government limits the greed of its more avaricious citizens and controls some of the means of production? Again the answer must be no, for, as has already been pointed out, such has always been the case. Liberation theology means far more, it means the creation of a Marxist society. As the *Primer encuentro por une Iglesia solidaria* tells us: "Christians must be committed both personally and collectively to the building of a new society. This new society must be a classless society in which there is collective ownership of the means of production." The ownership of private property inevitably leads to oppression and hence to class warfare. The only way to eliminate oppression and to resolve class struggle is to eliminate private property. As Father Ignatio Ellacuria says, "the task of the Church is to eradicate sin, the cause of which is private property."

And so we see that what is aimed at is not just “updating a sluggish old inventory by slapping a new label on obsolete goods,” but the creation of a “new society,” or as Father Segundo calls it, “a new humanity.” Let us be clear, Gutierrez’s “goal is the creation of a new man” with a “new universalistic consciousness... a new way for men and women to be more human... a human being that grows progressively free of all servitude preventing it from being the agent of its own lot in history...”

And how is this to be brought about? The solution lies in the dialectic of “class warfare.” As Father Gutierrez says, “The construction of a different society and a new human being will be authentic only if it is taken on by the oppressed themselves.” One of the first steps in this process is the “conscientization” of the working classes. This means, making them aware of their power and encouraging them to rise against their oppressors — the rich. The next step is for Christians to engage in class struggle. “Class struggle,” says Gutierrez, “is a fact, and neutrality in this matter is impossible... We must avoid getting bogged down in doctrinal analysis — that is, in an attempt to treat the problem outside the framework of the class struggle.” Indeed, the only way one can be a committed Christian is to engage in the class struggle, for it is in this process, and only in this process, that we can meet and love God — the ‘God of history’ who reveals himself only in history. Sin is no longer separation from God, but separation from one’s oppressed brothers. Liberation has its beginning in the battle against the established order. The new Parousia does not come from on high; it proceeds from the same process of salvic liberation which is the work of history. “There is only one way to encounter Christ in the poor and to receive the power to become a son of God and a brother of man,” and that is “to enlist sincerely and effectively in the struggle for liberation... Grace is the solidarity of the people, sin consists in failure to cooperate with that solidarity... Class solidarity lived out within this conflict is the sole means of realizing the Christian imperative.” If this results in violence, such is inevitable, for the “rich” will never give up their power willingly. Indeed, as Father Jose Miranda assures us, “Jesus was a hardened revolutionary” and “explicitly approved of and defended the use of violence.” And so we find liberation theologians committed to a Marxist analysis of the historical pro-

cess, and indeed, Gutierrez openly maintains that Marxism "is the common denominator of all the theologies of liberation" (Father André-Vincent).

Being a historical process, salvation/liberation is for all who "enlist sincerely and effectively in the struggle..." Indeed, Gutierrez tells us God will judge us "by our capacity to create brotherly conditions of life" by which of course he means revolutionary socialism. "Only by loving mankind as he exists in the concrete historical situation can man know and love God." But Christians, unlike atheistic Marxists, are failing to do this. And so, following the logic of his position, Marxists are certainly to be included in the salvific process. What results is a process which turns Marxists into "Christians" and Christians into Marxists.

In Gutierrez's view liberation is not limited to the socio-economic sphere. As he states, "modern man's aspirations include not only liberation from exterior pressures... he seeks likewise an interior liberation, in an individual and intimate dimension." Perhaps now we will see the deeper side of liberation theology. He continues: "He (man) seeks liberation not only on the social plane, but also on a psychological plane. He seeks an interior freedom understood however not as an ideological evasion from social confrontation or as the internationalization of a situation of dependency. Rather it must be in relation to the real world of the human psyche as understood since Freud." If I understand him correctly, liberated man will no longer suffer from penis envy and the Oedipus complex!

I have yet to find a liberation theologian who does not believe in progress or evolution. As Gutierrez says, "various political events have profoundly modified history. The rapid development of science and the consequent mastery of nature; the use of new instrumentation for the understanding of social reality... have hastened the maturation of political consciousness... history demonstrates that the achievements of man are cumulative and allow for even greater achievements in the generations yet to come... there is only a single process of human development definitively and irreversibly assumed by Christ." As a result of progress man is also changing. "The scope of our radical challenge to the prevailing social order would escape us, were we unaware of the change that has taken place in human self-

understanding — the change that has occurred in the approach to truth.” And more: “God reveals Himself only in history and salvation is a historical process. There is only one single history, one single process adding up to the evolution of the species, and in that process, the genesis of humanity is the central axis, a genesis realized through the energy of conflict in the struggle for liberation, class against class. This truth is the primary object of faith.” The culmination of this process will be the acceptance by man of the socialist “truth” — “the break with a social order of oppression and the erection of a classless society.” And so it is that Gutierrez “affirms a utopia on the way to becoming a historical reality.” And this utopian society will, he also assures us, be a scientific machine age and an industrial one. When this is achieved, mankind will be liberated. This is the praxis of liberation, the manifestation of salvation, history in its concrete reality.

So much for “liberation,” but what about theology? According to Gutierrez this science comes from the people, or more precisely, from society. It is his contention that the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas reflected Medieval and feudal society, while liberal theology — the musings of modernists over the past half century — reflected the ideas of the French Revolution. (With regard to the latter he is obviously correct). And currently he promises us his own special brand: “a different analysis of reality” and “a new way to do theology based on praxis” — that is, practice or action — “praxis first, and then reflection... the pastoral activity of the Church,” he tells us, “does not flow as a conclusion from premises... rather it reflects upon it... the only future theology has... is to become the theology of the future... our approach is to reflect critically on the praxis of liberation and not to limp after reality.” Extraordinary statement! The praxis of liberation creates reality and we are obliged to derive our theology from it. But then, such is to be expected if “the Church springs from the people.”

How does the Church “spring from the people?” The answer is that history is “the locus of revelation.” Christ reveals Himself in history; all of scripture is historical. Christ became, not man, but “poor.” Liberation praxis is the transforming action taking in the entire world and all mankind — a manifestation of the creative and redemptive action of God. The discernment of this his-

torical process is what liberation theology is all about. Does it have God for its object? Yes, because "God reveals himself only in history and salvation is a historical process." Not only do theology and the Church spring from the people, but also virtue. "Our new vision, attentive to structural factors, will help Christians to avoid the fallacy of proposing a personal change detached from concrete conditions, as a necessary prerequisite to any social transformation... changing the social and cultural structure is a way of changing the human heart."

Another favorite theme of liberation theologians is that throughout history religion has supported the power structure of self interest. The accusation is false, tiresome and hypocritical. The only time the Church has supported the power structure is when it is convinced either that that structure was itself Catholic and acting in the best interests of society, or when it applied the doctrine of lesser evil. Did the early popes who were jailed and martyred support the existing power structure in Rome? Did the popes of a later era support the Byzantine Empire? Did the Church that produced a St. Thomas Moore and St. John Fisher support the power structure during the Reformation? Did Popes Pius IX, Leo XIII and Saint Pius X support the international financial powers? All this is not to deny but that individual examples of men who fell from their high calling as followers of Christ can be cited — be they Renaissance popes or South American bishops who failed to propagate the encyclicals of Leo the XIII. But what makes this particular theme of the liberation theologians most offensive is their desire to see the Church support communist regimes such as Cuba and Nicaragua (while it was governed by the Sandanistas), and indeed to introduce similar regimes throughout the rest of Latin America. One wonders just how grateful a future generation of Catholics would be when they were to find themselves not only under a socialist regime, but sitting in the inevitable gulags they create.

CRITIQUE OF SOCIALISM AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Scripture teaches us that it is the truth that makes us free. But truth demands our assent which limits our liberty to choose its opposite. Thus it is that St. Paul warns us against those who

would “promise man liberty, while themselves the servants of corruption” and St. Thomas teaches us that “the end at which the devil aims is the revolt of the rational creature from God... This revolt from God is conceived as an end, inasmuch as it is desired under the pretext of liberty...” When traditional man is offered “liberty,” he remembers well the Homeric warning: “Beware of Trojans bearing gifts.” And so it is that we shall examine some of the basic precepts held in common by both socialism and liberation theology.

The creation of a new man: Both liberation theology and socialism dream of creating a “new man,” a “new humanism” and a “new order of society.” Now, the promise of perfecting man *qua* man, and of perfecting society since God is nothing other than a rephrasing of the serpent’s offer: if you eat the apple, “ye shall be as gods.” Only individuals who see man as the product of evolutionary forces can envision such an absurdity. How is it possible for anyone to “create” a man other than God Himself did, a man made in His own image, yet free to sin and fall. Man, like sin, can change his style, but never his nature. He may be “made new” by the laver of Baptism, but even then he carries with him the effects of his “fall.” Neither communists, nor “society” nor evolution can create a new and different kind of man, for “who, by taking thought can add one cubit to this stature?”

Historical determinism is another absurdity. Based on the false principles of progress and evolution coupled with Hegelian dialectics, it assures us that the future inevitably belongs to socialism. It reduces everything to the historical dimension and implicitly denies that man has free will. At the same time it preaches that man has the freedom and obligation to bring about the socialist Parousia. But if the utopian promise is inevitable, why is it that coercion must be used? Why must millions be slaughtered or enslaved in “gulags,” children brainwashed in schools and millions of dollars spent on propaganda? Why must the proletariat — “the most advanced and far-sighted segment of society” — be “conscientized” and brought to the point of rebellion?

Class warfare and rebellion is another principle that violates both Christian doctrine and common sense. Every normal society recognizes differences in human ability, and exists for the benefit

of all its members. Christ did not come for the economically poor, but for all men, be they publican or sinner. It is a matter of historical fact that the proletarian segment of society has never led or achieved a revolution. Like those who cried for the crucifixion of Christ, they have always been tools in the hands of professional agitators — usually the half-educated and poorer *bourgeoisie*. And not surprisingly, their victims have been the innocent and their benefactors Barabases. Class warfare has of course been eliminated in socialist countries such as Cuba and China. The unfortunate workers in these lands know that, if they protest, they will be shot. The proletariat in all these nations still work in dehumanizing factories for minimal wages. Dispossessed of all property, they are further deprived of the right to change employment, refused the privilege of forming independent unions, and forbidden to strike. In not one of the 40 or so socialist societies which existed until only recently was the lot of the worker improved over that which existed prior to the time when “the dictatorship of the proletariat” was established.

The elimination of private property: Based on the Masonic Rousseauist theory that all property is theft and therefore sinful, those who hold this view forget that man has a natural right to possessions. As Pius XI said, “the right to own private property has been given to man by nature, or rather, by the Creator Himself.” Not one line of Scripture and not one statement of the Church Fathers teaches that private property is intrinsically evil. The early Christians — the good thief apart — were not communists. They shared of their surplus under no coercion and loved one another regardless of socio-economic status. It is a matter of common sense that man is entitled to the just fruits of his labor and that, if he works harder than his neighbor, he is entitled to greater rewards. Every communist nation has had to give recognition and come to terms with this principle. But far more terrible is the fact that an individual deprived of all private property is turned into a slave. He either does what he is told or he starves. As Pius XII said, “positive legislation regulating private property may change or more or less restrict its use, but if legislation is to play its part, it must prevent the worker... from being condemned to economic dependence and slavery which is irreconcilable with his rights as a person.” In Russia, until the recent breakdown of

the communist order, those who did not do as the Party wished, lost their jobs, their homes, and indeed all income. If they were unable to show that they were productive members of society for three months, they would be declared to be “parasites” and arrested. Once this occurred, it was off to the “gulags” where apart from being slaves, they were “re-educated.”

Authority and power in the people: Scripture tells us that all authority comes from God. Thus it is that those in power are obliged to enforce God’s laws. The people may of course elect their leaders on the assumption that those chosen are just and capable, and thus can apply God’s laws in an appropriate manner. But to believe that authority comes from the people is absurd because *nihil agit in seipsum*. Socialists claim the source of their authority is the people — or at least the working man. Yet, once in power they inevitably become dictators of the most despicable sort. This is because it is impossible for the state/leader which controls what the people think, read, see, hear and have access to, not to mention controlling the election process, to ever really represent the masses. Not believing in God or any transcendent moral order, controlling what the people think and then claiming to represent these same people, they have no choice but to act as the sole source of authority. This further explains why they must destroy the family and religion — alternative sources of authority are never acceptable. The “dictatorship of the proletariat” was nothing but a bad joke as the events of the last few years have shown.

Coercive utopianism is the inevitable result. Human nature is not as malleable as these “social engineers” would like. And so when in control, communists become coercive, often concluding that one generation must be sacrificed to create an ideal system for the next. As Lenin said, “you can’t make an omelette without breaking a few eggs.” In accord with socialist principles, man must be re-educated to accept his proletarian, property-less and classless status. Those who resist such “progressive” and “scientific” demands are placed in camps and subjected to every Pavlovian technique known to man. And so it is that every socialist dictatorship — the so-called “dictatorships of the people” — results in the establishment of prison gulags and massive military establishments. Those who doubt this must explain why Mao Tse

Tung is estimated to have liquidated between 30 and 60 million people; why Russia, despite all attempts to hid the fact, created massive death camps in Siberia, why the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot decimated over a quarter of the Cambodian population, slaughtered all but 2,024 of 23,661 teachers, and only allowed 600 out of 82,000 Buddhist monks to survive; why over 3,000 Vietnamese boat people risked their lives every month to escape their homeland 10 years after socialism was established in Vietnam. Liberation theologians and socialists may dismiss such questions as “*bourgeois* logic,” but surely the millions of victims who have fled these worker paradises are not all “running dogs of capitalists.” Ask a Solzhenitsyn.

The classless society: A society in which the diversity of qualifications and hereditary aptitudes are ignored or destroyed, in which everyone is reduced to the level of a property-less proletarian, is both a monstrosity and an absurdity. Even if, thanks to progress and industry, goods are plentiful and work is reduced to a minimum, some work will have to be done. Who will clean the latrines and who will mine the coal? Who will decide how long and at what task each of us must labor? Why is it, we must ask, that in socialist societies that claim to be marching towards this utopian state, the most nefarious form of class structure is enforced — that of party membership? And why does this elite — the harbingers of a new society — have separate schools, housing, hospitals and stores, not available to the proletariat? Liberation theologians should further note that in this perfect classless society — a society in which men no longer have to struggle to be perfect even as our Father in Heaven is perfect — there will be no room, and indeed, no need for priests. Despite the fact that even extreme utopians do not dream of eliminating old age, illness, suffering and death, mankind will no longer be allowed the Sacraments and the consolations of religion. Clearly the Teilhardian dream of bringing mankind to “point omega” will end us all in the “nosphere.”

CONCLUSION

Socio-economic systems invariably reflect the philosophical premises on which they are based. Traditional economics was

static, theocentric and sacred in nature, and based on a transcendent metaphysics. Communism, having “no enemies on the left,” is the end point and the complete inversion. It sees everything in the light of historical determinism; it proclaims in the words of Marx that “man is the only supreme being for man;” it is patently secular, and is founded on the very denial of metaphysics. It is in fact a “counter-religion” offering its victims a false faith, a false hope, and a false charity. It is a “Devil’s Gospel.” Unfortunately, the more modern man separates himself from his traditional beliefs, the more he accepts the false “opiates” of progress and evolution, the more he sees himself as an economic and psychological animal devoid of higher intelligence and free will, the more attractive appears to him the Marxist apple.

Communism is not the dialectical antithesis of capitalism, but rather its logical progression and ultimate achievement. Sharing basically similar views as to the nature of man and reality, it is able to enforce with rigor the methodologies developed by its parent. Mankind, increasingly enslaved to economics today, will, we are promised, become totally subservient to the economic state of tomorrow. The reason why the Western and so-called democratic world still provides mankind with a modicum of security and freedom is not because it has progressed so far to the left, but because it has not totally divorced itself from its traditional roots.

Religious leaders, seduced by “the spirit of our times” and advocating an *aggiornamento* between religious values and socialist ideation are veritable wolves in sheep’s clothing. However well intentioned, their actions can only result in increasing the sufferings of the destitute and disenfranchised members of society and the total alienation of man. The slaves of a future utopia will have nothing but contempt and hatred for those responsible for their seduction. The idea that the Church should support and abet this “process” borders on blasphemy. And thus it is that the traditional Church, speaking through the mouth of Pius XI called socialism and communism “intrinsically evil” and “absolutely contrary to the natural law itself” because, as Pius IX said, “once adopted, it would utterly destroy the rights, property and possessions of all men, and even of society itself.” Pope Leo XIII, certainly no enemy of the “working man,” called it “a mortal plague

which insinuates itself into the very marrow of human society only to bring about its ruin." Pius XI as recently as 1937 called it "a pseudo ideal of justice, of equality and of fraternity," and added that "no one who would save Christian civilization may collaborate with it in any undertaking whatsoever."

If mankind is to have any modicum of security and justice in this world, it must once again turn to the rational principles on which all traditional societies were based. This does not mean that we must revert to Medieval socio-economic structures, but that we must study and re-apply the metaphysical principles in new and effective ways. Monetary reforms can be introduced that limit usury and take the minting of coins away from the banks. Tax structures can be modified so as to foster the greatest possible distribution of property, and to encourage, not class conflict, but cooperation between owners and employees. The means of production can be returned to the worker. It is by no means difficult to prevent the use of land for single export crop production which benefits only a small number of individuals and to adopt modern agrarian technology to the small farm so that each nation produces more than enough for its people. Beyond this, man must be re-educated — not by Pavlovian techniques — but by means of reason, to desire to make only those things which are both necessary and worth creating. Above all, man must learn once again what he is and why he was created. Finally, Christians who pray that God's Kingdom may come on earth should recognize that such will never occur until God reigns in our hearts, in our families, and by extension, in society. *Viva Christo Rey* — Long live Christ the King.

NOTES

1. A NOTE ON THE ROOTS OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY: Unfortunately Liberation theologians and socialists in general can find much to support their attitudes in positions taken by the post-Conciliar Church. Vatican II not only gave its stamp of approval to the false concepts of evolution and progress, it also promoted the idea that salvation was a historical and communitarian process. Thus it advocated the development of a "new humanism" and the unity of all men under the title of "the unity of the People of God." Beyond this it advocated a "wholesome socialization" towards which man was inevitably progressing, and refused, despite multiple requests by some 400 attending fathers, to condemn communism. John

XXIII made the post-Conciliar position absolutely clear in stating that “the Church is not a dam against socialism” and further emphasized in his first Encyclical that, in so far as “all men are equal by reason of their natural dignity, there are no communities that are superior by nature and none that are inferior by nature. All political communities are of equal natural dignity since they are bodies whose membership is made of these same human beings.” No wonder the left was delighted.

Paul VI held to similar views. He was almost effusive in his praise of both China and Cuba. As he said in a special audience in April of 1976, “the world will march irresistibly towards the new order and the new man for which we all long. Cuba will play its part, joyful, and disinterestedly in this grand joint undertaking.” John Paul II has occasionally criticized the excesses of communism as such. One of his first acts after his election was the re-appointment of Cardinal Caseroli — the originator of detente — as his Secretary of State. In his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* he speaks of “satisfactory socialization” with approval, and in his speech at Pueblo he publicly stated that he had no objection to the expropriation of private property, providing it was “correctly carried out.” When, one must ask, was it incorrectly carried out? Certainly not in Poland where the Church lost all her schools, colleges and hospitals — the gifts of the faithful — for Cardinal Wyszynski stated at the time that “in a communist country the Church should renounce its rights to private property.” Lest there be any doubt, he bluntly told Archbishop Romero before his death that “the Church” — his Church — “was not anti-communist.”

Much has been written about recent condemnations of liberation theology on the part of the Vatican. It should be clear that socialism as such was never condemned, but only certain aspects of this nefarious and anti-Christian doctrine. Specifically these are: (1) the attempt to replace Christ by the elevation of a social class, or by placing the poor at the center of Christianity; (2) the de-divinizing of Christ by making him, not the unique Son of God, but a model exemplar of a political revolutionary; (3) the appeal to class warfare and violence which is seen as hindering the unification of all Christians; (4) objection to the “horizontation” of the Scriptures — interpreting them only on the socio-political level, and (5) attacks upon the hierarchical structure of the Church. While one can laud such criticisms, it is clear that it is a classical case of attacking the symptoms and not the disease.

What is the Western Tradition?

A Trinitarian Interpretation

Lee Daniel Snyder

To define the western tradition is a challenging and difficult task, especially for the western historian. Gone are the certainties and simplicities of the recent past; the myth of progress in its various forms, liberal, Marxist, scientific, is no longer compelling after the disasters of the twentieth century and the rediscovery of the non-western world. Indeed it is quite natural, perhaps even inevitable, that we heirs of the western tradition should focus upon its complexity, diversity, ambiguity, its problems and inner debates, its contradictory movements and radical protests, because we cannot see it from the outside nor analyze it with impartial objectivity. We must reject its inadequacies, adapt its outmoded forms, and carry on its successes, for it is our own heritage. Indeed, if Carl Becker was right, that every generation must rewrite the past, we might add, that every intellectual movement, every reform movement, must rewrite history in its own image, in order to reinforce its cause and justify its vision. Consequently the complexity of our past can overwhelm us and the contradictory interpretations of historians can discredit all efforts to see the past objectively.

Nevertheless we do not surrender to subjectivism and political propaganda, for the achievements of recent historical scholarship are sufficient, in our view, to justify a cautious pursuit of objectivity. Moreover, the advantages of having an objective understanding of our own past are sufficiently great to reinforce such an effort, for as long as we have only partisan interpretations of our heritage, we can do little more than support or reject them, but with an objective and accurate understanding of our history, we have the freedom to pick and choose, to preserve or discontinue various elements from our past because we know the

historical circumstances under which they arose, the strategy for survival they represented, their costs, their alternatives and their relationships to other elements. If we are ever going to make illuminating and suggestive comparisons between our tradition and other major historical traditions, like the Islamic or Indian, and go beyond vague impressions, we need an objective understanding of our heritage as a critical starting point.

Although need does not determine possibility, we would like to propose an approach to the problem that in our view does provide great objectivity and at the same time a richer and more interesting interpretation of the western heritage. First of all, we want to reject all of those approaches which seek to define the West only in terms of its uniqueness, its difference from all other traditions. If such is the case, all we can do is retell the story of our development, or perhaps distill its unique spirit. Spengler's vision of the West as the Faustian spirit, for instance, while suggestive, is obviously over-simplified, romantic, and not viable among professional historians. The West is too complex to be explained in terms of one "spirit" and so are all of the other cultural traditions in history. A "unique story," while it has its place, for there are unique elements and unique configurations, nevertheless must be grounded in a more general awareness of the historical process at work everywhere. We see this uniqueness at least partially arising from the interaction of certain patterns and processes common to all complex cultures.

On the other hand, we also reject the opposite extreme, the effort to reduce all cultures to one basic pattern or process. This has been a popular option in recent times; its most famous examples are perhaps the theories of Karl Marx and P. Sorokin. But these also oversimplify history in another way; they undermine our ability to appreciate the diversities of culture, for the "real story" underlying every tradition is really the same story. If every story, the underlying structure of every cultural tradition, really is the same, then history loses its importance as a basic form of human knowledge. In our view, the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes.

The really important, intellectually epic break in historiography for us came a long time ago with St. Augustine of Hippo, for he concluded that history could not be understood in terms of one

pattern alone, but involved the interaction of two very different patterns. While for him the City of God unfolded in a linear fashion according to the divine plan, the City of Man embodied a characteristically cyclical pattern, with the rise and fall of empires. These ideas do need to be reformulated for a modern context, and we believe they can be, but our purpose here is not to present a new Augustine, but to stress that historical science need not be limited to the search for one basic pattern, be it say either liberal progress or Marxian dialectic. The constantly changing interaction of two or three quite different patterns provides a much more exciting, complex, and defensible theory of history.

In order to analyze and define the western tradition, and indeed any complex cultural tradition, we would propose the use of three ideal types of cosmologies or basic visions, each quite different from the others but consistent within itself, capable of providing a coherent understanding of man, nature, and the Divine, but often found in history in combination with one of the others. In other words, we are arguing that cultural history is best understood as the constant interaction between these three types of cosmologies, their tensions, rebellions against one another, and temporary integrations. And furthermore we are arguing that the western tradition is best defined as a characteristic balance among them.

The first ideal type we will call the unitary cosmology. It is perhaps the most familiar and easiest to understand, for it sees the whole universe as an integrated whole. Man is integrated with nature, part of a consistent larger whole, often a microcosm over against the macrocosm. The Divine, in whatever form it is traditionally seen, is also integrated, demythologized, abstracted, pictured as the ground of being, its essence or its structure. In this context, evil becomes disorder, disharmony, disruption of the natural order, failure to find and accept one's place in the system. Individuals must find their place; to pursue one's own faulty vision in opposition to the natural order is self-destructive. The same holds true for society. Evil has no independent existence. The hero of this cosmology is the one who conquers his own disordered impulses and accepts his place, indeed becomes a model of integration with Reality.

In order to achieve integration, wisdom, i.e., understanding of the true order of reality, is usually critical, but within this type there seems to be a spectrum of options depending upon the accessibility of that wisdom. At one end of the spectrum, this wisdom is easily accessible and public and rational, as say in Aristotelianism, the scientific vision of man in nature; at the other end, wisdom is difficult, esoteric, transcendental, made available only through great teachers who have broken through the illusions of everyday life, i.e., the mystical vision of man united with Reality. For the West, Plato is probably the greatest fountainhead of this option.

The second ideal type, although not as wide-spread historically as the first, still remains equally coherent and important for any complete analysis. We will call it the dualistic cosmology, for its fundamental principle is the eternal battle between right and wrong, or good versus evil. Typically the battle is dramatized and mythologized into a cosmic struggle between God and the demonic forces. While the focus may shift from the human battle against injustice and sin to the cosmic battle against evil, the divine and human elements are closely linked. Evil becomes typically rebellion against God and against His law; it is an active and powerful force, even though it may be ultimately defeated. Man may be the victim of this conflict, or a free participant, but refusal to fight is almost as bad as open rebellion. Since it is difficult to define nature in such terms, we might say that this cosmology is in tension with nature. It may be ignored, left as a largely irrelevant backdrop, or sometimes recruited into the war as God's ally (natural law as an example of obedience) or as God's enemy (the physical world become literally evil). Turning to nature can be interpreted as turning away from God who stands outside of nature.

In such a vision, the chief human virtue becomes courage, not wisdom or temperance; the ideal becomes the epic hero who fights against overwhelming odds, and sometimes dies the martyr. Time is intensified, not transcended, as in the unitary type; sacred history tells the story of victories and defeats. As in the first type, we can identify a spectrum of options, not so much in terms of wisdom, although this of course depends upon how one defines wisdom, but in terms of locating the battleground. At one

extreme the cosmic battle becomes so intense that man becomes largely a spectator, the apocalyptic vision; at the other extreme the battle becomes ontological, the struggle between the physical and spiritual levels of reality, the Gnostic vision. In between, the battle involves the continuing struggle against man's sin and injustice. Instead of dependence upon the seer-teacher-sage for leadership as in the unitary type, this vision looks to the prophet and perhaps warrior-king to lead the way. Its archetype for the West is undoubtedly the prophet of ancient Israel.

Our third and last ideal type will be called the social cosmology, for we believe it is based on the principle of social cooperation versus anarchy. While it may seem problematic to the philosopher to combine the terms social and cosmology, in our view this category can be quite coherent in its own terms and is indispensable for historical analysis. The harmonious functioning of a large complex society can easily be seen as the supreme value by those impressed by its power or those threatened with its collapse. In contrast, the undisciplined individual that foolishly destroys the social order can be perceived as the chief source of evil, although in this case evil can be quickly dissolved into lack of maturity, lack of refinement, or thoughtless selfishness. Since the objective is cooperation freely embraced, a head-on conflict that must destroy one or the other combatant is out of place.

In our view this position is based on the conviction that culture is not only distinct from nature but superior to it, that man must rise above his animal nature and find a place in refined society, built through creative freedom and operating on principles different from those of nature. To avoid anarchy, animal nature must be transcended; at best, nature can only provide a stage or platform for the social process, although a very stable and orderly one. Man is unique; his destiny is determined by his own creative freedom. The Divine also tends to fade away; the gods or God may provide inspiration or guidelines or limits, but the creative task is left to human energy and skill. Within this arena, we also see a spectrum of options, in this case in terms of the need for innovation. At one extreme, the chief task is defending and preserving the sacred tradition, worked out by the founding fathers; at the other extreme, the chief task is moving as rapidly as possible to the ideal society of the future. In any case, history is the

source of inspiration, not nature, and the ideal is the Romantic hero, who has learned balance, restraint, refinement, and respect for others, often through painful adventures. In the West, we see Cicero as a great classic spokesman for this position.

Having defined our three ideal types, we must now turn to defining the western tradition, to see how these types can help clarify the analysis. First of all, all historians agree that the West was the heir of classical Greek civilization, but what was the nature of that heritage? In our view, the Greeks had suppressed the dualistic cosmology early in their history. The Homeric epics were specifically designed to accomplish that end, for Achilles and Odysseus were not heroes in a war against evil; right and wrong were deliberately blurred. Each struggled to master his own emotions, that destructive madness so well described by Dodd, Achilles unsuccessfully and Odysseus successfully. So in our terminology, they were really Romantic heroes, teaching the lesson of temperance and restraint, to lead society beyond violence and anarchy.

Consequently, Greek tradition, to make a long story short, at least by the end of the 5th century B.C., involved an on-going debate between the two surviving cosmologies, a debate between *nomos* and *physis*, between the Sophists and Socrates, between the rhetoricians representing the social cosmology and the philosophers representing the unitary cosmology, a debate continuing down to the age of St. Augustine. Plato did his best to demolish the social cosmology by crushing the Sophists and absorbing politics, literature, and ethics into his great rational world-system where man retained a unique place (although the poets still had difficulty fitting into the Republic), but the rhetorical tradition continued independently with its own rival schools and leaders. In our view, Cicero, with his ideal of the orator-statesman, of social harmony and the sacred tradition of the Republic, still remains the best spokesman for the social cosmology in spite of his efforts to master philosophy.

In sum, Greek tradition involved a balanced and creative tension between the unitary and social cosmologies, where each retained a separate voice in a continuing debate. Moreover, social tradition tended to be defined in rational terms, like Roman Law, and philosophy tended to emphasize ethics and politics, like Sto-

icism, as each cosmology influenced the other. With the weakening of social tradition, however, in the 3rd century A.D., philosophy was able to move off in a more mystical direction, with Neoplatonism.

Meanwhile, through the success of Christianity, a very different cultural tradition was finding a powerful voice. In our view, the heritage of ancient Israel was dominated by the conflict between the dualistic cosmology, as dramatized in an all-powerful God demanding justice and destroying His enemies, and the unitary cosmology, here embodied in a complex ritualism of natural fertility and the institution of sacred monarchy. The social cosmology seems to be missing, at least since the rebellion of Absalom. The prophets cried out for justice and obedience; the kings preferred unity and ritual. After the exile, with prophets rare and kingship gone, a compromise emerged in legalism, a revealed law of both justice and ritual, comprehensive and permanent. The contrast with Greek tradition is sharp and clear.

In the midst of debate about the balance within this compromise, Jesus proposed and St. Paul confirmed a radical new alignment. In order to recover the dualistic cosmology with its radical call to obedience, following in the footsteps of the prophets, Jesus repudiated the unitary cosmology, rejecting both Pharisaic legalism and Sadducean ritualism, but He also rejected the extreme dualism of the revolutionary zealots, thus leaving His followers suspended in a mysterious in-between age, awaiting the Son of Man and the final triumph of righteousness but already enjoying the loving fellowship of the Church. He thus allowed a reemergence of the social cosmology in tension with the dualistic. In our view, St. Paul's conflict with the Judaizers, his rejection of salvation through the good works of the law, his stress on salvation in hope in a Spirit-filled community, all reinforced this new direction. While early Christians quickly found ways of compromising with the Greek tradition, nevertheless their predominant stress on the dualistic perspective was a challenging force within the Roman Empire and difficult to assimilate.

Consequently for the Christian of the 4th century, with the triumph of a Christianity that was ready and able to fight for its distinctive commitments, but living in a revitalized Roman

Empire, all three cosmologies were alive and challenging and demanding some new integration. For the West, most historians would agree that it was St. Augustine of Hippo who put together the characteristic combination which becomes the starting point for the modern West. To simplify a complex story, Augustine was converted to the unitary cosmology through Neo-Platonism and his passion for Truth, but, although he retained many elements in his thought, in the end he was forced to reject Neo-Platonism because of its incompatibility with his experience of dualism. The "One" and the "rational man" of Neo-Platonism gave way to the mystery of the Trinity and the mystery of the inner man struggling with his destiny, as vividly captured in the *Confessions*.

Augustine also encountered the social cosmology in one form in Donatism (interpreted as a form of Utopianism) and rejected it in favor of the mystery of the sacramental community of love. He encountered another form in Pelagianism (with its stress on moral freedom) and rejected it in favor of the mystery of grace. And finally, in his youth, he had experienced the dualistic cosmology in an extreme form, Manicheanism, had rejected it, and was unwilling to fall back into its easy answers. In our view thus he becomes a great seminal figure precisely because he experienced and rejected extreme forms of all three options and yet, captured by none of them, he was able to weave elements from all three into a distinctive but complex new vision of Reality. Providence guides the individual, free and yet not free, and the Church, social and yet more, in their momentary struggle against evil in history, towards a final fulfillment that will unify creation in love. The dualistic struggle against evil is real, but will be resolved into a larger unity.

We are arguing that the western tradition is defined precisely by that complex and dynamic balance of all three cosmologies, which are constantly breaking apart, prophets and reformers stressing the dualistic, humanists and educators the social, and philosophers and mystics the unitary, but also being constantly reintegrated in different patterns. One can see this process dramatically illustrated in the High Middle Ages, the first great period of western cultural development. All of these options were explored in the ferment of the 12th century, in the search for an authentic Christian society, but to make a long story short, let us focus on the 13th century reintegration, often called the Medieval

synthesis, and particularly on the figure of Dante.

Even more than Thomas Aquinas, Dante in our view represents the integration of all the vital forces in Medieval culture. For instance, in order to describe a coherent, rational, integrated universe that begins with the physical realities of nature and extends through man to include the supernatural world of Heaven, he not only picks up the results of Christian Aristotelianism (St. Thomas and the balance of nature with the supernatural) but also integrates the best findings of Medieval science, astronomy, geography, numerology, medicine, and optics. Hell and purgatory are carefully specified as part of the concrete, physical world, not as some mythological fantasy land. Man, of course, may resist this order, but he either learns to master himself and accept his place in the system or he suffers the consequences, and consequences that further demonstrate the over-all order of the system by designing each punishment to fit the particular fault. If that were not enough, Dante also integrates the traditions of mystical theology, running from St. Bernard, through the Victorines and Bonaventure, by describing the beatific vision and the ultimate union with God at the highest levels of Paradise. And so nature and the supernatural, science and mysticism, philosophy and theology, man as sinner and saint, all are integrated in an orderly and purposeful world. Dante himself becomes the archetypical hero, learning to conquer himself and accept his place in the system.

While this powerful expression of the unitary cosmology does dominate Dante's vision, the dualistic is not absent, for at another level the *Divine Comedy* is a passionate attack on sin and injustice. Repeatedly he attacks Florence and the violence and injustice of contemporary city life; he condemns tyrants and praises enlightened rulers; he glorifies the heritage of the Roman Empire and is scandalized by the corruption of the Church and Papacy. While the Devil is frozen in ice, evil is certainly an active, powerful and destructive force. The strange pageant of the Church at the end of the *Purgatorio* does not indicate any easy or impending end to the struggle against evil. At this level Dante's vision becomes historical, a defense of the justice of the Roman Empire and an attack on all rebels, whether urban or papal. That hero of the radical Franciscans, Joachim of Flora, is given a prominent place in Paradise, for the Joachimite heresy was the

bearer of radical dualism. Still one must recognize that the dualistic is subordinated to the unitary, as evil tends to become anarchy and personal sin.

While this strategy enables Dante to incorporate history, politics, and the reform tradition going back to Peter Damian and Gregory VII, there is still another side of Medieval culture that does not escape his attention: the social cosmology embodied in Classical humanism and Romantic literature. In regard to the former, one must admit that the rhetorical humanism revitalized by John of Salisbury comes through rather weakly, but Dante still makes every effort to incorporate Classical learning, constantly pairing Roman and Christian figures, and chooses Virgil for his guide with deliberate intention. It is in regard to the latter, however, where the social cosmology comes through most powerfully, for Dante is also the heir of the courtly poetic tradition, with roots back to the 12th century troubadours, as one of the greatest love poets of his day. The ennobling love for Beatrice, the suffering and humiliation on her behalf, the pursuit of adventures, the need to understand the true meaning of love and to refine his sensibilities, all came from a rich secular tradition. Through the *Divine Comedy* Dante slowly works out his own reconciliation between courtly love and Christian love, through recognizing a whole series of types and forms of love, climaxing in the pure love for God. Dante the lover, joins Dante the Crusader and Dante the theologian and scientist, while Dante the poet shapes sensibilities and elevates society.

Dante thus represents in our view the typically western attempt to integrate all three cosmologies, following in the steps of St. Augustine. Yet the integration is complex and fragile, and one must add typically Gothic or Medieval in that clearly the unitary is in the dominant position with the dualistic second. Even in Dante's lifetime, however, this Medieval synthesis was breaking down. According to some scholars like Gordon Leff, the condemnations of deterministic Averroism in 1277 shook the confidence of theologians and turned many towards the dualistic, towards renewed concern for moral responsibility. Then William Ockham argued that no religious doctrine could be supported by reason, and the alliance of theology and philosophy collapsed. Some moved off into mysticism, like Meister Eckhardt, and many

became the victims of heresy hunters. The crisis in the Papacy and the break-down of social order with war, famine and plague reinforced these trends. Nominalist theologians recouped with a new integration based upon a probabilistic metaphysics, religious authoritarianism, and emotional moralism, but many were not satisfied. A revival of the social cosmology did take place in aristocratic circles through a new fascination with chivalry, but just at the time when the knight was becoming out-moded as a military weapon. Thus it turned into nostalgia.

Much more significant historically, and itself a major step in the reformulation of the western tradition, was a different revival of the social, in Classical garb: Italian humanism. Petrarch, the Father of humanism, rejected philosophy, theology, science, and law, i.e., the various forms of unitary cosmology, and rediscovered Classical rhetoric and made Cicero his cultural hero. In spite of complexities, in our view the Italian Renaissance is best seen as a powerful resurgence of the social cosmology, challenging the old order and calling for reform in all aspects of the social and cultural heritage. While the early humanists kept an alliance with the dualistic, an even ascetic stress on morality, the pressures of an increasingly aristocratic society and the ambiguities of Italian politics pushed much of humanism into a more consistently social pattern, producing the open-ended political theory of Machiavelli and the elegant style of Castiglione's courtier.

While some did reach out for a new alliance with the unitary cosmology through the revival of Neo-Platonism, which did produce some intriguing figures from Ficino to Bruno, this strategy always remained a minority phenomenon, and evolved into esotericism. The less dramatic revival of Aristotelianism and the slow accumulation of science, in the long run, proved to be a much more viable form of the unitary perspective. Still the most influential humanist of the 16th century, Erasmus of Rotterdam, kept his distance from philosophy and only reluctantly utilized Scholastic theology. Almost a new Cicero, he stands as a classic embodiment of the social cosmology, with his optimism, his stress on education and personal refinement in a complex, evolving society, with his concern for social responsibility and his aversion to both conservative and radical dogmatism. He was impatient with "irrelevant" speculation and outmoded practices,

but equally opposed to the violence and confrontation of the Reformation. He was indeed the father of modern liberalism, and liberal Christianity.

Luther, on the other hand, and much of the Reformation, represented a powerful resurgence of the dualistic cosmology. Like an Old Testament prophet, he was ready to proclaim the Truth and expose falsehood even if the whole world should fall to pieces. There could be no toleration for rebellion against God's revealed Word. Luther rejected the unitary; he rejected any alliance with philosophy as intellectually corrupting. He even went beyond St. Augustine in eliminating the Neo-Platonic structure of growing in love for God. One must grow in serving others, but the relationship with God was defined by faith and God's decree of forgiveness. We could not improve upon it by human effort. In our view, this emphasis also eliminates mysticism, but certainly not religious intensity and a readiness for martyrdom.

While Luther did thus repudiate the unitary, his attitude towards the social is much more complex. On the one hand, he vigorously opposed Erasmian humanism, but on the other he maintained his partnership with Melancthon, the great German humanist and educational reformer. Luther's effort to reformulate ethics as service to others did allow an appropriation of much of the humanist heritage. In other words, the Reformation revived the dualist cosmology, and shifted the alliance of religion from the unitary to the social, a pattern which we believe has become characteristic of the post-Medieval West.

This shift of course did not occur without opposition. The Catholic Reformation tried to sustain the unitary by revivals of mysticism and Scholasticism, but in our view, by the beginning of the 17th century, the dominant force within Catholic Europe was also a version of the new alliance between the dualistic and social, a continuing war against sin and hereby within a society to be shaped and molded by Christian and Classical principles. We would call it the Jesuit strategy.

In another sense, however, western interest in the unitary perspective did not disappear but was shifted to a new level. Since religion was no longer substantiated by a theory of nature, nature could be reconceptualized in its own terms, independent of man and society. The Scientific Revolution of the 17th century

did precisely that, building up the image of a mechanical, purposeless physical world, although Galileo was still caught by a lingering remnant of the old Scholastic version of unitary science. Interest in science and technology, a characteristic part of the West, thus does not fade away but grows and flourishes because it has a definite place in the larger cultural tradition. Descartes made the classic formulation, a philosophical dualism, where the orderly, mechanical world of nature provides a stage or platform for human society, which operates by different basic principles. In our view, there is no better image of Baroque Europe than this picture of nature as a stage for culture, the human drama.

And what is our situation today? In our view, the characteristic dynamism of the West has been sustained by a continuing dominance of the dualistic-social alliance, but now reformulated in a secular spirit. Christianizing society has been replaced by the struggle to create an ideal society in the near future, a society defined by one of the versions of progress, liberalism, nationalism, or even Marxism. Science has been left either to pursue its separate way or to be integrated by subordination, i.e., reduced to a pragmatic, utilitarian enterprise that provides society with more tools with which to manipulate nature. While many efforts have been made to reintegrate nature and culture, science and society, and thus restore the unitary cosmology to a dominant position, one might question whether any have succeeded. In most cases, as in functionalism, because of the prestige and success of science, human society is absorbed into nature, i.e., into purposeless series of processes resulting in the loss of the dualistic element. With no battle to fight for the Good, western society tends to become demoralized, for its long-standing commitment to the dualistic is denied, and intellectual rebellion breaks out. Some will return to Cartesian dualism and argue the unique character of man and society, irreducible to natural science; some may seek a new theory of Nature that is more dynamic and purposeful. Some may turn away from both science and society and embrace a form of mysticism.

In other terms, the social cosmology must be sustained by a strong sense of its future destiny or by a rich pride in its past heritage, or else it will degenerate into a hedonistic individualism,

where might makes right and pleasure is the only value, as it did with the later Sophists opposed by Socrates. And in the West the alliance with the dualistic cosmology has stressed the vision of a better society in the future. Now, however, for various complex reasons, we have been losing confidence in the future. Our vision has become cloudy and we are suffering the consequences. If our analysis is correct, various solutions are possible. We could restore our alliance with the dualistic, i.e., revitalize our vision of the future, as in some new concept of progress or in Marxism. We could abandon dualism and focus on preserving the great achievements of our past, traditionalism. Or we could restore the unitary cosmology to dominance, reintegrate man and society with nature, and work for a balanced, stable, non-growing world order on space-ship Earth, as in the ecology movement. Are there other possibilities? Could we ever go back to a balance of all three cosmologies as in St. Augustine? Since we believe that history is an openended process and not a deterministic system, the historian's task is perhaps complete in identifying the alternatives and raising the basic questions.

Islamic Science and Western Science — Common Heritage, Diverse Destinies

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

To understand all that separates traditional science in its worldview, methodology, goal and significance from modern science, no comparison is as revealing as that of Islamic and Western science. There are many different types and schools of traditional science such as the Egyptian, Indian and Chinese,¹ but such sciences were either cultivated in areas far away from Europe and remained completely removed from the stages of the development of Western science or preceded it by many centuries. Therefore, these schools of traditional science are seen more as being of mere historical interest independent of Western science and as distant developments of a completely foreign nature rather than parallel traditions to be noted for their contrast with and similarities to what was to take place over the centuries in the West. In the case of Islamic science, which is one of the most important schools of traditional science both because of the wealth of its achievements and the survival of its teaching, there is the extraordinary phenomenon of the growth of a major scientific tradition which shared more or less with the West the common heritage of Antiquity and a similar religious and philosophical universe, but which, in contrast to what occurred in the West during the Renaissance and the 17th century, remained faithful to the traditional point of view. Moreover, this tradition was itself influential in the rise of Medieval science in the West, which still possessed a traditional character before the scientific revolution, and yet Islamic science did not share in any way in those upheavals which transformed the science cultivated by a Robert Grosseteste

in his treatise *On Light* to the physics of Newton's *Principia*.

It is true that Islam inherited certain aspects of the scientific heritage of the Mediterranean world which were not known to the West, not to speak of the sciences of India and ancient Persia which never reached the Occident save through Islamic science itself. Islam inherited nearly the whole corpus of Aristotelian science including the works of his Alexandrian commentators, Platonic cosmology, most of the important scientific achievements of Alexandria and its satellites in Pergamon, etc., and the more esoteric strands of Greek science associated with both Pythagoreanism and Hermeticism.² Moreover, Muslim scientists became acquainted early in the history of Islam with Sassanid astronomy and pharmacology and the Indian sciences, especially medicine, astronomy and mathematics. They also gained knowledge of certain aspects of Babylonian science which were not even transmitted to the Greeks.

Not all of these strands of the sciences of Antiquity reached the Christian West. Much of the Aristotelian heritage, Hermeticism and Pythagoreanism remained unknown in Europe until the second millennium of the Christian era. It might be argued that the heritage of western science and Islamic science were therefore not the same. But the fact remains that both were heir to the sciences of the same world and their knowledge of the natural order, concept of law, causality and general cosmology drew from the same sources although each developed these inherited concepts differently. Moreover, even if this difference of early heritage be accepted, the West itself became heir to early Islamic science and, through this science, to the sources which Islam had inherited and itself developed for several centuries before the translations made in Toledo and elsewhere from the 11th and 12th centuries onward made Islamic science available in Latin. Even if one leaves aside the earlier history of science in the West which points to the much richer development of Islamic science from the 8th to the 11th century than anything to be seen in Christian Europe at this time, the fact remains that by the 13th century Medieval European science was developing along lines parallel to and usually based upon Islamic science. These two traditions were much closer to each other than, let us say, Medieval Latin science and Chinese science or even Indian and Chinese science.

Considering the fact that Christianity and Islam belong to the same family of religions and that the philosophical schools of Islam soon came to find their counterparts in both Western Judaism and Christianity, one might have expected science to “develop”³ in the Christian West along lines similar to those which one observes in traditional Islamic civilization. This parallelism would seem to be especially dictated by similarity of methods, cosmological and philosophical ideas concerning space, time, matter, motion, etc. and the goal and end of the sciences of nature as means of discovering the wisdom of God found in both Islamic and Medieval western science. The School of Chartres, Albertus Magnus, Robert Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, Raymond Lull and many others seemed to be cultivating sciences very similar in nature, method and scope to those of the Muslims from whom they had learned so much.

Yet, in the West by the 14th century nominalism was already gaining the upper hand in theological circles while Christian philosophy was gradually becoming eclipsed. While during what is called the Renaissance, science in the West was still to a large extent of a traditional character, philosophical ideas based on rationalism and humanism were becoming dominant and preparing the ground for that scientific revolution which was brought about by Descartes, Galileo and finally Newton. Between Robert Grosseteste and Newton, at least the Newton of the *Principia*, or Roger Bacon and Francis Bacon a transformation took place in the understanding of the meaning of science which was not at all either emulated or repeated independently in the Islamic world. The modern astronomy and physics of a Galileo or Newton were based on an already secularized view of the cosmos, the reduction of nature to pure quantity which could then be treated mathematically, and a complete separation between the knowing subject and the object to be known based on Cartesian dualism. A new science was indeed born, one which discovered much in the realm of quantity, but at the price of the forgetting of the traditional worldview and the neglect of the spiritual dimension of nature — a forgetfulness with dire consequences whose extremely bitter fruits are only now being fully tasted.⁴

In contrast to these transformations in the West, in the Islamic world the sacred character of God’s creation continued to domi-

nate the intellectual horizons of man.⁵ The symbolic sciences of nature as expounded during previous centuries from the time of Jābir ibn Hayyān to that of Suhrawardī continued to be cultivated while mathematical and physical sciences continued to be studied in the bosom of the symbolic sciences and in the light of the metaphysical and cosmological principles derived from the Quranic revelation.⁶ On the philosophical level such figures as the contemporary of Descartes, Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, added a significant new chapter to the Islamic philosophy of nature but in the sciences themselves innovation decreased while the knowledge of the traditional sciences continued as shown by the application of these sciences in such domains as architecture and the making of dyes. A civilization which created the Shah Mosque of Isfahan or the Taj Mahal in India could not be simply dismissed as being of no significance in the realm of the sciences and technology nor could the existing traditional sciences be considered as insignificant simply because they did not change and develop in the manner of western science.

Muslims continued to create glories of art and thought and to preserve traditional technology and science within their own traditional worldview based on the harmony of man and nature and awareness of the spiritual significance of nature in man's life, while the West was rapidly developing a science based on considering nature as a "thing" or an "it" to be quantitatively studied, conquered, controlled, manipulated and finally, despite the opposition of many scientists, raped with such ferocity that the results now threaten human existence itself. The process continued until the applications of that science based on power rather than contemplative wisdom provided such military advantage to the West that it was able to colonize most of the Islamic world and finally destroy, if not completely, at least to a large extent the homogeneous Islamic civilization which had developed parallel to that of the traditional West for so many centuries.

For several centuries as the Eurocentric conception of history was taken for granted even in the intellectually colonized East, the development of science in the West was considered as the crowning achievement of the whole history of science of mankind. Modern science was considered as the only valid sci-

ence of nature and the question of the parallel development of sciences of another nature in other civilizations was rarely posed. It is only now, when the horrors of modern war and the ecological disasters brought about by the application of modern science along with the unprecedented alienation of man from God, nature and himself have become manifest to everyone, that one even dares to ask about the significance of parallel developments of science elsewhere. Now, one can at last pose the question not why Islam or China with their long and rich scientific traditions did not produce a Descartes or Galileo but rather why Europe did.

To understand the roots of the crisis of present day humanity, it is necessary to address this last question and especially to inquire into the factors which caused the destinies of science in the West and the Islamic world to become separated and for the two civilizations to part ways. Considering the incomparable value of what was lost of traditional knowledge in comparison to what was gained in the quantitative and empirical knowledge of the physical world, it is most important to delve into the factors of a negative nature which destroyed the vision of the traditional cosmos in the West. It is essential to understand the factors which caused western man to become blinded to the great value of what was lost in comparison to what was gained in that process which transformed Europe from the land of traditional Christian civilization to the citadel of the first civilization in historic times based on the negation of the traditional world view.

There are many factors which led to the development of science in the West in such a manner that science cultivated in the School of Chartres or the Oxford School of the 13th century and those of Paris and Oxford four centuries later seem to belong to two different universes rather than to a single civilization. The main factors, however, can be summarized and enumerated under several headings. The most central of these factors which was most responsible for the difference between the destinies of science in Islam and the West is the eclipse of the sapiential aspect of Christianity toward the end of the Middle Ages in contrast to the situation of Islam where the sapiential tradition has continued to survive to this day. The gnostic and sapiential mode of Christianity was in the process of flowering in the teachings of such

figures as Dante and Meister Eckhart when Christian civilization was mutilated by the intrusion of the paganism of Antiquity in the form of Renaissance humanism even before this civilization and its sapiential dimension could bear their fruits completely.

Every science of nature relies upon a worldview concerning the nature of reality. Medieval Christianity shared with Islam a worldview based at once upon revelation and a metaphysical knowledge drawn from the sapiential dimension of the tradition in question, although, as far as the metaphysical significance of nature was concerned, this knowledge was not fully integrated into the mainstream of Christian thought as it was into Islam. Once this knowledge was eclipsed and for all practical purposes lost, there was no means whereby a science based on metaphysical principles could be cultivated or even understood.⁷ Without such a knowledge the traditional sciences became opaque and even meaningless. Soon they ceased to satisfy man's need for causality. As a result a vacuum was created which men sought to fill by means of a rationalistic philosophy grounded outside of the Christian tradition and a science of a purely earthly nature but which was satisfactory from the point of view of rationalism and empiricism.

Having lost the vision of heaven, men discovered a new earth whose discovery they considered as ample compensation for the infinitely superior heaven whose very existence they forgot so rapidly.⁸ Without metaphysical knowledge, the traditional sciences shorn of their metaphysical significance and finally their residue survived as mere superstition in the eyes of those for whom any science pointing to metaphysical principles beyond itself and to realms of reality beyond the physical could not but be superstition. All that had been considered the highest form of knowledge became subverted to mere conjecture and deprived of the dignity of being called science while all that was accepted as science was accepted as such under the condition that this form of knowledge would have no relation to any knowledge of a higher order. No single factor was as significant in the parting of ways of the West not only from Islam but from all other traditions than the loss in the West of gnosis or sapience and the ever increasing eclipse of the metaphysical dimension of Christianity from the 13th century onward.

A closely related factor was the rise of nominalism in the 14th century. By depriving intelligence of the possibility of knowing the Platonic archetypes or ideas of things and in fact denying the very meaning of universals as possessing reality beyond that of names, nominalism affected profoundly not only theology but also philosophy. Nominalism, by basing religious truth upon faith alone rather than upon both faith and knowledge had no small role in secularizing knowledge and preparing the ground for the rise of modern science. The destruction of Medieval Christian philosophy based upon ontology could not but lead, after a period of uncertainty and groping, to that rationalistic philosophy associated with Cartesianism which served as the necessary basis for the 17th century Scientific Revolution.⁹ Without the withering criticism of nominalism, Medieval Christian philosophy and theology would not have relinquished their claim to the role of knowledge in discovering the nature of things in the light of higher principles to such an extent as to cause them to leave the field of battle without any defense before the onslaught of secularism, rationalism and empiricism which were, as a result, able to gain a remarkably easy victory.

The domination of nominalism combined with a tendency to substitute logic for philosophy was both the result of the loss of the symbolic science¹⁰ of nature and instrumental in the destruction of such a science which is always wed to metaphysics. Medieval European man still understood the language of symbolism which dominated his art and science as well as nearly every level of expression of his religion. A Medieval cathedral is an expression of a symbolic and sacred science of the cosmos and in turn enables man to gain access to the realities to which such a science leads, provided he still possesses that "symbolist spirit" which western medieval man shared to a large extent with the rest of humanity.

One can already observe in the late Middle Ages this rationalistic tendency which had lost sight of the symbolic content of the traditional sciences of nature. Although the life of the symbolic sciences of nature did not cease completely, as seen in Hermeticism and to a certain extent Pythagoreanism which continued to be cultivated in certain circles, the center of the intellectual arena of western Europe became ever more occupied by a type of

thought which was impervious and even blind to the language of symbolism. This type of thought helped destroy further the influence of symbolic modes of thought while the type of mentality which was blind to the symbolic significance of nature as well as Scripture in turn only helped to strengthen nominalism and rationalism and make possible their victory. Soon, symbols became reduced to signs and facts; both the book of nature and the book of revelation became opaque and reduced to their literal and external level of meaning.

Parallel with the loss of the symbolic sciences of nature, there occurred a marked decrease of interest in sapiential commentaries upon Sacred Scripture. Blindness to the inner dimension of one book was accompanied by the neglect of the inner meaning of the other. Although the symbolic sciences of both nature and Sacred Scripture survived to some extent and in the margin of the main currents of development of European thought, the center was left bereft of these sciences. What remained was a literal and external interpretation of religion left face to face with a science of the literal or factual aspect of nature which could then obviously see nothing in nature but brute facts to be gathered solely empirically and understood only rationally within a science that could no longer have any relation with the existing religion except the rapport of confrontation or indifference. As the *vestigia Dei* became quantifiably veritable facts, science developed in a direction in which it could no longer concern itself with whatever those facts or laws established by it could possibly signify beyond themselves.¹¹ A Jakob Boehme could still cultivate a symbolic science of nature in the 17th century; but by then he was no longer at the center of the arena of scientific activity and not even in the mainstream of the religious and theological thought of his day.

Parallel with this loss of a symbolic science of nature one can observe the rapid process of the desacralization of the cosmos in Medieval Christian thought. In the Bible the cosmos still possesses a sacred aspect and certain verses such as "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead,"¹² indicate the significance of this theme in Christian Sacred Scripture. Early Christianity, faced with the danger of

naturalism in the Graeco-Roman world and seeking to prevent at all costs the danger of cosmolatry,¹³ did not emphasize the spiritual significance of nature and even drew a rigid line between nature and super-nature. Yet, in the early Middle Ages the religious significance of nature was not forgotten, at least in the writings of such men as Erigena and Hugo of St. Victor, while the traditional Christian cosmos continued to be populated by angels and spirits. Already by the 13th century, however, the more dominant schools of Scholasticism began the philosophical and theological process of desacralizing the cosmos and thereby making it a suitable object of study for a purely quantitative science of nature.

The reception given to Ibn Sīnā in the Latin West in comparison to that given to Ibn Rushd is indicative of this trend. Avicennan cosmology emphasizes the significance of angels who carry out the command of God in the cosmos and who make possible its life and order. For Ibn Sīnā cosmology is inseparable from angelology.¹⁴ For Ibn Rushd, however, the "souls of the spheres" which are identified with angelic substances are dispensed with in favor of the intelligences. The fact that the Latin West was influenced by Averroism much more than by Avicennism and that even those deeply influenced by Ibn Sīnā tried to brush aside the central role he accorded to angels in both his cosmology and epistemology points to an important tendency taking place at that time. This tendency concerns the refusal to accept the angels of the traditional Christian cosmos as being essential and necessary to the governance and functioning of the cosmic and natural order. The traditional cosmos became thus philosophically and theologically prepared to be treated as that great mechanical clock whose laws would be discovered by a Galileo and a Newton by means of a mechanical science to be born as a result of the 17th century Scientific Revolution.

The fascination with mechanical clocks was already present in Europe long before Galileo wrote his *Discorsi*. Likewise, the angels had ceased to be considered as being metaphysically necessary to the running of the cosmos long before the advent of the 17th century philosophers and scientists even if ordinary men continued to believe in them and revere them even into later centuries. It seems as if the vision of nature in the mind of European

man had already gained a strong mechanical component before an actual science based on the mechanistic point of view became developed. Moreover, this science in turn helped to generalize and expand the mechanistic philosophy to such an extent that by the 18th century it had become part and parcel of the world view of European man going beyond the confines of the sciences of nature to embrace the whole philosophical worldview of the mainstream of western thought.

The desacralization of nature and the cosmos was also abetted by a factor of practical import, namely, the quest for gaining power over nature as emphasized in the writings of Francis Bacon. The traditional sciences of nature sought to lead man to wisdom and enable him to perfect his soul through the contemplation of Divine Wisdom in His handworks. Even in alchemy where there was an attempt to accelerate the natural processes of "giving birth" to gold¹⁵ and even to gain power over nature, the whole process was contained within the matrix of tradition and protected by the presence of the Sacred. The ultimate goal of the true alchemist was in fact to gain power and control over his own soul and not the external world, to transmute the base metal of his soul into the gold of sanctity and not simply to manipulate substances in order to gain wealth.¹⁶

Gradually with the rise of mercantilism and the rebellion of western man against the traditional Christian image of man as a fallen being alien to this world, there grew the desire of not only exploring the world but also of dominating it. The age of exploration was also the age of exploitation, domination and exercise of power over nature with the aim of tearing her riches from her bosom. Western science since the Renaissance has become associated more and more, although not completely, with power and control. The goal of science in the minds of many, if not all its practitioners, has become the control and manipulation of nature and not its contemplation. In direct contrast to the Islamic world where science was always related to wisdom and even its utility was envisaged in the light of man's needs as an immortal being, science in the West became wed to the quest for power, control and to a large extent wealth, and the utility of science became confined to the welfare of man seen as a purely earthly creature with no needs beyond those of an animal with certain mental

powers. Many notable scientists in the West were and remain to this day opposed to the wedding between science and power, but there is no doubt that one of the factors which caused the destinies of science in the Islamic world and the West to follow such diverse paths despite so many common factors is this relation of science to worldly power, a relation which remained totally alien to Islamic science despite the claims of certain modernist and so-called fundamentalist Muslims today.

If one were to ask what element or elements within Western Christianity were in turn responsible for this turn of events in Europe as far as the development of the sciences of nature are concerned, one could point most of all to the type of theology which developed in the Occident. In order to avoid the danger of naturalism, Christianity as formulated by the Latin Fathers drew too strong a distinction between the supernatural and the natural orders, did not emphasize sufficiently the cosmic function of the "Word become flesh" and did not consider as central the spiritual message of nature. Despite the songs dedicated to nature by early Irish monks and even the development of Christian Hermeticism which Christianized a whole traditional science of nature, the mainstream of Catholic theology did not concern itself as much with nature as did Islam or even Judaism which preceded Christianity and which interacted with it much more than did Islam. The voice of a St. Francis of Assisi singing the canticle of the Sun was not typical of the Christian spirituality of the Occident any more than were the cosmic visions of Hildegard of Bingen. The discovery of nature by Renaissance art and science appeared, therefore, almost as a "revelation" outside the mainstream of the Christian tradition while the whole realm of nature was soon surrendered to science to be dealt with irrespective of the religious and spiritual consequences of the development of a purely quantitative science.

The abdication of religion from the realm of nature especially after Galileo did not appear at that time as a great defeat for the religious worldview because the rule of religion over this realm had already been a halfhearted one since the integration of a complete theology and metaphysics of nature into the main current of Christian theological thought had never been fully achieved. As a result, despite a St. Francis or an Albertus Mag-

nus, who was at once a theologian and a scientist, and despite the later religious reactions of German mystics and the Romantic movement against the total dominance of a purely mechanical science of nature, the ground was left clear for such a science to develop without any constraint or opposition of a serious kind and to claim for itself complete monopoly of knowledge of the natural realm. Any spiritual view of nature was relegated to the category of "nature mysticism" while what remained of the traditional sciences of nature in the West became reduced to the category of the occult or even superstition, to survive solely in the margin of European intellectual life.

Finally, it must be remembered that what distinguishes the destinies of science in the West and the Islamic world is not only the presence of the metaphysical and cosmological doctrines of a Suhrawardī, Ibn 'Arabī or Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī at the heart of the Islamic intellectual tradition and the eclipse of doctrines of such an order in the West and their being relegated to the periphery of the intellectual life of Western man. One must also consider in a more inward sense the continuous presence of contemplatives of a sapiential nature and gnostics in Islam and their extremely small numbers and almost complete disappearance in the West during the modern period. The contemplative who is of a gnostic nature is the channel of grace for nature. He hears the invocation of nature in the solitude of high mountains and deserts, along the shore of the sea and in the heart of forests. He prays with nature and acts as her protector and channel for the Divine Grace which nourishes and sustains virgin nature. The mind of such a sage is indeed a mirror which reflects the light shining in his heart. His speculation is a reflection of the knowledge of the heart upon the plane of the mind, according to the literal meaning of the term *speculum* which means nothing other than reflection in a mirror. From his heart a light is reflected upon the mirror of the mind which in turn provides a doctrine concerning nature that cannot but reflect in conceptual terms that intimacy and inner *sympathia* which the contemplative gnostic possesses with the inner reality of nature.

Once that light ceases to reflect upon the mind, the fundamental nexus between man and the inner significance of nature is severed. Not only the metaphysical and cosmological doctrines

concerning nature become opaque and meaningless, but man loses the capacity of hearing the prayer of nature and praying with her. The rustling of the wind in the forest, the sound of the brooks rushing down the mountainside and the chant of the birds celebrating the rising of the sun can no longer be heard as the invocation of God's Blessed Names (*dhikr*) and as His Praise according to the Quranic verse, "All things praise God." Rather, they become meaningless noise, at best pleasant but devoid of a spiritual message to be heard and understood. Nature, rather than aiding such a type of man who is deaf and blind to the world of the Spirit, hides her inner reality from him, seeming outwardly to confirm the view of that science which would deny the existence of this inner reality. But this "turning away" from an avaricious and irresponsible humanity bent on the rape of nature with the tools of a quantitative science and in the name of human progress and welfare based on a purely earthly and animal conception of man must not be considered as proof of the complete surrender of nature and the victory of modern science. Nor must the remarkable success of the science developed in the West to make known the quantitative aspects of the natural order be seen either as proof of its claim to the monopoly of all knowledge concerning nature or of the lack of validity of the traditional sciences developed by Islam and other traditions. Already the havoc wrought by modern science has caused many a thinking person to pause and to ask about the wisdom of accepting modern science as the only possible science of nature and to seek for the first time in the West since the rise of modern science to understand seriously the significance of the worldview of the traditional sciences.

Meanwhile, the prayer of nature and her creatures which always accompanied the contemplative, who sought refuge from the noise and fury of the world in her bosom, has turned to a prayer to the Creator for protection against modern man's ravaging of the natural order. And despite appearances and despite what seem to be the complete victory of Promethean man over nature, the prayer of nature and the creatures of the natural order will not go unheeded. It is nature that will have the final victory, for her victory is that of the Truth over falsehood and of the Spirit over every form of materialism, be it scientific or otherwise, which would deny its reality. To know nature in her intimate real-

ity and according to the norms of the traditional sciences of nature is to gain a knowledge which is permanent, which satisfies the mind while nourishing the soul. It is also to gain a knowledge which no form of quantitative science can replace, a knowledge without which man cannot ultimately survive on earth but with the aid of which he can live in harmony with himself and with nature because he lives in harmony with that Reality which is the origin of both himself and the natural order.

NOTES

1. On the meaning of traditional science and its contrast with modern science see R. Guénon, *Crisis of the Modern World*, trans. M. Pallis and R. Nicholson, London, 195, chapter IV; T. Burckhardt, *Mirror of the Intellect*, trans. W. Stoddart, Albany (N.Y.), 1988, chapters; and S.H. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, New York, 1981, especially chapters four and six.
2. Much of this tradition reached the Muslims through the Harraneans who were also known as the Sabaeans in Islamic history. See J. Pedersen, "The Sabians," in *Volume of Oriental Studies presented to E.G. Browne*, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 383-391; and E. Drower, *The Mandaean of Iran and Iraq*, Oxford, 193.
3. In traditional civilizations there has in fact never been a continuous "development" of science which the modern world envisages as normal to civilization. Traditional civilizations display periods of interest and activity in the science of nature interrupted by eras during which the intellectual energies of that civilization turn other domains without there being any sign of decadence of an intellectual or artistic nature. On the contrary, except for Islam, most other traditional civilizations seem to have turned more to the so-called "exact sciences" at the moment of their own decay and demise. Babylonian and Alexandrian science provide striking examples of this phenomenon.
4. See T. Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends*, New York, 192; S.H. Nasr, *Man and Nature*, London, 1989; and W. Smith, *Cosmos and Transcendence*, 1984.
5. This is due to a large extent to the emphasis placed in the Quran upon the sacred quality of nature and the significance of natural phenomena as signs (*ayat*) of God. See S.H. Nasr, "The Cosmos and the Natural Order," in S.H. Nasr, (ed), *Islamic Spirituality — Foundations*, New York, 1989, pp. 345-357.
6. See Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, Albany, (NY), 1993 .
7. On the relation between science and metaphysics in general see F. Bruner, *Science et réalité*, Paris, 1955. As for the case of Islam, we have dealt

- ence and Civilization in Islam*, Cambridge, 1987; *Islamic Science — An Illustrated Study*, London, 1986; and *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*.
8. See F. Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, trans. Lord Northbourne, London, 1984, chapter II, "In the Wake of the Fall."
 9. See E. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, London, 1938.
 10. Symbolic science is treated amply by contemporary traditional authors because of the central role it plays in understanding both the languages and content of traditional writings. See R. Guénon, *Symboles fondamentaux de la science sacrée*, Paris, 1962.
 11. A symbol is always a symbol of some reality beyond itself while a fact as seen scientifically cannot but be ontologically separated from higher realms of existence. To say symbol, in the traditional sense of the word, is to say that which lies beyond what is immediately perceived. According to traditional metaphysics, only the Absolute Reality is totally Itself. Everything else in the Universe is a symbol of a reality beyond the ontological level on which the being in question is perceived as a particular being. See M. Lings, *Symbol and Archetype*, Cambridge, 1991.
 12. Romans 1:20.
 13. See F. Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, chapter III, "Dialogue Between Hellenists and Christians."
 14. On Avicennan angelology see H. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, trans. W. Trask, New York, 1960; and Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, chapter 15.
 15. On alchemy as gynecology and the attempt to speed up the rhythm of nature in transmitting base metal into gold see M. Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible*, trans. S. Corrin, New York, 1962.
 16. See T. Burckhardt, *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, trans. W. Stoddart, Baltimore, 1971.

The Sacred Language of North American Plains Indian Art Forms

Joseph Epes Brown

Introduction

Fundamental Perspectives on Art Forms of Primal Peoples

Central to all that I presume to say concerning traditional art forms of primal peoples and here specifically of the North American Plains Indians, is a sense of continuing indebtedness to that great metaphysician, historian and teacher of the traditional arts, Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy. It is, therefore, of special import for me that his son Dr. Rama Coomaraswamy is present at this conference.

The first and presiding perspective to establish is the obvious yet often forgotten reality that traditional arts, and this general term must always include the crafts, express through external forms that which is most internal, or spiritually central, to the individuals of the particular culture.

If traditional art forms constitute vehicles which bear a people's most sacred values, we have in such expressions precious documentations which may serve for the remembering of such values where they may have been neglected or lost under the pressures of a contemporary world increasingly motivated by priorities opposite to those of traditional cultures. Indeed, in my own work with North American Indian groups, I am aware that very often it has been the traditional art forms, including the ritual or liturgical arts, which have been particularly instrumental in the reconstitution or revitalization of traditional values and related life-ways.

The rich languages of the traditional arts of primal peoples constitute a range of spiritual perspectives and fundamental

assumptions which today are continually misunderstood or not understood at all. The following is a brief clarification of at least the central perspectives:

a). Within created traditional forms there can be no dichotomy between the arts and crafts. For art, first of all, is not the particular created form but is the inner Principle by or from which the outer form comes into being. To dismiss utilitarian items as being only "crafts" is, through ignorance or ill-will, a modern prejudice which has contributed to the tragic separation of art from life and to a presiding cult which glorifies the banal and passing idiosyncrasies of human individuals over the affirmation of universal and timeless realities.

b). A fundamental perspective latent to the spoken languages of primal peoples is that the word or name mysteriously makes really present the essence or power of what is named, and this power is enhanced by the understanding that speech is born by the breath and breath comes from the area of the heart understood as the spiritual center of the living being. In parallel manner traditional art forms are experienced not just as "symbols" of some other agreed upon referent, but a spiritual essence of power specific to the particular form is really present, not just symbolically, but in an immediacy of experience. As will be seen through the following illustrations, an animal or a vision being painted on a Plains Indian shield, or upon the cover of a lodge, is understood to be really present with the fullness of its particular spiritual powers which may be transmitted to the observer.

With this brief introduction I now wish to present and explain selected examples of art forms which are central to Native American tribal groups of the North American Plains and Prairie area. I should add that we are here dealing with only one distinctive "culture area" among a total of at least ten, each of which have their own distinctive art forms. The fundamental assumptions or principles, however, which I have just outlined, and will reiterate, are universal to all the "culture areas," and indeed to all primal peoples wherever they may be located.

In viewing traditional art forms, particularly those of primal

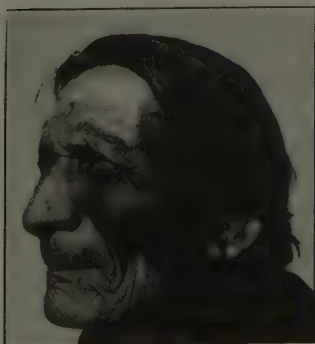
peoples, we tend to dissociate from the created object the human agent or artisan who originally created the form, thus missing an essential spiritual element. For neither beauty nor truth can manifest itself, at least in human mode, except through a being who has realized the sacred realities within himself or herself. I suggest that the portraits of the following Plains personages speak to the quality of such realization.



1. Wolf Robe (profile)
Cheyenne



2. The Boy
Gros Ventre



3. Little Warrior
Lakota Sioux



4. Black Elk
Lakota Sioux

In understanding the artifacts of primal peoples in the fullest and deepest manner, not only is the human agent an aspect of the message, but also the elements of the natural environment of the culture in question play a quasi-determining role.

5. Bison



All the parts of the bison, for example, are used not only for sustenance, but also for the creation of almost everything necessary to the Plains Indian style of nomadic life. It is for this reason that the bison is associated with totality, the universe, a provider of almost all of life's needs.

In similar manner the land itself, in all its beauty and bounty, is understood as a mother to the people, also providing the varied materials essential to the lives of the people.

6. Deerskin painting, cir. 1860. Brulé Dakota.



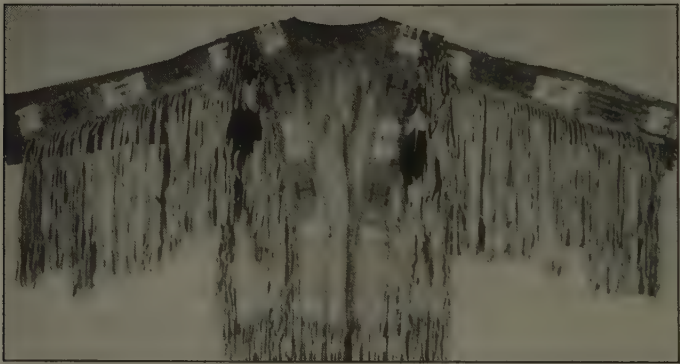
As with all primal arts, little attempt is made to achieve naturalistic representation; rather, something of the essence of the being is projected. We find here not a particular horse, but a universalized horse, or the essence of the horse.

If there had been sufficient space, I would have wished to present art representations of all the animals of the Plains Indian environment, for it is the totality of these beings, each with its specific qualities, which spell out for the people a totality of differentiated essential values which were integrated into the peoples' lives and culture.

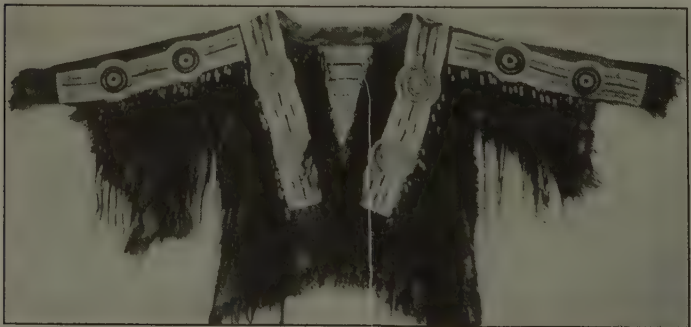
7. Putting up poles for a Cheyenne tipi, cir. 1900. The typical dwelling of the once nomadic Plains Indian, the tipi, is an example of sacred architecture since the conical dwelling is understood as an image of the world or universe with the supporting poles linking heaven and earth. The fire at the center of the lodge is the presence of "The Great Mysterious," the ultimate Principle. A particular tipi might have a bison encircling the dwelling in such a manner that its mid-section is over the doorway. In entering such a tipi one becomes ritually identified with the bison who is understood as totality, as is the tipi itself. It is understood here, as with all sacred arts of the Plains, that the owner of the lodge has earned the right to this particular bison motif through his personal sacred vision experience received in a lonely retreat while fasting and suffering. Living with such a dwelling is participating continually in a liturgy, the most powerful of the sacred arts.



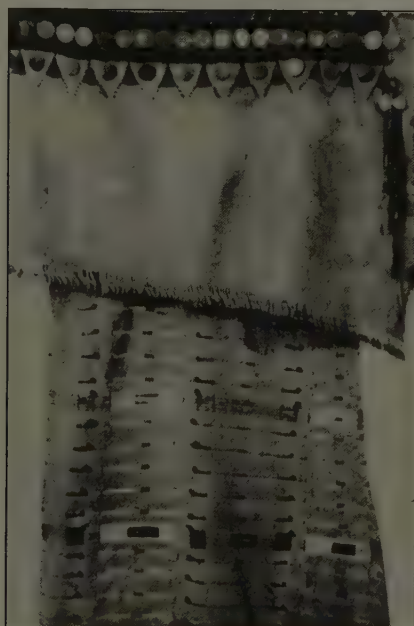
8. As examples of costume we have here a series of men's shirts made from the hide of the deer. One notes how the animal has been respected for the skin of the legs have been left intact, indeed, almost none of the hide has been cut. Such garments constitute a sacred and liturgical art, for to wear such a shirt is to become those particular qualities or powers latent to this particular animal. This shirt belonged to a Teton Lakota. One should note that fringes on garments or containers speak of the sacred powers which irradiate out from a sacred source, in this case the deer and also the human person.



9. A Cheyenne shirt from Wyoming indicates that the wearer was probably a Keeper of Sacred Pipes. Hair fringes on such shirts are often incorrectly associated with scalp-locks taken in warfare. More often, however, they are special shirts belonging to recognized leaders of band groups. The hair is that of close relatives and represents their support for the young leader.



10. A dress from the early 1800's decorated with porcupine quills, an especially sacred craft to which I shall turn shortly.



11. The Blackfeet Chief Little Wolf and his wife who illustrate costumes as they should be seen e.g. not static on museum walls, but worn, since the dynamic movement of the garment is important to its sacred meanings.



12. An 1880 Kiowa cradle board. It was always thought important that young children should be surrounded and protected by beauty from an early age when they are particularly sensitive to outside influences. Recent studies have demonstrated, incidentally, that a child reared in such a carrier, being always close to the mother, and the eyes on the same level as the adult, establishes a quality of relationships not present when the child must always look up to the adult.



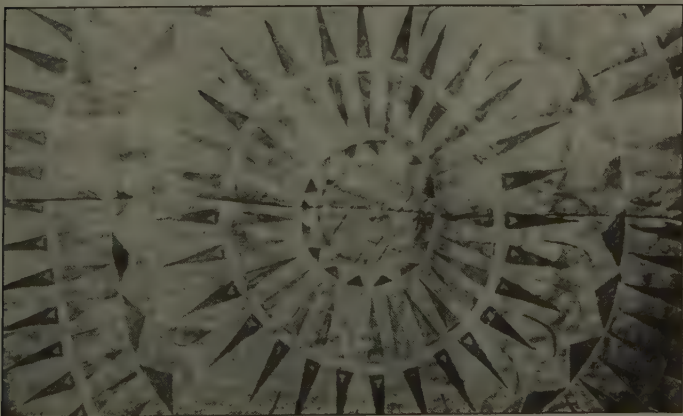
13. An example of quilled containers made by the women to contain a person's most sacred possession, the tobacco smoking-pipe. Elongated fringes on containers, or on any other objects, always have reference to the presence of sacred power. In the mythology of all Plains peoples the porcupine, who climbs high into trees, is associated with the Sun, the creative principle. The quills are therefore identified with the Sun's rays. Such legends are held very closely by the women, and those who work with the quills are organized into guilds or secret societies and never divulge the mysteries of their craft.



14. Robes made for the men are from the hide of bison bulls and appropriately are decorated with “sun-burst” symbols which express the male generative principle.

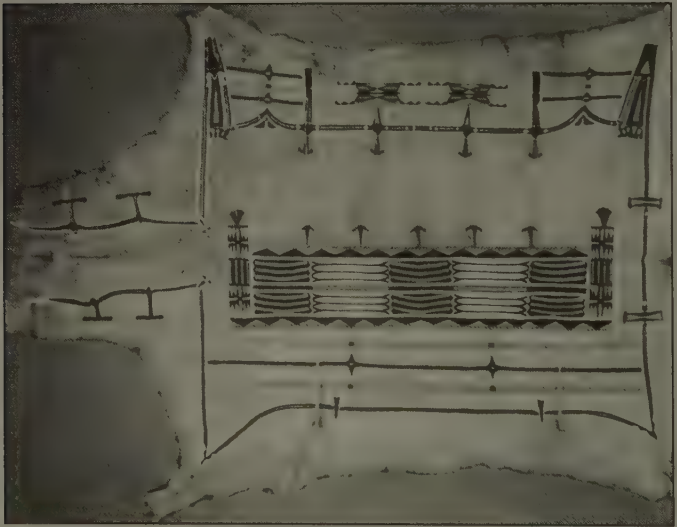


15. In this detail of the “sun-burst” motif the central cross-hatched figure is a stylized sunflower which always moves during the day facing the sun, the Source of Life. Such movement is imitated by the participants in the annual Spring Sun Dance ceremonies of the Lakota Sioux. The double-triangle figures irradiating out from the center are feathers and plumes of the eagle, a solar being, and are therefore the life-giving rays of the sun. The same symbol is also a representation of a cocoon which contains the potential living form to be released, a moth or butterfly. The entire figure then speaks of both the creative force of the Ultimate Principle (The Great Mysterious — Wakan-Tanka in Lakota), and also of all Potentiality.



16. In distinction to the solar symbols on men's robes, the robes for women are appropriately made from hides of the bison cow and bear abstract representations of the feminine reproductive and life forces.

An art style common to very diverse types of art expressions of the Americas, this is often referred to by the unfortunate term "X-Ray" motif, for here one looks behind the outer layers of illusory or lesser realities, the appearances, and into the inner spiritual Essence or Principle which is universal to all phenomena. It is through understandings of such depth that the interrelatedness of all life is seen as a presiding Principle of Native American peoples.



17. A genre of particularly powerful men's paintings are those on the protective circular shields made from the heat-tempered hide of the bison bull. The painted motif typically derives from a vision experience received during a many-day spiritual retreat and total fast. The painted sacred being is understood to be really present in its image, giving of its powers which will protect from the arrows or bullets of the enemy. On this shield it is the grizzly bear who protects with the power of his paw

towards which the arrows come but then mysteriously stop.

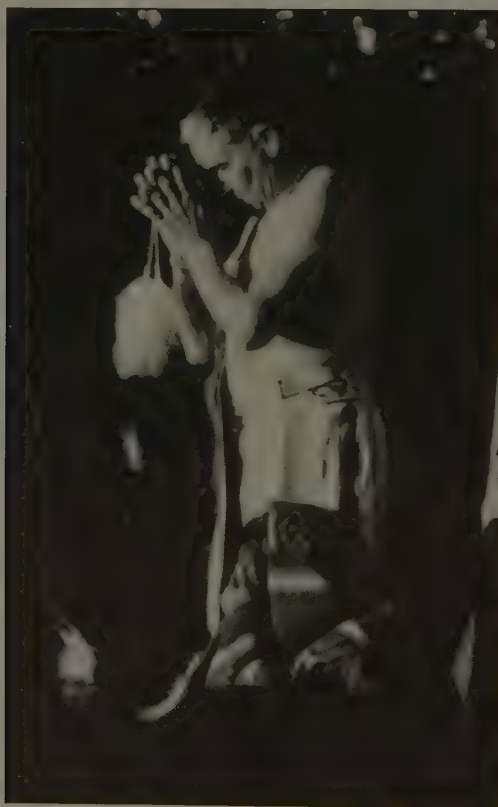


18. In order to emphasize that concepts of the presence of sacred powers received through vision experiences are not just of the past, I present this contemporary banner bearing a shield motif created by the Lakota artist Arthur Amiotte, grandson of Standing Bear, an example of those younger leaders who today are continuing and revitalizing the sacred traditions not only of the Plains peoples, but among many if not most of the tribal groups of North America. One notes here that today one must use materials which are available, yet even so portions of the work are done with the sacred porcupine quills, buckskin and beadwork.



19. We cannot conclude without a brief mention of at least one of the great liturgical arts of the Plains peoples, the annual 3 or 4 day Spring Sun Dance ritual. The entire ceremony is of great beauty and dignity; it takes place within a circular lodge understood as the world or Universe with a sacred tree at the center as axis joining heaven and earth. For three or four days and nights the participants fast and suffer within the lodge. They dance almost continually to the rhythm of large drums and powerful songs, moving with dignified steps to the central tree and then backwards to their places at the periphery, but always facing the Center.

Special prayers are offered at each sun-rise and songs of great antiquity bless the sun, all the powers of the Universe and all life.



These profound ceremonies, and there are hundreds more with equal profundity, are continuing today not only among the Plains peoples, but also among many other tribal groups of North America. For it is a presiding belief that if the myths, sacred tales, rites and ceremonies are abandoned, the cycle of the world will come to an end. Since this presentation commenced with reference, indeed homage, to Ananda Coomaraswamy, it is appropriate to conclude with one of his brief and always succinct statements written as part of our introduction to a book on the chantways of the Diné, or Navajo Indians of the Southwest:

“The most immediate significant point is that of the artist’s priestly or ministerial function. The original intention of intelligible form was not to entertain us but literally to remind us. The chant is not for the approval of the ear or the picture for that of the eye [although these senses can be taught to approve the splendor of truth, and can be trusted when they have been trained], but to affect such a transformation of our being as is the purpose of all ritual acts.

“It is in fact, the ritual arts that are the most artistic because the most correct as they must be if they are to be effectual.”

The World of Today in the Light of Tradition

Martin Lings

One of the signs of the extreme old age of the macrocosm is the unparalleled extremity of degeneration that has now been reached by a large sector of the human race. The religions, despite their differences of expression, are unanimous that primordial man was placed at the center of the terrestrial state, a center from which he was to be the mediator between Heaven and earth. The Fall meant loss of access to the center and therefore loss of illumination from the vertical axis — represented in monotheistic traditions by the Tree of Life — which connects this world with all that transcends it. But that loss is not absolute, nor has man been replaced as mediator by any other creature. There is therefore still only one criterion for judging the worth of any human individual, and that is his nearness or farness with regard to the center, and the intensity or laxity of his aspiration to transcend his fallen state.

What then is to be said of typically modern man, who is so remote from the center that he has ceased to believe in its existence and in the reality of the Transcendent to which it gives access. He believes on the contrary that he has suffered no loss whatsoever and that man, having evolved from next to nothing, is now better than he has ever been. It may well be asked if we have not here an extremity of error beyond which it would be impossible to go. This two-fold pseudo-religion of evolution and progress is an aspect of what might be called macrocosmic senility. But it could never become universal, nor must we forget that the macrocosm, taken as a whole, is a sacred thing. Like all that is relative, it has to confess its relativity in the face of the Absolute, which it does by suffering a Dark Age, that is, by growing old. But it is not imaginable that it should ever be deserted by Heaven and put to shame any more than it is imaginable that such

ignominy should befall a saint towards the end of his earthly life. The macrocosm is a norm; and normal old age has its positive aspects which outweigh its ills. The blindness which eventually befell the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob was as nothing compared to their inward illumination. Nor is it possible that the world of today should be without an analogous inward illumination, despite its outward blindness.

In its essentials spirituality escapes from time. Every true sage has virtually the wisdom of all the ages. But the starting points of spirituality and inversely its earthly manifestations do not escape from time; and this makes it possible to speak of aspects of wisdom which are especially characteristic of old age, and which the old age of the macrocosm calls into evidence.

To see what is meant by this, let us consider the analogy between macrocosm and microcosm or more precisely the normal microcosm, for only a human norm — man as he was created, or man who has regained the primordial state, True Man as the Taoists call him — can be considered as a full microcosm, whose life corresponds to the “life” of the macrocosm, that is, to the cycle of time which is now nearing its close.

Like the macrocosm, the normal microcosm is subject in old age to the tension of two opposite tendencies, a contradiction which in the first part of life was relatively latent and from which, in the Earthly Paradise, man was altogether exempt. This contradiction is due to the imprisonment of an immortal soul in a mortal body, a soul which is moreover in communion with the Spirit. The body is an image of the soul, of which it is also a prolongation. In youth, generally speaking, the body appears as a purely positive symbol and there is perfect harmony between it and the soul. Analogous to this is the harmonious homogeneity of the earlier ages of the macrocosmic cycle. But gradually, in the microcosm, the body begins to show that it is merely a symbol, and that “merely” becomes more and more aggravated with the passage of time. On the one hand, therefore, there is a gradual bodily deterioration which ends with death; on the other hand there is a mellowing of spirituality. The serene and objective wisdom which is the central characteristic of normal old age outweighs, by its transcendence, the many ills which are the inevitable result of increasing decrepitude, and in a certain sense

it may be said to thrive on them. The corresponding ills of the macrocosm likewise create a climate which is not unfavourable to wisdom on condition that they are seen as ills. Detachment is an essential feature of the sage, and this virtue, which in better times could only be acquired through great spiritual efforts can be made more spontaneous by the sight of one's world in chaotic ruins.

There is yet another feature of normal old age, perhaps the most positive of all, which likewise has its macrocosmic equivalent, in virtue of which our times are unique. It is sometimes said of spiritual men and women at the end of their lives that they have "one foot already in Paradise." This is not meant to deny that death is a sudden break, a rupture of continuity. It cannot but be so, for it has to transform mortal old age into immortal youth. Nonetheless, hagiography teaches us that the last days of sanctified souls can be remarkably luminous and transparent. Nor is it unusual that the imminence of death should bring with it special graces, such as visions, in foretaste of what is to come. The mellowing of spirituality, which is the highest aspect of old age in itself, is thus crowned with an illumination which belongs more to youth than to age; and so also in the macrocosm, the nearness of the new Golden Age cannot fail to make itself mysteriously felt before the end of the old cycle. Such an anticipation has moreover been predicted, as we shall see.

It follows from the strict analogy between macrocosm and microcosm that the world of today could not be other than it is, namely a self-contradictory world of the sharpest contrasts, a husk of decrepitude which surrounds and hides a luminous kernel of wisdom. As to the husk, evolutionism and progressism have already been mentioned as two of the main aspects of the senility of the macrocosm in extreme old age; and these two diseases, which incapacitate man for orthodox religious beliefs, lead to other ailments, that are even more dangerous. For man is nothing if not religious; and if he be deprived of normal religion, he will inevitably transfer his religious sentiments to something else — hence the many pseudo-esoterisms and heresies for which the modern world is a breeding ground, and which make it easier to go astray than ever before. Despite these, thanks to what is most positive in this day of conflicting opposites, the highest and deep-

est truths have become correspondingly more accessible, as if forced to unveil by cyclic necessity — the macrocosm's need to fulfill its aspect of terminal wisdom. This same need — for to speak of wisdom is to speak of esoterism — was bound to cause an inward movement away from error and towards these truths. That it has in fact done so is shown, apart from more direct but less accessible signs, by the greatly increased publication of relevant books, for a minority no doubt but nonetheless on a scale to which esoterism has long been unaccustomed.

The seeming paradoxes and contradictions of our day are perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the literature of this most literate of all ages. On the one hand, like an old man who has become irrepressibly garrulous in his senility, the human race produces a ceaseless flow of books, and we may be certain that incomparably more is written than what reaches the stage of print. No period of history can come near to competing with this output either in terms of quantity or in terms of profanity and pointlessness — lack of the sense of reality, one might say. Most of these writings are in fact without pretension; they share with the mass media the blame of distracting man from the essential, but they are far less dangerous than the writings of those literary, philosophic and scientific “heroes” of the hour which serve to indoctrinate their readers with error in various forms and in general to impress them within the limitations of the modern outlook.

At the same time, there are those many publications which reflect what might be called the archival aspect of finality. A general sense of the need to place everything on record — a sense that seems to be more collective than individual — has brought forth, amongst other things, a spate of encyclopedias. It goes without saying that much of what is being recorded would be better forgotten. But there is also much of value, as for example the quantities of lavishly illustrated books on sacred painting and architecture and the equivalent of these books in the way of recorded music. Sacred art, though it does not withhold its blessings from any sector of the community, is in itself a purely esoteric phenomenon, which means that it is central and therefore universal; and all that is best in sacred art virtually belongs to everyone who has “eyes to see” or “ears to hear,” no matter what his

faith or his race. Thus, for the great loss of the experience of a traditional way of life there can now be for those capable of taking it, a certain compensation in the gain of access to the spiritual riches of traditions other than one's own.

The nearer a work is to the center the more universal it is, but also, at the same time, the more concentratedly it represents the world of its own particular provenance. What could be more universal than the Bharata Natyam temple dancing of India and the music that accompanies it, the landscape paintings of China and Japan, the Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals of Western Europe, and the mosques of Andalusia, Egypt, Persia and Turkestan, to mention only a few examples. And what, respectively, could give us a more concentrated sense of the unique spiritual fragrance of each of the four ways in question, Hinduism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam? To add a fifth, exactly the same may be said of the statuary of Buddhism, from Ajanta to Kyoto. Taken together, the summits of sacred art give us in little, that is, in an easily assimilable form, a faithful view of the immense variety of the great religions and their civilizations.¹ This comprehensive view may be considered as an aspect of that terminal wisdom which the macrocosm is bound to manifest. To the call of spirituality itself, that is knowledge of the source of these wonders, every sage has access, no matter where he lives. But this particular means to the end withheld itself from all other epochs, and offers itself now to him who seeks.

Also of great spiritual importance are the many translations which have been made of esoteric treatises hitherto almost unknown outside a narrow circle of readers in their land of origin. Their presence in an accessible form is a providential setting for those twentieth century works which may be considered as representative of our day in its best aspect, and which no other age could have produced.

Amongst these signs of the times we will mention first of all *Man and his Becoming according to the Vedanta*² by René Guénon. As the title suggests this book is a definition, in Hindu terms, of the whole nature of man and of the supreme spiritual possibilities which lie open to him. Although the author himself had already found a spiritual path in the esoterism of Islam, that is, in Sufism, he preferred, with characteristically impersonal

reckoning, to take as the basis for this exposition something still further removed from Christianity than just another monotheism. This does not however prevent him from continually referring to the three Abrahamic traditions.

An advantage of Hinduism as a basis for the exposition of universal truth is the comprehensive breadth of its structure. On the one hand, like Judaism and Islam, it depends on direct revelation and makes a rigorous distinction between what is revealed and what is merely inspired. On the other hand, like Christianity, it depends on the Avatara, that is, the descent of the Divinity into this world.

Hinduism's breadth of structure is matched by its unequalled length of span across the centuries as a fully valid way of worship, by reason of its providential escape from the degeneracy which other religions of its own age suffered in the normal course. This brings us to the Aryan affinity which it has with the western world as a whole. The fact that European languages are Indo-Germanic and therefore cognate with Sanskrit means, at a deeper level, that the religions of the ancient Greeks, Romans, Germans and Celts must have been originally so many counterparts or parallels of Hinduism.

This question of affinity must not however be exaggerated. It means that there may be something in the European soul which is naturally open to the voice of Hinduism and predisposed to listen to its altogether objective approach to the doctrine. But it cannot be considered in a more operative sense, nor had Guénon any intention along those lines.³

The great purpose behind *Man and his Becoming* and all his other writings is to open his readers to the possibility of following an esoteric path, a possibility which, in the case of vocation becomes a necessity; but he does not recommend any one traditional line more than another. His motto was expressly *Vincit omnia veritas*; it was also, in fact, "Seek and ye shall find" and "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." Implicit in his writings is the certainty of their author that they will providentially come to the notice of those qualified to receive his message which will prove irresistible to them in the sense that they will be compelled to seek — and thus to find — a spiritual path. His books and articles are therefore, in intention and in fact, a treasury of informa-

tion about what an intellectual — or one who is virtually so — needs to be made aware of; and a feature of Guénon's greatness is his remarkable grasp of the twentieth century situation and his consequent ability to put his finger on the crucial gaps in modern man's understanding. Amongst these gaps are the failure to make a distinction between intellect and reason, a lack of understanding of symbols and rites, and ignorance in particular of the need for the rite of initiation before one can embark on an esoteric path.

In addition to his writings on esoterism, Guénon also wrote books which are mainly concerned with the errors of the modern world, though here also esoterism is always present in the background as "the one thing necessary," the indispensable cornerstone for any restoration of the world to normality. A note which is sounded in all his writings is the need for orthodoxy, a term which has become, in academic use, almost a synonym for narrow and fanatical exoterism, but which Guénon reestablishes in its true sense, while extending its guarantee of rightness beyond the limits of one religion only. In his perspective it takes on a vast significance, to include, for all seekers of religious truth, every form of worship that has its origin in Divine intervention and has been faithfully transmitted from generation to generation by an uninterrupted process of tradition.

With Guénon mention must also be made of Ananda Coomaraswamy. In most respects they cover the same ground, for the writings of both are centered on metaphysical principles and both, from this same standpoint, wrote devastating and pertinent critiques of the modern world. In particular Coomaraswamy was also, like Guénon, a master of symbolism; but there is a whole aesthetic dimension in Coomaraswamy that is lacking in Guénon, who was not an authority on art. At the risk of simplification, if we were to sum up the work of Coomaraswamy as "truth," that of Guénon could be summed up with the word "orthodoxy." In reading Guénon we are scarcely ever allowed to lose sight of the driving force behind his pen, the already mentioned purpose or hope of enabling and impelling a qualified minority to take effective spiritual action. This purpose was no doubt also present in Coomaraswamy, but the reader is less aware of it. One's immediate impression is of a vast canvas of meta-

physical and cosmological truth which stretches the intelligence towards its limits, enlarging it and enlightening it, and thus predisposing it for the spiritual work which is the methodic complement of doctrine — a complement which tends to be no more than implicit in Coomaraswamy, whereas in Guénon it is altogether explicit.

The writings of these two sages, which could not have been expected by any chain of worldly causality, are indeed so opportune as to be suggestive of something in the nature of a mission. This does not mean that we are claiming for either the status of prophethood, which both would have disclaimed. But it may nonetheless be relevant to remember, in connection with them, the promise contained in the closing words of the Old Testament: “Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”⁴

In connection with this passage, in an article about the function of Elijah — or Elias, as he is called in the New Testament — Leo Schaya remarks that the relationship between “father” and “children” signifies the “tradition,” the religious teaching which is passed from the one to the other. He adds: “The ‘heart of the fathers’ is the central inward aspect, the essence of the tradition, its esoteric spiritual and universal nucleus; it is also the doctrines, methods and influences which are derived from it. The ‘heart of the children’ or believers is their spiritual receptivity, their inward acceptance and reception of what is given them by their ‘father’.” Schaya also says: “When he returns towards the end of time... Elias will raise his voice so loud, says Jewish tradition, that it will be heard from one end of the earth to the other. This means that Elias’ mission is not confined to Israel, but will spread to all peoples and thereby to all religions.”⁵

We have mentioned Elias here because the works of Guénon and Coomaraswamy are precisely, in a very full sense, a turning of “the heart of the fathers to the children” in order to operate a turning of the “heart of the children to their fathers.” This, together with the almost prophetic suddenness of the Guénon-Coomaraswamy phenomenon, is a powerful indication that they

were destined to inaugurate, for this cyclic moment, the workings of "the Eliatic function."

Their writings may be said to lead up to that of Frithjof Schuon. It could be said, again at the risk of simplification, that if Coomaraswamy represents truth in which commitment is implicit, and if Guénon represents both truth and commitment, it was left to Schuon to add his insistence on the need for total commitment, while at the same time, as regards doctrinal truth, his works are a self-sufficient whole. It could also be said that if the writings of Guénon lead to initiation, those of Schuon lead both to it and beyond it, for they contain a dimension of method which it was not the function of his two predecessors to give.

"Knowledge saves" says Schuon, "only on condition that it enlists all that we are: only when it is a way which tills and which transforms, and which wounds our nature as the plough wounds the earth... Metaphysical knowledge is sacred. It is the right of sacred things to demand of man all that he is."⁶

Some enthusiasts of Guénon have wrongly concluded from his works that the whole esoteric path depends on the assimilation of doctrine and the correct performance of orthodox rites, and on nothing else, as if the virtues were not also essential. It is typical of Schuon, in refuting an error, to go to meet its exponents on their own ground, as he does in this case, in his book *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*:

"If we were asked despite the evidentness of the thing what virtue has to do with questions of spiritual realization, involving a rigorous and extra-individual technique, we would answer in the following way, placing ourselves at the same strictly practical point of view. Spiritual realization imposes on the soul an immense disproportion owing to the fact that it introduces the presence of the sacred into the darkness of human imperfection; this inevitably provokes disequilibrium producing reactions which in principle carry with them the risk of an irremediable fall, reactions which moral beauty, together with the graces which by its very nature it attracts, can largely prevent or attenuate. It is precisely this beauty that ambitious dilettantes without imagination think they can disdain, for they see in it only sentimentalism foreign to what they believe to be a spiritual technique; nevertheless, when

the soul finds itself suspended between two worlds, one already lost and the other not yet reached, only a fundamental virtue together with grace can save it from vertigo, and only this virtue immediately makes it immune to temptations and deviations.”

And he adds: “On this level of spiritual alchemy, it is important not to confuse a purely extrinsic morality with intrinsic virtue... nor a natural virtue of modest scope with a virtue profoundly rooted in the heart.”

Let us quote finally, from the same work, his assessment of basic human values:

“Is it (i.e. a man’s spiritual worth) his intelligence, his discernment, his metaphysical knowledge? Obviously not, if this knowledge is not combined with a realizing will and an inclusive virtue which are at least sufficient. Is it his realizing will, his power of concentration? No, if this is not combined with the necessary minimum of doctrinal knowledge and virtue. And spiritual worth likewise does not consist in virtue, if this is not accompanied by a doctrinal understanding that is at least sufficient and by an equivalent realizing effort... Obviously the most brilliant intellectual knowledge is fruitless in the absence of the corresponding realizing initiative and in the absence of the necessary virtue; in other words, knowledge is nothing if it is combined with spiritual laziness and with pretention, egoism, hypocrisy. Likewise, the most prestigious power of concentration is nothing if it is accompanied by doctrinal ignorance and moral insufficiency; likewise again, natural virtue is but little without the doctrinal truth and spiritual practice which operate it with a view to God and which thus restore to it the whole point of its being.”

Of the end, which is the aim of all spiritual effort, he says: “Remove ‘the rust... from the heart,’ and the Intellect will be released.” He adds: “This release is strictly impossible — we must insist upon it — without the cooperation of a religion, an orthodoxy, a traditional esoterism with all that this implies.”

The existence of such writings as these is an untold blessing for our time, but it lays upon us a grave responsibility. All men and women alive today, whatever their years, are “old,” macro-cosmically speaking, that is, they have a part to fulfill in the old

age of the macrocosm. There is, therefore, a question which arises, and it does so with implacable clarity for those who can see by the light of these writings. That question is, for each individual, which aspect of old age, the positive or the negative, the kernel or the husk, they will represent in the macrocosm, that is in the human collectivity taken as a whole, and how active or passive each will be in this respect.

NOTES

1. In the Islamic litany of the 99 Names of God, one of the names which this context recalls is al-Badī', the Marvellously Original.
2. *L'Homme et son devenir selon la Vedanta*, first published in 1925.
3. In letters to those who asked his advice — for he kept up a wide correspondence he tended to be discouraging with regard to Hinduism as a possible spiritual path for the western seeker.
4. Malachi IV, 5-6.
5. "The Eliatic Function" in *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Winter-Spring, 1979.
6. *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts* (this book has been republished in a new translation, Pates Manor, Middlesex, 1987).

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