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Hermeneutics for a Global Age Lectures in Shanghai and Hanoi

by
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The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Introduction

George F. McLean

That the world has been becoming smaller is a truism related especially to technology. This has enabled transportation to shrink the three months it took for Columbus cross the Atlantic to 6 hours or even half that for the retired Concorde.

Yet until 1989 the world economic order was not one or unipolar but bipolar; not effectively one, but two. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, this division disappeared. Suddenly there was but one economic system and through the 1990s the stock market soared in an unprecedented and uninterrupted manner until it became manifest that the unfettered flow of capital could ruin whole countries over night and how contagious could be an “Asian flu.”

Similarly, in the political order it was suggested that history with its wars had ended. The world entered the new millennium with visions of perpetual peace, only to find that an unipolar political and military hegemony over diverse peoples was itself a formula for new and more pervasive conflict. This defied understanding in previous terms of nations and interests. Economy had been succeeded by issues of recognition, and these in turn had metastasized into issues of cultures and civilizations.

On the one hand, the new whole needed to be understood in terms of its component parts, yet could no longer be reduced thereto. On the other hand, the parts now needed to be understood in terms of the emerging whole, yet violently resisted being reduced thereto. Indeed the candidate for a universal culture proposed achieving its universality by abstracting — or in Rawls’ words: “removing behind a veil of ignorance” — all integrating religious or cosmic visions so that a new totalitarian “liberalism” could be imposed. We face now new problems of how the many peoples of the world can live if they are now destined to live together.

This is indeed the classic issue of hermeneutics: that the parts cannot be understood without the whole, but that neither can the whole be understood without the parts. This has been a local issue for single communities and its minorities; now it has ballooned suddenly into a problem of the entire global whole and its many peoples, cultures and civilizations.

There is something new, however, to the optic in which this dilemma is now situated. Before it was a matter of individuals emerging from a whole as, for example, the psychological maturation of persons emerging from their family. Now, however, the tide appears to be reversed as the multiple cultures and civilizations strive to retain their identity in this newly unified globe in which all are rudely pressed together.

This situation challenges hermeneutics as it begins to evolve into a broadly humane method. It is no longer a matter of drawing forward the ancient wisdom of one’s culture in order to face new challenges or of engaging this in understanding and interpreting others. Instead, it becomes a matter of understanding oneself from the view point of the new global whole into which we now enter. This is more a matter of the goal challenging the present as the global whole which only now is emergent gives new sense to the part.

How can hermeneutics contribute to our response to present into cultural dilemmas; how must hermeneutics be transformed in order to do so in our newly global age? Here culture is taken as the combination of values and virtues which mark the life of a people. In order to see this we must begin with the currently emerging questioning of the adequacy of objective scientific knowledge alone and the new appreciation of subjectivity. This, in turn, will allow for an internal

understanding of freedom, not as a matter of choice between external objects or of formal adherence to laws, but as the inner existential construction of one's life. In this light culture becomes a matter not of things, but of life.

Globalization then emerges not simply as an economic phenomenon, but as a new stage in the evolution of humankind, and hence of creation as a whole. As it constitutes a new way of being in terms of the whole and hence relationally, the issue becomes that of living with all the peoples and cultures of the world. This requires a transformation of hermeneutics from its classical role in interpreting sacred texts into a means for interpreting our ever broadening and intensifying life with others in this global age.

This study was presented in the form of four lectures in the Institute of Philosophy of Fudan University in Shanghai, China and of the Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Social Sciences in Hanoi, Vietnam. As lectures they are necessarily more succinct, but also more pointed. Hence, the lectures have been appended here both as summaries and as applications of the main text. Their full scientific apparatus is the main body and burden of this work.

Part I
Hermeneutics for a Global Age

1. Subjectivity and Self-Realization

Introduction: The Emergence of Subjectivity

In the context of the many crises with which we have been greeted in entering upon the new millennia it is dangerous to raise the question of the role of philosophy. For if, with Aristotle, philosophy is to be taken up when the basic needs of the times are cared for then philosophy is in danger of being shelved for many generations to come. On the other hand, philosophy may have to do with our nature and dignity — with what we are, and with what we are after — and hence with the terms in which we live as persons and peoples. If so then philosophy may be not the last, but the first consideration, or at least the most determinative for life in our trying circumstances. How can a philosopher position him or herself in order to be able to see and to think in these terms?

During the last century human knowledge of the physical universe was totally transformed by breaking into the atom and discovering its structure. The effect was not only scientific advance, but the ambivalence of the conjoined threat of the atomic bomb and great promise of atomic energy. It is contended here that similarly philosophical understanding today has shifted from being a work of deduction by specialists working in abstraction from the process of human life, to deep engagement at the center of human concerns and under the pressures of life's challenges. From external objective observation life is now lived in terms especially of internal self-awareness; human freedom with its cultural creativity and responsibility now become central. The playing field has shifted, the challenges have risen geometrically and with them the potential not only for death but for life. To understand this we need to review the steps, negative and positive, by which this breakthrough from mere objectivity to subjectivity has occurred.

The Crisis of Objective Reason

As we enter into the new millennium we cross a new divide. To see this we need to review the history of reason in this epoch. The first millennium is justly seen as one in which human attention was focused upon God. It was the time of Christ and the Prophet; much of humanity was fully absorbed in the assimilation of their messages.

The second millennium is generally seen as shifting its attention to human beings. The first 500 years focused upon the reintegration of Aristotelian reason by such figures as Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd and Thomas Aquinas.

The second half of the millennium, from 1500, was marked by a radicalization of reason. Whereas from its beginning human reason always had attempted to draw upon the fullness of human experience, to reflect the highest human and religious aspirations, and to build upon the accomplishments of the predecessors — philosophers sensed themselves as standing on the shoulders of earlier philosophers — a certain Promethean hope now emerged. As with Milton's *Paradise Lost*, it was claimed that humankind would save itself, indeed that each person would do so by his or her power of reason.

For this, Francis Bacon¹ directed that the idols which bore the content of the cultural traditions be smashed; John Locke² would erase all prior content of the mind in order to reduce it to a blank tablet; René Descartes³ would put all under doubt. What was sought was a body of clear and distinct ideas, univocous, universal and necessary, strictly united on a mathematical model.

It was true that Descartes intended later to reintroduce the various levels of human knowledge on a more certain basis. But what he restored was not the rich content of the breadth of human experience, but only what could be had with the requisite clarity and distinctness. Thus, of the content of the senses which had been bracketed by doubt in the first *Meditation*, in the sixth *Meditation* only the quantitative or measurable was allowed back into his system. All the rest was considered simply provisory and employed pragmatically to the degree that it proved useful in so navigating in the world as to avoid physical harm.

In this light the goal of knowledge and of properly human life was radically curtailed. For Aristotle,⁴ and no less for Christianity and Islam in the first 1500 years of this era, this had been contemplation of the magnificence and munificence of the highest being, God. By the Enlightenment this was reduced to control over nature in the utilitarian service of humankind. And as the goals of human life were reduced to the material order, the service of humankind really became the service of machines in the exploitation of physical nature. This was the real enslavement of human freedom.

At the beginning of the 20th century humanity still felt itself poised for the final push to create, by the power of science, a utopia not only by subduing and harnessing the physical powers of nature, but by genetic human engineering and social manipulation. Looking back from the present vantage point we find that history has proven to be quite different from these utopian goals as the power of science was diverted to two destructive World Wars and to the development of nuclear weapons capable of extinguishing the entire human race.

On the one side of the cold war, before the end of the 20th century the Soviet Union appeared to implode and the horizon on which meaning was conceived and life was lived by half of humankind was extinguished, as if the sun went down never to rise again.

On the other hand, the ideals and idealism of Hegel and Josiah Royce would give way to William James's and John Dewey's concrete, pragmatic goals which could be achieved by human effort.⁵ Or at least this would be so until it came to be recognized that in positive or empirical terms it was not possible even to articulate such social goals. Positivism would then succeed pragmatism only to have to admit that its controlling "principle of verifiability" (and then of "falsifiability") was not intelligible in its own positivist terms. The consumer society then showed itself incapable of generating meaning for life, but capable of exploiting everyone else, and the ideology of a totally free market appears to threaten the weak majority in the present global times.

The religiously contextualized philosophical traditions not built in terms of a modern enlightenment reductionism were not understandable within that more restricted horizon. Hence the great Hindu and Islamic traditions were dismissed as mystifications for reasons opposite to those of al-Ghazali, and effective access to the classical tradition of Western philosophy was no longer available.

¹ 1 Francis Bacon, *Novum Organon, De Sapientia Veterum* (New York, 1960).

² John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1690).

³ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), I.

⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII.

⁵ William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (New York, 1907). John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York, 1920).

In sum, the last century was marked by poverty that cannot be erased and exploitation ever more widespread, two World Wars, pogroms and holocausts, genocide and “ethnic cleansing,” emerging intolerance, family collapse and anomie. The situation recalls the great meteorite which hit the Yucatan Peninsula eons ago sending a cloud of dust around the world which obscured the sun for years, killed off the flora and thus broke the food chain. Life of all sorts was largely extinguished and had to begin to regenerate itself slowly once again.

In this light the present period may be misnamed “postmodern;” it seems more the final critical period of modernity as it progressively collapses. Having become conscious of its own deadly propensities, modern philosophy begins to attack these evils by the only tools it possesses: power and control, in a manner that is not creative, but destructive. Knowing that it must arrest its inherently destructive urges reason destroys its own speculative foundations. All notions of structures and stages and, of course, all ethical norms, everything must be trashed because the *hubris* of modern rationalism closes off access to any sense that it itself is the real root of its problems. In a paroxysm of despair, like a scorpion trapped in a circle of fire, it commits its own *auto de fe*.

Subjectivity: A New Agenda

To read this history negatively, as we have been doing, is, however, only part of the truth. It depicts a simple and total collapse of technical reason acting alone and as self sufficient. But there may be more to human consciousness and hence to philosophy. If so in analogy to the replacement of a tooth in childhood, the more important phenomenon is not the weakness of the old tooth that is falling out, but the strength of the new tooth that is replacing it. A few philosophers did point to this other dimension of human awareness. Shortly after Descartes Pascal’s assertion “Que la raison a des raisons, que la raison ne comprend pas” would remain famous if unheeded, as would Vico’s prediction that the new reason would give birth to a generation of brutes — intellectual brutes, but brutes nonetheless. Later Kierkegaard would follow Hegel with a similar warning. None of these voice would have strong impact while the race was on to “conquer” the world by a supposed omni-sufficient scientific reason. But as human problems mounted the adequacy of reason to handle the deepest problems of human dignity and transcendent purpose came under sustained questioning and more attention was given to additional dimensions of human capabilities.

One might well ask which comes first, the public sense of human challenge or the corresponding philosophical reflection. My own sense is that they are in fact one, with philosophical insight providing the reflective dimension of the human concern. In any case, one finds a striking parallel between social experience and philosophy in this century. To the extreme totalitarian repression by the ideologies of the 1930s there followed the progressive liberation from fascism in World War II, from colonial exploitation in the 1950s and 60s, of minorities in the 1970s and from closed societies in the 1980s. Throughout, like the new tooth the emergence of the person has been consistent and persistent.

There has been a strikingly parallel development in philosophy. At the beginning of this century, it had appeared that the rationalist project of stating all in clear and distinct objective terms was close to completion. This was to be achieved in either the empirical terms of the positivist tradition of sense knowledge or in the formal and essentialist terms of the Kantian intellectual tradition. Whitehead wrote that at the turn of the century, when with Bertrand Russell he went to the First World Congress of Philosophy in Paris, it seemed that, except for some details of application, the work of physics had been essentially completed. To the contrary, however, the

very attempt to finalize scientific knowledge with its most evolved concepts made manifest the radical insufficiency of the objectivist approach and led to renewed appreciation of the importance of subjectivity.

Thus, Wittgenstein began by writing his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*⁶ on the Lockean supposition that significant knowledge consisted in constructing a mental map corresponding point to point to the external world as perceived by sense experience. In such a project the spiritual element of understanding, i.e., the grasp of the relations between the points on this mental map and the external world, was relegated to the margin as simply “unutterable.” Later experience in teaching children, however, led Wittgenstein to the conclusion that this empirical mental mapping was simply not what was going on in human knowledge. In his *Blue and Brown Books*⁷ and in his subsequent *Philosophical Investigations*⁸ Wittgenstein shifted the human consciousness or intentionality, which previously he had relegated to the periphery, to the very center of concern. The focus of his philosophy was no longer the supposedly objective replication of the external world, but the human construction of language and of worlds of meaning.⁹

A similar process was underway on the continent in the Kantian camp. There Husserl’s attempt to bracket all elements in order to isolate pure essences for scientific knowledge forced attention to intentionality and to the limitations of a pure essentialism. This opened the way for his understudy, Martin Heidegger, to rediscover the existential and historical dimensions of reality in his *Being and Time*.¹⁰ The religious implications of this new sensitivity would be articulated by Karl Rahner in his work, *Spirit in the World*, and by the Second Vatican Council in its Constitution, *The Church in the World*.¹¹

For Heidegger the meaning of being and of life was unveiled and emerged — the two processes were identical — in conscious human life (*dasein*) lived through time and therefore through history. Thus human consciousness became the new focus of attention. The uncovering or bringing into light (the etymology of the term “phenomenology”) of the unfolding patterns and interrelations of subjectivity would open a new era of human awareness. Epistemology and metaphysics would develop — and merge — in the very work of tracking the nature and direction of this process.

For Heidegger’s successor, Hans-Georg Gadamer,¹² the task becomes uncovering how human persons, emerging as family, neighborhood and people, by exercising their creative freedom weave their cultural tradition. This is not history as a mere compilation of whatever humankind does or makes, but culture as the fabric of the human consciousness and symbols by which a human group unveils being in its time.

The result is a dramatic inversion: where before all began from above and flowed downward — whether in structures of political power or of abstract reasoning — at the turn of this new millennium attention focuses rather upon the emerging upward of the creative freedom of people in, and as, civil society as a new and responsible partner with government and business in the continuing effort toward the realization of the common good. This is manifest in the shift in the agenda of the United Nations from the cold war debates between economic systems and their political powers to the great conferences in Rio on the environment, in Cairo on family, in Beijing

⁶ Tr. C.K. Ogden (London: Methuen, 1981).

⁷ (New York: Harper and Row).

⁸ Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958).

⁹ Brian Wicker, *Culture and Theology* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), pp. 68-88.

¹⁰ (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

¹¹ *Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (New York: New Century, 1974).

¹² *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975).

on women. The agenda is no longer reality as objectively quantifiable and conflictual, but the perhaps more difficult, or at least more meaningful, one of human life as lived consciously with its issues of human dignity, values and cultural interchange.

This more integral human horizon situates the objective issues of power and profit in a context of human value and subjectivity. This calls upon philosophy most urgently to develop the new ways of thinking and interpreting which can enable people to engage more consciously, freely and responsibly these new dimensions of life. Done well this can be an historic step ahead for humanity; done poorly it can produce a new round of human conflict and misery. At this writing the jury is decided out, for not only the threats but the proposed responses seem ominous indeed.

In order to enter then into this new field in search of its promise, and to avoid its pitfalls, we need to examine more closely the levels of freedom at our disposition.

Freedom as Existential Self-Realization

If freedom is the responsible exercise of our life then it can be understood how central is the issue of the levels of freedom and the possibilities and limitations of each. Indeed, the term “freedom” is used so broadly and with so many meanings that it can both lead and mislead. It seems important then to sort out its various meanings.

After surveying carefully the history of philosophy, Mortimer Adler and his team, in *The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectic Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom*,¹³ distinguished three main levels of freedom: circumstantial freedom of self-realization as a choice of whatever one wants among objects; acquired freedom of self-perfection as the ability to choose as one ought; and natural freedom of self-determination by which one responsibly creates oneself and one’s world.

Empirical Freedom of Choice

At the beginning of the modern stirrings for democracy John Locke perceived a crucial condition for a liberal democracy. If decisions were to be made not by the king but by the people, the basis for these decisions had to be equally available to all. To achieve this Locke proposed that we suppose the mind to be a blank paper devoid of characters and ideas, and then follow the way in which it comes to be furnished. To keep this public he insisted that it be done exclusively via experience, that is, either by sensation or by reflection upon the mind’s work on the materials derived from the senses.¹⁴ Proceeding on these suppositions as if they were real limitations of knowledge, David Hume concluded that all objects of knowledge which are not formal tautologies must be matters of fact. Such “matters of fact” are neither the existence or actuality of a thing nor its essence, but simply the determination of one from a pair of sensible contraries, e.g., white rather than black, sweet rather than sour.¹⁵

The restrictions implicit in this appear starkly in Rudolf Carnap’s “Vienna Manifesto” which shrinks the scope of meaningful knowledge and significant discourse to describing “some state of affairs” in terms of empirical “sets of facts.” This excludes speech about wholes, God, the

¹³ (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1958), 48.

¹⁴ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Dover, 1959), Book II, chap. I, vol. I, 121-124.

¹⁵ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Chicago: Regnery, 1960).

unconscious or *entelechies*; the grounds of meaning, indeed all that transcends the immediate content of sense experience, are excluded.¹⁶

The socio-political structures which have emerged from this model of Locke have contributed much, but a number of indices suggest that he and others have tried too hard to work out their model on a solely empirical or forensic basis. For in such terms it is not possible to speak of appropriate or inappropriate goals or even to evaluate choices in relation to self-fulfillment. The only concern is the ability to choose among a set of contraries by brute, changeable and even arbitrary will power, and whether circumstances will allow one to carry out these choices. Such choices, of course, may not only differ from, but even contradict, the immediate and long range objectives of other persons. This will require compromises in the sense of Hobbes; John Rawls will even work out a formal set of such compromises.¹⁷

Through it all, however, the basic concern remains the ability to do as one pleases: “being able to act or not act, according as we shall choose or will.”¹⁸ As its orientation is external, that is, to the objective and sensible, in practice and over time this comes to constitute a black hole of [self-centered] consumption of physical goods in which both nature and the person are consumed. This is the essence of consumerism; it shrinks the very notion of freedom to competitiveness in the pursuit of material wealth.

Freedom in this sense is built upon a conception of human nature as corrupted, of man as wolf, and of life as conflict. Hopefully this will be exercised in an “enlightened” manner, but laws and rights can be only external remedies. By doing violence to man’s naturally violent tendencies, they attempt to attenuate to the minimal degree necessary one’s free and self-centered choices, and hence the supposed basic viciousness of human life. There must be a better understanding of human freedom; indeed these emerge as soon as one begins to take into account not only external objects, but also the interior nature and the existence of the human subject.

*Formal Freedom to Choose as One Ought*¹⁹

For Kant the heteronomous, external and empiricist character of the above disqualifies it from being moral at all, much less from constituting human freedom. In his first *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant had studied the role of the mind in the scientific constitution of the universe. He reasoned that because our sense experience was always limited and partial, the universality and necessity of the laws of science must come from the human mind. This was an essential turning point for it directed attention to the role of the human spirit and especially to the reproductive imagination in constituting the universe in which we live and move.

But this is not the realm of freedom for if the forms and categories with which we work are from our mind, how we construct with them is not left to our discretion. The imagination must bring together the multiple elements of sense intuition in a unity or order capable of being informed by the concepts or categories of the intellect and with a view to constituting the necessary and universal judgments of science. The subject’s imagination here is active but not free, for it is ruled

¹⁶ R. Carnap, *Vienna Manifesto*, trans. A. Blumberg in G. Kreyche and J. Mann, *Perspectives on Reality* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), p. 485.

¹⁷ *The Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

¹⁸ M. Adler, I, 62.

¹⁹ See George F. McLean, *Tradition, Harmony and Transcendence* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), pp. 67-70.

by the categories integral to the necessary and universal judgements of the sciences. In these terms the human mind remains merely an instrument of physical progress and a function of matter.

However, in his second *Critique*, that of *Practical Reason*, beyond the set of universal, necessary and ultimately material relations, Kant points to the reality of human responsibility. This is the reality of freedom or spirit which characterizes and distinguishes the person. In its terms he recasts the whole notion of physical law as moral rule. If freedom is not to be chaotic and randomly destructive, it must be ruled or under law. To be free is to be able to will as I ought, i.e., in conformity with moral law.

Yet in order to be free the moral act must be autonomous. Hence, my maxim must be something which, as a moral agent, I — and no other — give to myself. Finally, though I am free because I am the lawmaker, my exercise of this power cannot be arbitrary if the moral order must be universal.

On this basis, a new level of freedom emerges. It is not merely self-centered whimsy in response to circumstantial stimuli, nor is it a despotic exercise of power, nor is it the work of the clever self-serving eye of Plato's rogue. Rather, it is the highest reality in all creation. To will as I ought is wise and caring power, open to all and bent upon the realization of "the glorious ideal of a universal realm of ends-in-themselves." In sum, it is free men living together in righteous harmony. This is what we are really about; it is our glory — and our burden.

Unfortunately, for Kant this glorious ideal remained on the formal plane; it was a matter of essence rather than of existence. It was intended as a guiding principle, a critical norm to evaluate the success or failure of the human endeavor — but it was not the human endeavor itself. For failure to appreciate this, much work for human rights remains at a level of abstraction which provides only minimal requirements. It might found processes of legal redress, but stops short of — and may even distract from, and thus impede — positive engagement in the process of constructing the world in which we live: witness the long paralysis of Europe and the world since the end of the cold war in the dissolution of the moral and hence legal foundations for life in our times.

This second level of freedom makes an essential contribution to human life; we must not forget it nor must we ever do less. But it does not give us the way in which we, as unique people in this unique time and space, are to face our concrete problems. We need common guides, but our challenge is to act concretely. Can philosophy, without becoming politics or other processes of social action, consider and contribute to the actual process of human existence as we shape and implement our lives in freedom?

When the contemporary mind proceeds beyond the objective and formal to become more deeply conscious of human subjectivity and of existence as emerging from and through human self-awareness, then the most profound changes must take place. The old order built on objective structures and norms would no longer be adequate; as they begin to be reinforced, deepened and personalized a new era would dawn. This is indeed the juncture at which we now stand.

*Existential Freedom as Self-Constitution and Self-Determination*²⁰

Progress in being human corresponds to the deepening of one's sense of being. This goes beyond Platonic forms and structures, essences and laws. It opens to act as uncovered by Aristotle and especially to existence as it emerges in Christian philosophy through the Patristic and Middle Ages. More recently this sensibility to existence has emerged anew through the employment of a

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-79.

phenomenological method focusing upon intentionality and the self-awareness of the human person in time (*dasein*). This opens the third level of freedom stated above, namely, that of deciding for oneself in virtue of the power “inherent in human nature to change one’s own character creatively and to determine what one shall be or shall become.” This is the most radical freedom, namely, our natural freedom of self-determination.

Basically it is self-affirmation in terms of our teleological orientation toward perfection or full realization, which we will see to be the root of the development of values and virtues, and hence of cultural traditions. It implies seeking perfection when it is absent and enjoying or celebrating it when attained. In this sense, it is that stability in one’s orientation to the good which classically has been termed holiness and anchors such great traditions of the world as the Hindu and Taoist, Islamic and Judeo-Christian. One might say that this is life as practiced archetypically by the saints and holy men, but it would be more correct to say that it is because they lived in such a manner that they are called holy.

In his third *Critique*, Kant suggests an important insight regarding how this might form a creative force for confronting present problems and hence for passing on the tradition in a transforming manner. He sees that if the free person of the second critique were to be surrounded by the necessitarian universe of the first critique, then one’s freedom would be entrapped and entombed within one’s mind, while one’s external actions would be necessary and necessitated. If there is to be room for human freedom in a world in which one can make use of necessary laws, indeed if science is to contribute to the exercise of human freedom, then nature too must be understood as directed toward a goal and must manifest throughout a teleology within which free human purpose can be integrated. In these terms, even in its necessary and universal laws, nature is no longer alien to freedom; rather it expresses divine freedom and is conciliable with human freedom.

This makes possible the exercise of freedom; but our issue is how this freedom is exercised in a way that creates diverse cultures. How can a free person relate to an order of nature and to structures of society in a way that is neither necessitated nor necessitating, but free and creative? In the *Critique of the Aesthetic Judgment*, Kant points out that in working toward an integrating unity the imagination is not confined by the necessitating structures of categories and concepts as in the first *Critique*, or the regulating ideal of the second *Critique*. Returning to the order of essences would lose the uniqueness of the self and its freedom. Rather, the imagination ranges freely over the full sweep of reality in all its dimensions to see where relatedness and purposiveness can emerge. This ordering and reordering by the imagination can bring about numberless unities or patterns of actions and natures. Unrestricted by any *a priori* categories, it can integrate necessary dialectical patterns within its own free and creative productions and include scientific universals within its unique concrete harmonies. This is the proper and creative work of the human person in this world.

In order for human freedom to be sensitive to the entirety of this all-encompassing harmony, in the final analysis our conscious attention must be directed not merely to universal and necessary physical or social structures, nor even to beauty and ugliness either in their concrete empirical realizations or in their Platonic ideals. Rather, our focus must be upon the integrating pleasure or displeasure, enjoyment or revulsion, generated deep within our person by these images as we

attempt to shape our world according to the relation of our will to the good and hence to realize the good for our times.²¹

This still could be a matter of forms and categories, rather than of existence and thus a matter of the human person in him or herself. It is possible, however, to read this in terms of existence rather than of essence, as well as a matter of relation to the creator or Being itself and the living of grace in time. In this light the aesthetic enables one to follow the free exercise of existence in human life. The third level of freedom then becomes truly the work of “God with us,” Emmanuel.

In this manner human freedom is at once the goal, the creative source, the manifestation, the evaluation and the arbiter of all that imaginatively we can propose. It is *goal*, namely, to realize life as rational and free in this world; it is *creative source* for through the imagination freedom unfolds the endless possibilities for human expression; it is *manifestation* because it presents these to our consciousness in ways appropriate to our capabilities for knowledge of limited realities and relates these to the circumstances of our life; it is *criterion* because its response manifests a possible mode of action to be variously desirable or not in terms of a total personal response of pleasure or displeasure, enjoyment or revulsion; and it is *arbiter* because it provides the basis upon which our freedom chooses to affirm or reject, realize or avoid this mode of self-realization.

Thus, freedom in this third, existential sense emerges as the dynamic center of our life. It is the spectroscope and kaleidoscope through which is processed the basic thrust toward perfection upon which, as we shall see, culture as the pattern of public life is based and by which its orders of preference are set. The philosophical and religious traditions it creates become the keys to the dynamics of human life. Hence the possibilities of peace within a nation and cooperation between peoples must depend fundamentally on the potentialities of creative freedom for overcoming the proclivities of the first level of freedom for self seeking, confrontation and violent competition, for surmounting the general criteria of the second level of freedom, and for setting in motion positive personal processes of concrete peaceful and harmonious collaboration.

Existential Self-Realization

Just as we saw Aristotle evolved the formal structures of Plato in a more active sense, here thought takes an additional step ahead, moving from the relativity passive level of essence to existence as that by which essences are made to be. Moreover, if for living things “to be” is “to live,” then “to be” for conscious, free and social human beings is to live in a conscious, free and socially responsible manner. Existence then is the place to begin in order to be able to understand the unique commitments of cultures and the possibilities of harmony in a pluralistic global horizon.

This existential sense of freedom can be traced from the Greek Church Fathers; it took on systemic form in the Islamic and Christian medieval syntheses of Avicenna and Aquinas; and it has been an object of special attention in this century with the development of the phenomenological methods for bringing to light human intentionality. Here we shall look at the first and the third of these, that is, at the classical Greek component and at its contemporary implications.

To begin with the Greek Fathers, as long as the Greek philosophers supposed matter to be eternal, the issue was merely by which form matter was specified; the issue of existence in contrast to non-existence did not emerge. But by applying to the Greek notion of matter the Judeo-Christian

²¹ Donald W. Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1974), pp. 83-90; Wilhelm S. Wurzer, “On the Art of Moral Imagination,” in George F. McLean and John Kromkowski, *The Imagination* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2003), pp. 103-123.

heritage regarding the complete dominion of God over all things, the Church Fathers opened human consciousness to the fact that matter, too, even if eternal, stood in need of causal explanation. This shortly preceded Plotinus, who was the first philosopher to attempt an explanation of the origin of matter.²²

This in turn enabled philosophical questioning to push beyond issues of form, nature or kind to existence and, hence, to deepen radically the sense of reality. If what must be explained is no longer merely the particular form or type of beings, but matter as well, then the question becomes not only how things are of this form or of that kind, but how they exist rather than not exist. In this way the awareness of being evolved beyond change or form;²³ to be real would mean to exist and whatever is related thereto. Quite literally, “To be or not to be” had become the question.

By the same stroke, our self-awareness and will were deepened dramatically. They no longer were restricted to focusing upon choices between various external material objects and modalities of life — the first and common but superficial meaning of freedom above — nor even to Kant’s choosing as one ought; all this remains within the context of being as nature or essence. The freedom opened by the conscious assumption and affirmation of one’s own existence meant rather responsibility for one’s very being.²⁴

One might follow the progression of this deepening awareness of being by reflecting upon the experience of being totally absorbed in the particularities of one’s job, business, farm or studies — the prices, the colors, the chemicals — and then encountering an imminent danger of death, the loss of a loved one or the birth of a child. At the moment of death, as at the moment of birth, the entire atmosphere and range of preoccupations in a hospital room shifts dramatically, being suddenly transformed from tactical adjustments for limited objectives to confronting existence, in sorrow or in joy, in terms that plunge to the center of the whole range of meaning. Such was the effect upon philosophy when the awareness of being developed from attention to merely this or that kind of reality, to focus upon the act of existence in contrast to non-existence, and hence to human life in all its dimensions and, indeed, to life divine.

Cornelio Fabro goes further. He suggests that this deepened metaphysical sense of being in the early Christian ages not only opened the possibility for an enriched sense of freedom, but itself was catalyzed by the new freedom proclaimed in the religious message. That message focused not upon Plato’s imagery of the sun at the mouth of the cave from which external enlightenment might be derived, but upon the eternal Word, Son or Logos through, and according to which, all things received their existence and which enlightened their consciousness life.

Moreover the Christian Kerygma sees redemption as having been achieved in principle by the cross, but as needing to be accepted and affirmed in a personal act of freedom by each person. The passage here from death to life is symbolized in baptism by immersion in water and resurgence.

Thus, the new sense of existence was that of being bursting into time:

- it rejects being considered in any sense as nonbeing, or being treated as anything less than one’s full reality;
- it directs the mind beyond the ideological poles of species and isolated self-interest,
- it centers, instead, upon the unique reality of the person as a participation in the creative power of God — a being bursting into existence, who is and cannot be denied;

²² Plotinus, *Enneads*, II 5 (25), ch. v.

²³ Maurizio Flick and Zoltan Alszegehy, *Il Creatore, l’inizio della salvezza* (Firenze: Lib. Ed. Fiorentina, 1961), pp. 32-49.

²⁴ M. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom*, p. 187.

- it is lived in the image of God and thus is sacred.

One is sanctified in sharing this with one's neighbors in what is now termed civil society, and with all humankind in the global society.²⁵

It took a long time for the implications of this new appreciation of existence and its meaning to germinate and find its proper philosophical articulation. Over a period of many centuries the term "form" was used to express both the kind or nature of things and the new sense of being as existence. As the distinction between the two was gradually clarified, however, proper terminology arose in which that by which a being is of this or that kind came to be expressed by the term "essence," while the act by which a being simply is was expressed by "existence" (*esse*).²⁶ The relation between the two was under intensive, genial discussion by the Islamic philosophers when their Greek tradition in philosophy was abrogated as described by al-Ghazali in his *Munqidh*.

This question was resolved 150 years later in the work of Thomas Aquinas through his notion of the real distinction between essence as existence. Paradoxically this rendered more intimate the relation of the two principles which as principles of being are related as act and potency.

This opened a new and uniquely active sense of being. It made it possible to carry Aristotle's insights regarding the structure of society to the existential level and to see this as a self-creative work of human freedom in the third or existential sense of freedom cited above. This remained objective knowledge. It was able to identify the exalted importance of the human exercise of freedom, the need for all to exercise it, and even its eternal salvific implication. However, this understanding entered into the distinctive inner subjectivity in terms of which freedom is consciously lived. This is the heart of a loving response to Being and neighbor, and thus the motivation of life in society and of the willingness to work out its challenges. It enables one to take full account of the differences between cultures in terms of which freedom is exercised, of the unique sacrifices and creativity of each person and people, and therefore of the ways in which peoples can cooperate most deeply even while remaining unique and hence distinct. All of this now has become newly possible by a phenomenological effort articulated in terms of values, virtues and cultural traditions.

Should we say that this philosophical capability has been developed in response to the new sensibilities to these issues or that these new sensibilities have developed as a result of this philosophical insight? Probably the two are yet more intimately related such that the philosophical work is the reflective dimension of the broad contemporary evolution of human sensibilities enabling it to be better understood and more responsibly oriented.

In any case, our effort here will focus on a hermeneutic examination of values and virtues as the cumulative exercise of the responsible freedom which is at the heart of civil society. In these terms we shall seek to uncover afresh the conscious exercise of existence as lived over time by persons and peoples from civil society to the global community.

²⁵ George F. McLean, *Ways to God* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999), p. 184.

²⁶ Cornelio Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Torino: Societa Ed. Internazionale, 1950), pp. 75-122.

2.

Hermeneutics and the Nature of Cultures

Hermeneutics is a single thread in the complex fabric woven by the interplay of subject and object described in Chapter I, but has emerged as salient for our times. With the increasing systematization of theology, upon the introduction of Aristotelianism logic and scientific structures in the high Middle Ages, biblical interpretation was increasingly subjected to the theological systematization of the sacred teaching. Thus, from the point of view of hermeneutics the Reformation was an inversion of the greatest magnitude. Rather than the parts of the scriptures being read in terms of the overarching theological systematization of the teaching of the Church, the latter was made subordinate to scripture; whose many parts were to be read in their own right. Biblical interpretation replaced the teaching authority of the Church. Moreover, its parts needed to be read in terms of the Bible itself as a whole. Thus, Matthias Flacius articulated the hermeneutical circle: reading the parts in terms of the whole and the whole in terms of the parts.¹

This “liberation of interpretation from dogma,” as Wilhelm Dilthey would characterize it, paralleled the nominalism of Ockham, to whose school Luther proclaimed adherence. According to this, reality was no longer primarily universal forms or ideas, but the single entities for which such universal terms stood. But here, too, unity remained necessary for the intelligibility of the world. So a scientific method was developed which was not a process of deduction from universal premises and principles, but just the contrary. The abstract hypotheses could be made part of general theories provided they received empirical verification through sense knowledge and its objects. Here the process was inductive from singulars rather than deductive from universals, but the goal remained knowledge that was universal, objective and certain due to the absence of any subject or subjectivity. As this method evolved and became ever more pervasive human awareness became attuned to what was outward and exterior; it no longer took account of the interior life of the spirit. Rudolf Carnap and others stated this most bluntly in their positivist Vienna Manifesto in 1929.

The reaction to this trend was initiated by Schleiermacher and Dilthey in restoring attention to human subjectivity both in hermeneutics and in the so-called sciences of the spirit (*geisteswissenschaften*). They thereby renewed the field of hermeneutics and gave it great impetus. But despite their great accomplishment the direction of their work suffered from a fatal flaw in attempting to develop a science according to the norms of objectivity in order to take account of subjectivity. As Gabriel Marcel and other recent existentially oriented thinkers would point out, the effort to turn the subject and its work into an object is essentially to lose its very subjectivity. This cannot be restored or discovered by stepping back, no matter how many times, in order to reintroduce the subject, for such objectivist sciences must then treat all things as objects. Their every effort to take account of the self turned it into an object, thereby losing its subjectivity. In this light the effort to develop hermeneutics after the modern objectivist model of science suffers from an inherent self-destructive contradiction. For lack of direct attention to the interior life of human subjectivity it obscures the way in which this was a personal search. Hence, it will be especially important to look at the development of phenomenology by which Husserl overcame

¹ Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. 75-124. For a review of more recent writing on the history of hermeneutics see the afterword to the second edition of H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1989); other references to Gadamer are to the first English edition of this work (New York: Seabury, 1975), which was translated from the second German edition, 1965, by G. Barden and J. Cumming.

this obstacle, and Heidegger's application of this to being. All of this laid the grounds for Gadamer's full fledged hermeneutics, which can serve our effort to communicate between cultures.

The Evolution of Modern Hermeneutics²

In *Truth and Method* H.-G. Gadamer has surveyed the development of hermeneutics showing its progressive evolution from objectivity in Schleiermacher and Dilthey to its enrichment by the attention to subjectivity through the development of the phenomenological method by Husserl and Heidegger. I will adjust the common reading of that history in view of our concern with the cultural and religious dimensions of human existence and the present challenge of globalization as an dialogue of cultures. Here I would like to point especially to the interior and ultimately religious horizon of the hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and its reemergence, at least potentially, in the context of Heidegger as important for the hermeneutics of Gadamer.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834)³

Friedrich Schleiermacher had a masterful vision based on the unity of God who has created humans as they are their united one to another as brothers and sisters. Hence, a prime way of returning to God is by deepening this union with other humans. That is, the more deeply we unite with others the more fully we achieve consciousness and appreciation of the initial unity, and unite therewith.

In this context his hermeneutics can be seen to have a number of characteristics.

First it will become important when a shared faith becomes confused or weakened as in the past. Correspondingly it is important at present when the sense of global unity is new and in formation. In such circumstances it becomes necessary to do consciously and methodically what previously had been spontaneous and second nature. This had been suggested by Spinoza and Hegel, but tended to reduce hermeneutics to external and practical technique. Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is much more for it evokes, shapes and helps to implement the reality of our conscious and spiritual relation to others and especially to God.

Second because the text is limited by the physical exigencies of language, Schleiermacher in his intent to enable the human to express the infinite moved beyond the text to reconstruct the inner intentional or mental process of the author. To approach God through man he saw the need to go beyond grammatical issues and the structure of the text (his work of 1805-1890) and to enter into the mind of the author. Here his concern was not simply what was written, nor the truth or validity of its content, but the inner processes of the faith experience of the author.

Still, Schleiermacher was extremely cautious here. Though he attended to the author as living and writing in the life world, he did so according to the characteristics of the science of his day; hence he sought objectively valid knowledge. He detached his hermeneutics from both the lived processes of the subject and the content of the text in search rather of laws and principles for understanding. Hence, he missed the existential factors upon which Gadamer would later focus, namely, the historical and community structure of understanding and the importance of pre-understanding of the whole in order to enter into the hermeneutic circle with its parts.

² H.-G. Gadamer (New York: Seabury, 1975), pp. 153-234; Palmer, pp. 198-218.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 162-173.

Nevertheless, many miss the significance of Schleiermacher's contribution since they close their eyes to the religious dimension of his thought and consider it to be merely a matter of human psychology. As noted above, however, for Schleiermacher the horizontal reunion between non-conceptual human consciousnesses is fundamentally a vertical deepening into the divine ground of being. This is the heart of the matter and the reason why the dialogue of cultures and civilizations is at root also a dialogue of religions.

There were, however, it would seem a number of limitations. Previously, interpretation had been guided not only by the individual's act of faith, but by that of the believing community, called "the teaching" or dogma, which stated the identity of that community. At this point this belief of the community of the faithful was omitted and one was left alone with the individual interior faith: "the liberation of interpretation from dogma." If all that was truly religious was reduced to this interior act of faith, as implied by Luther's reading of *sola fide* as the way of salvation, then the external sacred text is reduced to an object for scientific inspection, rather than a religious reality or a matter for belief. In interpreting the Qu'ran, for example, this would break the essential role of the continuous tradition coming from the community of the Companions of The Prophet, the life of the early Community of Believers, the Hadiths and the long experience of living as a people of God according to the Qu'ran. But without these how could one understand the Holy text? Gadamer, as we shall see, insists upon the essential role of one's tradition in interpreting any text.

Paul Tillich would come to regret bitterly this replacement of the sense of the sacred community by the text and by personal faith alone in Schleiermacher and Dilthey, for it left the reader of the text at the mercy of social forces, rather than as shaping society in the light of the Spirit as lived by the community of believers. For Tillich this came to a crisis in Germany in the early 1930s when, along with most others in philosophy and theology, he had thought that National Socialism would be the new manifestation of God, only to see it evolve into a new paganism with Hitler as its head. Tillich would write in some personal dismay "Neo-Protestantism is dead in Europe. All groups, whether Lutheran, Reformed, or Barian, consider the last 200 years of Protestant Theology essentially erroneous. The year 1933 finished the period of theological liberalism stemming from Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Troeltsch."⁴

In the previous chapter we had seen how attending to subjectivity led foundationally to freedom as the human exercise of existence. Here we can see how in doing so this not only made possible the work of hermeneutics, but opened up some of its key problems. Gadamer illustrates this from the work of two historians L. von Ranke and J.G. Droysen.⁵ Ranke focused upon freedom as the essential element in history. Hence rather than develop an Hegelian unity of all acts of the spirit in terms of a universal telos: the return of the Spirit to itself, he builds from the individual acts as free but connected in multiple concatenations. In this light the meaning of history can be appreciated only in retrospect, for which there are multiple partial vantage points or perspectives.

Droysen would take this a step further and suggest that recreating the intention of the free agent is not enough as the effects of their actions interact and produce results which exceed their intention. History then is better understood as the human attempt to give expression to ethical ideals, an attempt which is realized only partially in any one community.

But here the project of attending to intention and freedom would seem to encounter a check, for if the goal is retrospective, that is, to return from a later period or from other circumstances to the intention of the author then retrospection and recreation clash: the very need to recreate in new

⁴ Paul Tillich, "The Present Theological Situation in the Light of Continental European Developments," *Theology Today*, 6 (1949), 299.

⁵ Gadamer, pp. 179-192.

and different circumstances militates against the ability to see the original as it was; conversely, the attempt to return to the original intention militates against the effort to recreate it anew in, and for, fresh circumstances. The result is an isometric in which any success is a loss of appreciation of the meaning of the text either in itself or for our day.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911)⁶

What Dilthey did was to shift attention from the inner regions of the heart to life as lived externally and corporately. This is not the realm of reflexive consciousness in which one is self-aware and reflective of one's own actions, but rather immediate engagement in life for which he developed such categories as value, meaning and relationships. These do not dissect analytically as do the sciences, but reflect the inner unity of knowing, willing and feeling. The process here is not about life; it is life itself as the living process of realizing meaning.

This is temporal in two senses. It depends upon materials from the past and lives in expectation of the future. But beyond the transition from past to future there is also a deepening of meaning. This is not a matter of private introspection, but of objective cultural expression in writing and ritual of lived experience.

In this context hermeneutics goes far beyond the interpretation of a written text as a dead artifact to see it as a way in which life continues to express and disclose itself. It is in these terms that is to be found the significance of the hermeneutic circle taken in terms of meaning. In one sense meaning is a matter of the whole of life. Thus, while derived from the meaning of the parts, nonetheless it also determines the meaning of those parts. Moreover, this is historical in the sense that the meaning can be seen from the many particular parts or standpoints, or any combination of these. The meaning then is not outside of the circle, but essentially is part of the historically defined circle.

In this sense life is lived and known from within, prior to its division between object and subject. Though able to be properly understood only via its objectification, it is itself the interaction between the individual and the overall cultural tradition in which he lives as the objective spirit. There is then no principal standpoint from which to understand and judge, for understanding is always in a cultural context or horizon. Interpretation is a matter of searching out the interaction of the horizons of the reader and the text.

Dilthey has done much in focusing on experience as lived externally in the artifacts of a culture. He thereby situated hermeneutics as temporal and historical. But in the end his goal remains that of achieving a scientific knowledge for purposes of grasping and controlling. The fact that the subject is essentially included in an historical process of meaning leaves him in a relativism for which there is only a series of world views with no way of judging between them. Person and communities are inescapably historical and understand themselves best by interpreting their history from the past.

In effect Dilthey has projected outward the relationship between human spirits which we saw in Schleiermacher, but finding these to be essentially temporal he is left with only a series of views and horizons lacking unity or direction. What he needed, but did not sufficiently appreciate in Scheiermacher, was the vertical dimension in which these historical relations between people are points of manifestation of the being of the divine which emerges ever more into human life. Like a boat without keel or compass Dilthey leaves understanding as a matter of reexperiencing the

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 204-214.

experience of the author, rather than as a truly progressive and forward movement of the text living through time and engaging the modern dilemmas.

From Schleiermacher and Dilthey, however, we do have significant axes for a hermeneutics: it is lived in a human community, but as making manifest Being as the ground of meaning; it is centered on the meaning of life, which it sees reflected in all aspects of culture; thus it grows through history and is diversified in and by all peoples and their cultures.

*Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)*⁷

Let us now resume our quest. We have seen how, along with the developments of objective and empirical sciences, there was an attempt to recognize as well the non-objective realm of human subjectivity. The danger was that, in a time when the sense of science was objectivist, univocal and pervasive, the very attempt to recognize and protect the non-objective would be carried out by objectivist means and thereby itself become a process of reducing subjectivity to objectivity. This marked the efforts from Schleiermacher through Dilthey, and raised the question of whether subjectivity could ever be protected. On the one hand, the attempt of Schleiermacher illustrated that this could not be done if what was sought ultimately was objective scientific knowledge. On the other hand, Dilthey's effort illustrated that subjectivity would be reduced to relativism if left to itself in an exclusively horizontal historical dimension that moved simply from past to future.

In retrospect then it would appear that the only way is to take up the vertical dimension which inspired the thought of Schleiermacher, but had been ignored by those in search of a science of spirit or *geisteswissenschaft*. But in order to access this a new mode of thinking, now called phenomenology, would be needed. This was initiated by Husserl, and surprisingly not in reaction against, but in the search of the foundations of scientific knowledge at its most rigorous, namely, in mathematics.

As a student he had been sent by Jan Masaryk to Franz Brentano in Vienna, who introduced him to the notion of intentionality from Aristotle. This flowed through the channel of Catholic philosophy due to its openness to the work of the Spirit in the human heart. In this light, the sciences and even mathematics needed to be set within the broader horizon of intentionality once they were seen as way of organizing experience with a view to certain intentions or goals.

Thus, whereas Dilthey had attempted to render all such knowledge ultimately objective for scientific goals, Husserl situated science within the broader life world. He placed on one side the experience that is objective and hence available for anyone and everyone to see. Under this heading would come the genius of Aristotle in developing a process of abstraction where differences would be omitted from attention so that there remained only what was uniform across any field under investigation. Modern empiricism is similarly objectivist in insisting that the object of knowledge be repeatable at any time and by any one, and that the result of any given experiment be exactly the same.

But our experience of life manifests another dimension of experience characterized precisely by its temporal and historical character. What happens is succeeded by other events, in terms of which our prior experience can never again be seen in quite the same light. Hence, experience is not a set of unchanging blocks, but more a process of becoming. It consists less in objects before us than in our total — including our emotional — response to the world. This personal outlook on

⁷ See the studies by Joseph Kockelmans, "The Founders of Phenomenology and Personalism" and Robert E. Wood, "The Phenomenologists" in G. McLean, ed., *Reading Philosophy for the XXIst Century* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1989), pp. 111-212. See also Gadamer, pp. 214-225.

life is shaped less by the things observed than by living through them. Moreover, these two processes of experience and understanding are not so much separated as interactive in a spiral manner: understanding is shaped by developing experience, which in turn is shaped by progress in understanding.

In this way Husserl succeeded in directing the mind to human subjectivity, and hence to the unique freedom and creativity of peoples. But he leaves unanswered the question of the unity of this realm of human subjectivity. That there is a unity is seen from the fact of communication, the cooperative projects of science and the yet broader project which is the community, but how can this be grounded? Husserl appealed to a transcendental ego in a somewhat Kantian manner which ideally or formally states the entire realm of self-consciousness and of mutual awareness, but this would appear to lose touch with the life world he wanted to explore. At a later point he would seem to identify this with the entire historical realm of actual human interchange, but that would not confront the foundational question of the unity of this realm.

In any case, his interest is not in a Kantian form of consciousness superimposed upon the concrete acts of consciousness. Rather he is intent upon a process of phenomenological reduction by which all the particular empirical contents of the various experiences are put to one side or bracketed in order to make manifest what is essential to consciousness. His conclusion is that whereas other things are always what they are, what is proper or essential to consciousness is that it always is of, or about, something else; that is, it is relational, transcending itself and tending toward another; in a word, it is intentional.

Husserl's process of reductions by which he uncovers this is close to Descartes' inward process of discovering that doubting is basically thinking and thus the work of the self or spirit as a thinking thing. This leads Husserl to the way the observer is progressively and selectively conscious of the different aspects of objects, and thereby constitutes the world for consciousness.

There is a yet further step to be taken, however, because, in addition to those many relations of the self to its objects in which awareness consists, there is also awareness of this awareness. In this we touch upon the deepest dimension of the self in relation to which everything else including reflection is an object. This he refers to as the transcendental ego, to which corresponds the world as a whole. In a provocative aside Robert Wood notes that "It is in this very direction that we might find the roots of traditional doctrines seemingly so foreign to minds conditioned to think in terms of sensorially observable objects: doctrines like Plotinus' world-intelligence, Aristotle's agent intellect, Augustine's divine illumination, German Idealism's Absolute Spirit are here necessarily related."⁸

Yet there remains a gulf between the agent-intellects of the medieval philosophers and the atman-Brahman of the Hindu's, on the one hand, and Husserl's transcendental ego, on the other. For, where they were involved in reality or being. Husserl is looking for the essence or quintessence of consciousness. As this must be a consciousness of consciousness he is in danger of entering as it were into a hall of mirrors and becoming trapped in an idealism.

The integral complex of these conscious relations is what constitutes the pattern of a culture, in terms of which in turn life is encountered, interpreted and responded to. In the past culture was not seen as life, but rather as an outer garment by which life was adorned. It was as it were an afterthought, a possession of varying degrees of value perhaps, but more an adornment than life itself. Husserl enables us to see that cultures are the forms of the life world of which we are part. Yet they remain for him additions, as it were, forming and structuring life, but not being itself.

⁸ Robert E. Wood, pp. 140-141.

If this be so then an important step awaits, namely, to review these matters, but now in terms of being in order to be able to see intentionality as the quintessence, not merely of consciousness, but of life itself. In those terms cultures and civilizations, and the religious which are their roots, will be revealed as the basic life or death issue. This would enable us to rediscover in a new way how religion is the heart of life, why it now returns to the center of the conflicts and promises of life in our day, and how addressing its challenges is the key to moving into the future.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)⁹

This step from consciousness to being was taken up in phenomenological terms by Husserl's successor, Martin Heidegger. In pursuit of the transcendental ego as the quintessence of conscious life Husserl bracketed the concrete existential reality of engagement in the world with others, thereby losing actual life in his search for the essence of life. To correct this Heidegger advanced the phenomenological project from the order of consciousness to that of being.

He focused concretely on the human being living in the flesh and through time who experiences. But this is twofold. In his earlier work which culminated in his *Being and Time* the perspective was not that of single things, or even of these as beings, but of the being of these beings. For this he turned to the being which is conscious of itself, that is, to the *dasein*, or the human being who is not only given but aware of his givenness. Here the major point of insight which frees the mind and takes it beyond the isolated singularity of things is their temporal character. On the one hand, we are creatures of past decisions which create this world, which we do not make but in which we find ourselves thrown. On the other hand, we act in terms of a future toward which we project ourselves.

In this light the character of understanding is not primarily a speculative grasp of a fixed scientific object, but the practical engagement of one's being in the realization of its capacity for life. This reverses the direction of hermeneutics. It is no longer a search for necessary and objective, repeatable and universal truths, but the conscious emergence of being in time.

Heidegger's *Being and Time* was only the first part of his project, whose second part he never formally completed. But in his subsequent writings (the so-called "later Heidegger") his horizon shifts so that the perspective is no longer that of the temporal *dasein* and what was available or at hand for description and analysis. Rather it becomes Being which the *dasein* expresses in time, but which transcends this being and is characterized rather by hiddenness and mystery. This deepens his sense of truth as *aleitheia*, or the unveiling of what is hidden.

The difference is important for the work of hermeneutics. The earlier Heidegger provided rich insight into our temporal conditions and how this could be a mode of awareness of being and of its realization in our lives. Thus, the earlier Heidegger sees the special role of hermeneutics to be that of questioning being — almost calling it to account for itself in history; for the earlier Heidegger this is the essence of the human person. Only in questioning does man become truly himself and correlatively only as answer does being disclose itself. Indeed, by this questioning Being becomes history and in a sense depends upon man as the place of its manifestation.

The later Heidegger looks again at this. Now it is not man which is and brings Being into time, though Being always depends on man as the place of being. But now man is seen precisely as the expression of Being itself which becomes the focus of attention, from which perspective is seen all, including human physical and conscious life. In religious terms this has always been referred to as seeing all *sub specie aeternitatis* (in terms of the eternal). While not himself considering Being

⁹ Gadamer, pp. 225-234.

itself to be the Divine, Heidegger elaborates horizons that can be very helpful for religious thinkers and hence for the dialogue of essentially religious civilizations.

A whole new terminology appears in his writings. Man does not summon Being at will by his questioning, but is himself more fundamentally gift. He must wait upon Being to manifest itself, not only in the sense of awaiting the time or *kyros* of manifestation, but of responding to, waiting upon, and *shepheding* beings in time. Hence, the properly human attitude is not one of questioning, but of thanksgiving. This most deeply inspires and gives dynamism to human life as it is the gift of one's very being. This gift of life can never be repaid in kind; it must be received and treasured, interpreted and shaped, and in turn creatively passed on to others. This itself is a hermeneutic process, indeed the essence of all hermeneutics.

Thus we come to what religious people have always known, namely, (a) that only in letting go of the grasping by which we hold to — or more really are held by — our possessions do we allow God to live in us; (b) that we live in Him, and hence (c) that to live is to serve God and neighbor in gratitude and generosity.

The Constitution of a Cultural Tradition

This achievement of modern hermeneutics in enabling the interpretation of human consciousness from within makes it possible to comprehend the nature of culture as constituted progressively of the development of values and virtues.

Values

The drama of free self-determination, and hence the development of persons and of civil society, is most fundamentally a matter of being as the affirmation or definitive stance against non-being elaborate at the very beginning of Western philosophy in the Poem of Parmenides, the first Greek metaphysician. This is identically the relation to the good in search of which we live, survive and thrive. The good is manifest in experience as the object of desire, namely, as that which is sought when absent. Basically, it is what completes life; it is the “per-fect” understood in its etymological sense as that which is completed or realized through and through. Hence, once achieved, it is no longer desired or sought, but enjoyed. This is reflected in the manner in which each thing, even a stone, retains the being or reality it has and resists reduction to non-being or nothing. The most that we can do is to change or transform a thing into something else; we cannot annihilate it. Similarly, a plant or tree, given the right conditions, grows to full stature and fruition. Finally, an animal protects its life — fiercely, if necessary — and seeks out the food needed for its strength. Food, in turn, as capable of contributing to an animal's sustenance and perfection, is for the animal an auxiliary good or means.

In this manner, things as good, that is, as actually realizing some degree of perfection and able to contribute to the well-being of others, are the bases for an interlocking set of relations. As these relations are based upon both the actual perfection things possess and the potential perfection to which they are thereby directed, the good is perfection both as attracting when it has not yet been attained and as constituting one's fulfillment upon its achievement. Hence, goods are not arbitrary or simply a matter of wishful thinking; they are rather the full development of things and all that contributes thereto. In this ontological or objective sense, all beings are good to the extent that they exist and can contribute to the perfection of others.¹⁰

¹⁰ Ivor Leclerc, “The Metaphysics of the Good,” *Review of Metaphysics*, 35 (1981), 3-5.

The moral good is a more narrow field, for it concerns only one's free and responsible actions. This has the objective reality of the ontological good noted above, for it concerns real actions which stand in distinctive relation to one's own perfection and to that of others — and, indeed, to the physical universe and to God as well. Hence, many possible patterns of actions could be objectively right because they promote the good of those involved, while others, precisely as inconsistent with the real good of persons or things, are objectively disordered or misordered. This constitutes the objective basis for what is ethically good or bad.

Nevertheless, because the realm of objective relations is almost numberless, whereas our actions are single, it is necessary not only to choose in general between the good and the bad, but in each case to choose which of the often innumerable possibilities one will render concrete. However broad or limited the options, as responsible and moral an act is essentially dependent upon its being willed by a subject. Therefore, in order to follow the emergence of the field of concrete moral action, it is not sufficient to examine only the objective aspect, namely, the nature of the things involved. In addition, one must consider the action in relation to the subject, namely, to the person who, in the context of his/her society and culture, appreciates and values the good of this action, chooses it over its alternatives, and eventually wills its actualization.

The term 'value' here is of special note. It was derived from the economic sphere where it meant the amount of a commodity sufficient to attain a certain worth. This is reflected also in the term 'axiology' whose root means "weighing as much" or "worth as much." It requires an objective content — the good must truly "weigh in" and make a real difference; but the term 'value' expresses this good especially as related to wills which actually acknowledge it as a good and as desirable.¹¹ Thus, different individuals or groups of persons and at different periods have distinct sets of values. A people or community is sensitive to, and prizes, a distinct set of goods or, more likely, it establishes a distinctive ranking in the degree to which it prizes various goods. By so doing, it delineates among limitless objective goods a certain pattern of values which in a more stable fashion mirrors the corporate free choices of that people.

This constitutes the basic topology of a culture; as repeatedly reaffirmed through time, it builds a tradition or heritage about which we shall speak below. It constitutes, as well, the prime pattern and gradation of goods or values which persons experience from their earliest years and in terms of which they interpret their developing relations. Young persons peer out at the world through lenses formed, as it were, by their family and culture and configured according to the pattern of choices made by that community throughout its history — often in its most trying circumstances. Like a pair of glasses values do not create the object, but focus attention upon certain goods rather than upon others. This becomes the basic orienting factor for the affective and emotional life described by the Scotts, Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, as the heart of civil society. In time, it encourages and reinforces certain patterns of action which, in turn, reinforce the pattern of values.

Through this process a group constitutes the concerns in terms of which it struggles to advance or at least to perdure, mourns its failures, and celebrates its successes. This is a person's or people's world of hopes and fears in terms of which, as Plato wrote in the *Laches*, their lives have moral meaning.¹² It is varied according to the many concerns and the groups which coalesce around them. As these are interlocking and interdependent a pattern of social goals and concerns develops which guides action.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Laches*, 198-201.

Indeed, Aristotle takes this up at the very beginning of his ethics. In order to make sense of the practical dimension of our life it is necessary to identify the good or value toward which one directs one's life or which one finds satisfying. This he terms happiness and then proceeds systematically to see which goal can be truly satisfying. His test is not passed by physical goods or honors, but by that which corresponds to, and fulfills, our highest capacity, that is, contemplation of the highest being or divine life.¹³

Virtues

Martin Heidegger describes a process by which the self emerges as a person in the field of moral action. It consists in transcending oneself or breaking beyond mere self-concern and projecting outward as a being whose very nature is to share with others for whom one cares and about whom one is concerned. In this process, one identifies new purposes or goals for the sake of which action is to be undertaken. In relation to these goals, certain combinations of possibilities, with their natures and norms, take on particular importance and begin thereby to enter into the makeup of one's world of meaning.¹⁴ Freedom then becomes more than mere spontaneity, more than choice, and more even than self-determination in the sense of determining oneself to act as described above. It shapes — the phenomenologist would say even that it constitutes — one's world of meaning as the ambit of human decisions and dynamic action. This is the making of the complex social ordering of social groups which constitutes civil society.

This process of deliberate choice and decision transcends the somatic and psychic dynamisms. Whereas the somatic dimension is extensively reactive, the psychic dynamisms of affectivity or appetite are fundamentally oriented to the good and positively attracted by a set of values. These, in turn, evoke an active response from the emotions in the context of responsible freedom. But it is in the dimension of responsibility that one encounters the properly moral and social dimension of life. For, in order to live with others, one must be able to know, to choose and finally to realize what is truly conducive to one's good and to that of others. Thus, persons and groups must be able to judge the true value of what is to be chosen, that is, its objective worth, both in itself and in relation to others. This is moral truth: the judgment regarding whether the act makes the person and society good in the sense of bringing authentic individual and social fulfillment, or the contrary.

As will be seen below this capacity is not unrelated to space and time and to their specific conditions. The achievement of the good is only in the concrete. Hence creativity, deliberation and voluntary choice are required in order to exercise proper self-awareness and self-governance. By determining to follow this judgment one is able to overcome determination by stimuli and even by culturally ingrained values and to turn these, instead, into openings for free action in concert with others in order to shape one's community as well as one's physical surroundings. This can be for good or for ill, depending on the character of my actions. By definition, only morally good actions contribute to personal and social fulfillment, that is, to the development and perfection of persons with others in community.

It is the function of conscience, as one's moral judgment, to identify this character of moral good in action. Hence, moral freedom consists in the ability to follow one's conscience. However, this work of conscience is not a merely theoretical judgment, but the exercise of self-possession

¹³ *Metaphysics, XII, 7.*

¹⁴ J.L. Mehta, *Martin Heidegger: The Way and the Vision* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), pp. 90-91.

and self-determination in one's actions. Here, reference to moral truth constitutes one's sense of duty, for the action that is judged to be truly good is experienced also as that which I ought to do.

When this is exercised or lived, patterns of action develop which are habitual in the sense of being repeated. These are the modes of activity with which one is familiar; in their exercise, along with the coordinated natural dynamisms they require, one is practiced; and with practice comes facility and spontaneity. Such patterns constitute the basic, continuing and pervasive shaping influence of one's life. For this reason, they have been considered classically to be the basic indicators of what one's life as a whole will add up to, or, as is often said, "amount to." Since Socrates, the technical term for these especially developed capabilities has been 'virtues' or special strengths.

But, if the ability to exercise one's creativity and, hence, to develop one's set of virtues must be established through the interior dynamisms of the person, it must be protected and promoted by the related physical and social realities. This is a basic right of the person — perhaps *the* basic human and social right — because only thus can one transcend one's conditions and strive for fulfillment. Its protection and promotion must be a basic concern of any order which would be democratic and directed to the good of its people.

Culture

Together, these values and virtues of a people set the pattern of social life through which freedom is developed and exercised. This is called a "culture." On the one hand, the term is derived from the Latin word for tilling or cultivating the land. Cicero and other Latin authors used it for the cultivation of the soul or mind (*cultura animi*), for just as good land when left without cultivation will produce only disordered vegetation of little value, so the human spirit will not achieve its proper results unless trained or educated.¹⁵ This sense of culture corresponds most closely to the Greek term for education (*paideia*) as the development of character, taste and judgment, and to the German term "formation" (*Bildung*).¹⁶

Here, the focus is upon the creative capacity of the spirit of a people and their ability to work as artists, not only in the restricted sense of producing purely aesthetic objects, but in the more involved sense of shaping all dimensions of life, material and spiritual, economic and political toward human fulfillment. The result is a whole life, characterized by unity and truth, goodness and beauty, and, thereby, sharing deeply in meaning and value. The capacity for this cannot be taught, although it may be enhanced by education; more recent phenomenological and hermeneutic inquiries suggest that, at its base, culture is a renewal, a reliving of origins in an attitude of profound appreciation.¹⁷ This leads us beyond self and other, beyond identity and diversity, in order to comprehend both.

On the other hand, "culture" can be traced to the term *civis* (citizen, civil society and civilization).¹⁸ This reflects the need of a person to belong to a social group or community in order for the human spirit to produce its proper results. By bringing to the person the resources of the tradition, the *tradita* or past wisdom produced by the human spirit, the community facilitates

¹⁵ V. Mathieu, "Cultura" in *Enciclopedia Filosofica* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1967), II, 207-210; and Raymond Williams, "Culture and Civilization," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), II, 273-276, and *Culture and Society* (London: 1958).

¹⁶ Tonnelat, "Kultur" in *Civilisation, le mot et l'idée* (Paris: Centre International de Synthèse), II.

¹⁷ V. Mathieu, "Cultura."

¹⁸ V. Mathieu, "Civiltà," *Ibid.*, I, 1437-1439.

comprehension. By enriching the mind with examples of values which have been identified in the past, it teaches and inspires one to produce something analogous. For G.F. Klemm, this more objective sense of culture is composite in character.¹⁹ E.B. Tyler defined this classically for the social sciences as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits required by man as a member of society.”²⁰

In contrast, Clifford Geertz has focused on the meaning of all this for a people and on how a people’s intentional action went about shaping its world. Thus to an experimental science in search of laws he contrasts the analysis of culture as an interpretative science in search of meaning.²¹ What is sought is the import of artifacts and actions, that is, whether “it is, ridicule or challenge, irony or anger, snobbery or pride, that, in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said.”²² Thus there is need to attend to “the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs.”²³ In this light, Geertz defines culture rather as “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of intended conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about, and attitudes toward, life.”²⁴

Each particular complex whole or culture is specific to a particular people; a person who shares in this is a *civis* or citizen and belongs to a civilization. For the more restricted Greek world in which this term was developed, others (aliens) were those who did not speak the Greek tongue; they were “barbaroi,” for their speech sounded like mere babel. Though at first this meant simply non-Greek, its negative manner of expression easily lent itself to, perhaps reflected, and certainly favored, a negative axiological connotation, which soon became the primary meaning of the word ‘barbarian’. By reverse implication, it attached to the term ‘civilization’ an exclusivist connotation, such that the cultural identity of peoples began to imply not only the pattern of gracious symbols by which one encounters and engages in shared projects with other persons and peoples, but cultural alienation between peoples. Today, as communication increases and as more widely differentiated peoples enter into ever greater interaction and mutual dependence, we reap a bitter harvest of this negative connotation. The development of a less exclusivist sense of culture and civilization must be a priority task.

Moreover, autogenesis is no more characteristic of the birth of knowledge than it is of persons. One’s consciousness emerges, not with self, but in relation to others. In the womb, the first awareness is that of the heart beat of one’s mother. Upon birth, one enters a family in whose familiar relations one is at peace and able to grow. It is from one’s family and in one’s earliest weeks and months that one does or does not develop the basic attitudes of trust and confidence which undergird or undermine one’s capacities for subsequent social relations. There one encounters care and concern for others independently of what they do for us and acquires the language and symbol system in terms of which to conceptualize, communicate and understand.²⁵ Just as a person is born into a family on which he or she depends absolutely for life, sustenance, protection and promotion, so one’s understanding develops in community. As persons we emerge

¹⁹ G.F. Klemm, *Allgemein Culturgeschichte der Menschheit* (Leipzig, 1843-1852).

²⁰ E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London, 1871), VII, p. 7.

²¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), p. 5.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁵ John Caputo, “A Phenomenology of Moral Sensibility: Moral Emotion,” in George F. McLean, Frederick Ellrod, eds., *Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development: Act and Agent* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), pp. 199-222.

by birth into a family and neighborhood from which we learn and in harmony with which we thrive.

Similarly, through the various steps of one's development, as one's circle of community expands through neighborhood, school, work and recreation, one comes to learn and to share personally and passionately an interpretation of reality and a pattern of value responses. The phenomenologist sees this life in the varied civil society as the new source for wisdom. Hence, rather than turning away from daily life in order to contemplate abstract and disembodied ideas, the place to discover meaning is in life as lived in the family and in the progressively wider social circles of civil society into which one enters.

Tradition

The development of values and virtues and their integration as a culture of any depth or richness takes time, and hence depends upon the experience and creativity of many generations. The culture which is handed on, or *tradita*, comes to be called a cultural tradition; as such it reflects the cumulative achievement of a people in discovering, mirroring and transmitting the deepest meanings of life. This is tradition in its synchronic sense as a body of wisdom.

This sense of tradition is vivid in premodern and village communities, but would appear to be much less so in modern urban centers. Undoubtedly this is in part due to the difficulty in forming active community life in such contexts. However, the cumulative process of transmitting, adjusting and applying the values of a culture through time is not only heritage or what is received, but new creation as this is passed on in new ways and in response to emerging challenges. Attending to tradition, taken in this active sense, allows us not only to uncover the permanent and universal truths which Socrates sought, but to perceive the importance of the values we receive from the tradition and to mobilize our own life project actively toward the future. This diachronic sense of culture will be treated below.

But because tradition has sometimes been interpreted as a threat to the personal and social freedom essential to a democracy, it is important to note here that a cultural tradition is generated by the free and responsible life of the members of a concerned community or civil society and enables succeeding generations to realize their life with freedom and creativity.

In fact, the process of trial and error, of continual correction and addition in relation to a people's evolving sense of human dignity and purpose, constitutes a type of learning and testing laboratory for successive generations. In this laboratory of history, the strengths of various insights and behavior patterns can be identified and reinforced, while deficiencies are progressively corrected or eliminated. Horizontally, we learn from experience what promotes and what destroys life and, accordingly, make pragmatic adjustments.

But even this language remains too abstract, too limited to method or technique, too unidimensional. While tradition can be described in general and at a distance in terms of feed-back mechanisms and might seem merely to concern how to cope in daily life, what is being spoken about are free acts that are expressive of passionate human commitment and personal sacrifice in responding to concrete danger, building and rebuilding family alliances, and constructing and defending one's nation. Moreover, this wisdom is not a matter of mere tactical adjustments to temporary concerns; it concerns rather the meaning we are able to envision for life and which we desire to achieve through all such adjustments over a period of generations, i.e., what is truly worth striving for and the pattern of social interaction in which this can be lived richly. The result of this

extended process of learning and commitment constitutes our awareness of the bases for the decisions from which history is constituted.

This points us beyond the horizontal plane of the various ages of history; it directs our attention vertically to its ground and, hence, to the bases of the values which humankind in its varied circumstances seeks to realize.²⁶ It is here that one searches for the absolute ground of meaning and value of which Iqbal wrote. Without that all is ultimately relative to only an interlocking network of consumption, then of dissatisfaction and finally of anomie and ennui.

The impact of the convergence of cumulative experience and reflection is heightened by its gradual elaboration in ritual and music, and its imaginative configuration in such great epics as the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. All conspire to constitute a culture which, like a giant telecommunications dish, shapes, intensifies and extends the range and penetration of our personal sensitivity, free decision and mutual concern.

Tradition, then, is not, as is history, simply everything that ever happened, whether good or bad. It is rather what appears significant for human life: it is what has been seen through time and human experience to be deeply true and necessary for human life. It contains the values to which our forebears first freely gave their passionate commitment in specific historical circumstances and then constantly reviewed, rectified and progressively passed on generation after generation. The content of a tradition, expressed in works of literature and all the many facets of a culture, emerges progressively as something upon which personal character and society can be built. It constitutes a rich source from which multiple themes can be drawn, provided it be accepted and embraced, affirmed and cultivated.

Hence, it is not because of personal inertia on our part or arbitrary will on the part of our forbears that our culture provides a model and exemplar. On the contrary, the importance of tradition derives from both the cooperative character of the learning by which wisdom is drawn from experience and the cumulative free acts of commitment and sacrifice which have defined, defended and passed on through time the corporate life of the community as civil society.²⁷

Ultimately, tradition bridges from ancient philosophy to civil society today. It bears the divine gifts of life, meaning and love, uncovered in facing the challenges of civil life through the ages. It provides both the way back to their origin in the *arché* as the personal, free and responsible exercise of existence and even of its divine source, and the way forward to their goal; it is the way, that is, both to their *Alpha* and their *Omega*.

Cultural Traditions

Today, while moving from a centralized to a more open economy, the nations are engaged not only in balancing all the great forces of the world, but in integrating them into a new and viable whole; the future of civilization is in play. Truly humane progress will be possible only to the degree that peoples are able to find ways of inspiring their disparate elements with values in a way that promotes both the dignity of the human person and the social cohesion and cooperation of its peoples.

²⁶ H.-G. Gadamer, pp. 253-258.

²⁷ *Ibid.* Gadamer emphasized knowledge as the basis of tradition in contrast to those who would see it pejoratively as the result of arbitrary will. It is important to add to knowledge the free acts which, e.g., give birth to a nation and shape the attitudes and values of successive generations. As an example one might cite the continuing impact had by the *Magna Carta* through the *Declaration of Independence* upon life in North America, or of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* in the national life of so many countries.

Prof. S. Shermukhamedov describes spiritual culture as

the system in which the values of human society and humankind are reflected, impressed and incarnated with their needs, wishes, interests, hopes, beliefs, and persuasions. This is the world of emotions, sensations, aspirations, views, wills, impulses and actions, as impressed upon the internal world of man and realized through the interaction between society and nature in which man is the subject of national and common values. Man is the highest value and his life, goodness, interests, harmony, and happiness are the goals of society.²⁸

These words reflect an important shift taking place in contemporary culture.

From the time of the great trio of Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, thought had shifted in an objectivist direction. Concern was centered upon the way things were, rather than upon the human person who knows and engages them. This orientation was radicalized at the beginning of modern times which came thereby to be characterized by rationalism.

It is then of epic moment that in our day we should become aware not only of the achievements of this orientation, but also of its limitations and of the way in which it has held us captive. Now new concerns come to the fore reflected not least in the new freedom hopes and aspirations of peoples. This provides orientation for our search further into the nature of civilizations, their foundations and ways in which they can live together and cooperate in a global age.

One of the most important characteristics of human persons and societies is their capability for development and growth. One is born with open and unlimited powers for knowledge and love. Life consists in developing, deploying and exercising these capabilities. Given the communitary character of human growth and learning, dependence upon others is not unnatural — quite the contrary. Within, as well as beyond, our social group we depend upon other persons according as they possess abilities which we, as individuals and communities, need for our growth, self-realization and fulfillment.

This dependence is not primarily one of obedience to the will of others, but is based upon their comparative excellence in some dimension — whether this be the doctor's professional skill in healing or the wise person's insight and judgment in matters where profound understanding is required. The preeminence of wise persons in the community is not something they usurp or with which they are arbitrarily endowed; it is based rather upon their abilities as these are reasonably and freely acknowledged by others.

Further, this is not a matter of universal law imposed from above and uniformly repeated in univocal terms. Rather it is a matter of corporate learning developed by the components of a civil society each with its own special concerns and each related to others in a pattern of subsidiarity.

All of these — the role of the community in learning, the contribution of extended historical experience regarding the horizontal and vertical axes of life and meaning, and the grounding of dependence in competency — combine to endow tradition with authority for subsequent ages. This is varied according to the different components of tradition and their interrelation.

There are reasons to believe, moreover, that tradition is not a passive storehouse of materials simply waiting upon the inquirer, but that its content of authentic wisdom plays a normative role for life in subsequent ages. On the one hand, without such a normative referent, prudence would be as relativistic and ineffectual as muscular action without a skeletal substructure. Life would be

²⁸ "Issues Regarding the Interaction of Spiritual Culture and Social Progress," in *Spiritual Values and Social Progress*, Uzbekistan Philosophical Studies I, eds. S. Shermukhamedov and V. Levinskaya (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2000), p. 10.

merely a matter of compromise and accommodation on any terms, with no sense of the value either of what was being compromised or of that for which it was compromised. On the other hand, were the normative factor seen to reside simply in a transcendental or abstract vision the result would be devoid of existential content.

The fact that humans, no matter how different in culture, do not remain indifferent before the flow of events, but dispute — even bitterly — the direction of change appropriate for their community reflects that every humanism is committed actively to the realization of some common — if general — sense of perfection. Without this, even conflict would be impossible for there would be no intersection of the divergent positions and, hence, no debate or conflict.

Through history, communities discover vision which both transcends time and directs life in all times, past, present and future. The content of that vision is a set of values which, by their fullness and harmony of measure, point the way to mature and perfect human formation and, thereby, orient life.²⁹ Such a vision is historical because it arises in the life of a people in time. It is also normative, because it provides a basis upon which past historical ages, present options and future possibilities are judged; it presents an appropriate way of preserving that life through time. What begins to emerge is Heidegger's insight regarding Being. Its characteristics of unity, truth and justice, goodness and love are not simply empty ideals, but the ground, hidden or veiled, as it were, and erupting into time through the conscious personal and group life of free human beings in history. Seen in this light, the process of human search, discussion and decision — today called democracy — becomes more than a method for managing human affairs; more substantively, it is the mode of the emergence of being in time, the very reality of the life of persons and societies.

One's cultural heritage or tradition constitutes a specification of the general sense of being or perfection, but not as if this were chronologically distant in the past and, therefore, in need of being drawn forward by some artificial contrivance. Rather, being and its values live and act in the lives of all whom they inspire and judge. In its synchronic form, through time, tradition is the timeless dimension of history. Rather than reconstructing it, we belong to it — just as it belongs to us. Traditions then are, in effect, the ultimate communities of human striving, for human life and understanding are implemented, not by isolated individual acts of subjectivity — which Gadamer describes as flickerings in the closed circuits of personal consciousness³⁰ — but by our situatedness in a tradition. By fusing both past and present, tradition enables the component groupings of civil society to determine the specific direction of their lives and to mobilize the consensus and mutual commitments of which true and progressive community life is built.³¹

Conversely, it is this sense of the good or of value which emerges through the concrete, lived experience of a people throughout its history and constitutes its cultural heritage, which enables society, in turn, to evaluate its life in order to pursue its true good and to avoid what is socially destructive. In the absence of tradition, present events would be simply facts to be succeeded by counter-facts. The succeeding waves of such disjointed happenings would constitute a history written in terms of violence. This, in turn, could be restrained only by some utopian abstraction built upon the reductivist limitations of modern rationalism. Such elimination of all expressions of democratic freedoms is the archetypal modern nightmare, *1984*.

All of that stands in stark contrast to one's heritage or tradition as the rich cumulative expression of meaning evolved by a people through the ages to a point of normative and classical perfection. Exemplified architecturally in a Parthenon or a Taj Mahal, it is embodied personally in

²⁹ Gadamer, pp. 253-258.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 258-274.

a Confucius or Gandhi, a Bolivar or Lincoln, a Martin Luther King or a Mother Theresa. Variouslly termed “charismatic personalities” (Shils),³² “paradigmatic individuals” (Cua)³³ or characters who meld role and personality in providing a cultural or moral ideal (MacIntyre),³⁴ they supersede mere historical facts. As concrete universals, they express in the varied patterns of civil society that harmony and fullness of perfection which is at once classical and historical, ideal and personal, uplifting and dynamizing — in a word, liberating.

Nor is it accidental that the founders of the great religious traditions come most spontaneously to mind as examples. It is not, of course, that people cannot or do not form the component groups of civil society on the basis of their concrete concerns for education, ecology or life. But their motivation in this as fully human goes beyond pragmatic, external goals to the internal social commitment which in most cultures is religiously based.

Civilizations

On entering into the new millennium we stand at a point not only of numerical change to the series 2000 or even of a change within a system as with a substitution of political parties, but at a point of revision of the very nature of world ordering itself. Earlier the issue was one of the possession of territory under the leadership of great Emperors or of the physical resources and the military-industrial power that entailed. More recently we have seen the world divided by ideologies into great spheres. Since the end of the Cold War, however, it is suggested famously in the work of Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*,³⁵ that the world order is being remade on the basis of the pattern of civilizations. The tragic events of 9/11 show how violent this remaking can be.

This reflects a deep transformation in interests and epistemology. Before, attention was oriented objectively, that is, to things as standing over against (*ob*-against; *ject*-thrown) the knowing subject. In this perspective their quantitative characteristics, according to the classical definition of quantity as parts divided against parts, were particularly salient and were given major importance.

In this century the subject and its intentional life — or subjectivity and values — have come to the fore and phenomenological methods have been developed for their identification and interpretation. Whether it was philosophers who brought this realm of subjectivity to central awareness or whether it was attention to subjectivity which evoked the development of the corresponding philosophical methodologies can be disputed. Probably the philosophical methods provided the reflective dimension and control over the new self-awareness of human consciousness. In any case, it is suggested that the new world order will be based not on the resources we have, but on the civilizations we are: not on having but on being.

According to Huntington the notion of civilization seems to have developed in the 18th century as a term to distinguish cultivated peoples from the barbarian or native populations being encountered in the process of colonization. In this sense it was a universal term used in the singular. It implied a single elite standard of urbanization, literacy and the like for the admission of a people

³² Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 12-13.

³³ Anton Cua, *Dimensions of Moral Creativity: Paradigms, Principles and Ideals* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978).

³⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp. 29-30.

³⁵ (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

into the world order. When the standard was met the people was “civilized”; all the rest were simply “uncivilized.”

In the 19th century a distinction was made between civilization as characterized by material and technological capabilities and that characterized by a more elaborate political and cultural development in terms of the values and moral qualities of a people. The two terms tend to merge in expressing an overall way of life, with civilization being the broader term. Where culture focuses on the understanding of perfection and fulfillment; civilization is more the total working out of life in these terms. Hence civilization is culture, as it were, writ large.

This appears in a number of descriptions of civilization where culture is always a central element: for F. Braudel civilization is “a cultural arena,”³⁶ a collection of cultural characteristics and phenomena; for C. Dawson: the product of “a particular original process of cultural activity which is the work of a particular people”;³⁷ for J. Wallerstein it is “a particular concatenation of worldview, customs, structures, and culture (both material culture and high cultures) which form some kind of historical whole.”³⁸

Taken as a matter of identity it can be said that a civilization is the largest and most perduring unit — the largest “we.”³⁹ The elements included are blood, language, religion and way of life. Among these religion is “the central defining characteristic of civilizations,”⁴⁰ as it is the point of a person’s or peoples deepest and most intensive commitment, the foundation on which the great civilizations rest.⁴¹ Hence the major religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Confucianism) are each associated with a civilization, the exception being Buddhism which came as a reform movement, was uprooted from its native India, and lives in diaspora among other nations.

Civilizations endure over long periods of time. While empires come and go, civilizations “survive political, social, economic even ideological upheavals.”⁴²

International history rightly documents the thesis that political systems are transient expedients on the surface of civilization, and that the destiny of each linguistically and morally unified community depends ultimately upon the survival of certain primary structuring ideas around which successive generations have coalesced and which then symbolize the society’s continuity.⁴³

But this does not mean that they are static. On the contrary it is characteristic of a civilization to evolve and the theories of such evolution are attempts to achieve some understanding of the process, not only of the sequence of human events but more deeply of the transformation of human self understanding itself. Famously, Toynbee theorizes that civilizations are responses to human challenges; that they evolve in terms of establishing increasing control over the related factors, especially by creative minorities; that in the face of troubles there emerges a strong effort at integration followed by disintegration. Such theories vary somewhat in the order of stages but generally move from a preparatory period, to the major development of the strengths of a culture

³⁶ *On History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), pp. 177, 202.

³⁷ *Dynamics of World History* (La Salle, IL: Sheed and Ward, 1959), pp. 51, 402.

³⁸ *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³⁹ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 43.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴¹ C. Dawson, p. 128.

⁴² F. Braudel, *History of Civilizations* (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. 35.

⁴³ A. Bozeman, *Strategic Intelligence and Statecraft* (Washington: Brassey’s, 1992), p. 62.

or civilization, and then toward atrophication. In any case these imply cycles extending over very long periods.

It is significant that in the end, however, Huntington is not able to give any clear definition or distinction of civilizations. Whereas Descartes would require just such characteristics for scientific knowledge, Huntington notes that civilizations generally somewhat overlap, and that while no clear concept can be delineated civilization are nonetheless important.

Civilizations have no clear cut boundaries and no precise beginnings and endings. People can and do redefine their identities and, as a result, the composition and shapes of civilizations change over time. The cultures of peoples interact and overlap. The extent to which the cultures of civilizations resemble or differ from each other also varies considerably. Civilizations are nonetheless meaningful entities, and while the lines between them are seldom sharp, they are real.⁴⁴

In this light it can be seen that a shift of world order to a pattern not of empires or commercial blocks, but of civilizations bespeaks a great development in human consciousness, beyond the external, objective and physical, to the internal and subjective, the spiritual and indeed the religious. In contrast to Descartes it appears that what is most significant in the relations between peoples, indeed what defines them as peoples, is a matter not accessible by scientific definition, but for more inclusive aesthetic appreciation. It is in these terms that one's life commitments, personal relations, and interactions between peoples are realized.

We have seen now the nature of cultural traditions and of civilizations as constituted by freedom as it forms values, virtues and cultures. We must look next into hermeneutics as the method whereby these can be interpreted and applied in a mutually cooperative manner for a global age.

⁴⁴ Huntington, p. 43.

3. Hermeneutics of Cultural Traditions

Hermeneutic Application of One's Own Cultural Tradition

Dialectic of Whole and Part

First of all it is necessary to note that only a unity of meaning, that is, an identity, is intelligible.¹ Just as it is not possible to understand a number three if we include but two units, no act of understanding is possible unless it is directed to an identity or whole of meaning. This brings us directly to the classic issue in the field of hermeneutics described above as the hermeneutic circle, namely, knowledge of the whole depends upon knowledge of the parts, and vice versa. How can we make this work for, rather than against, us in the effort to live our cultural traditions?

Reflection on the experience of reading a text might prove helpful. As we read we construe the meaning of a sentence before grasping all its individual parts. What we construe is dependent upon our expectation of the meaning of the sentence, which we derived from its first words, the prior context, or more likely a combination of the two. In turn, our expectation or construal of the meaning of the text is adjusted according to the requirements of its various parts. As we proceed to read through the sentence, paragraph, etc., we reassess continually the whole in terms of the parts and the parts in terms of the whole. This basically circular movement continues until all appear to fit and be meaningful.

One set of problems regarding a hermeneutics of tradition concerns not its content, but its relation to the present. If our present life is simply a deadening repetition of what has already been known, then life loses its challenge, progress is rejected in principle, and hope dies. Let us turn then from tradition as a whole to its hermeneutic application in our days.

Novelty

To understand this we must, first of all, take time seriously, that is, we must recognize that reality includes authentic novelty. This contrasts to the perspective of Plato for whom the real is idea or form which transcends matter and time, while temporal things, in turn, are real only to the degree that they imitate or mirror the ideal. It also goes beyond the perspective of rationalism in its search for simple natures which are clear, distinct and eternal in themselves and in their relations. *A fortiori*, it goes beyond simply following a method as such without attention to content.

In contrast to all these, to recognize novelty – especially the novelty of our living of our own tradition – implies that tradition with its authority (or *nomos*) achieves its perfection not in opposition to, but in the very temporal unfolding of, reality. For the human person is both determined by, and determinative of, his changing physical and social universe. Hence, to appreciate moral values one must attend to human action: to the striving of persons to realize their lives, and to the formation of this striving into a fixed attitude (*hexis*). In distinction from physics then, ethos as the application of tradition consists neither of law nor of lawlessness, but concerns

¹ Gadamer, pp. 261-262.

human institutions and attitudes which change. Ethical rules do not determine, but they do regulate action by providing certain broad guidelines for historical practice.²

What is important here is to protect the concrete and unique reality of human life — its novelty — and hence the historicity of our life. As our response to the good is made only in concrete circumstances, our cultural tradition and our ethics as a philosophic science must be neither purely theoretical knowledge nor a simple historical accounting from the past, but we must enable our cultural tradition via our moral consciousness to help in concrete circumstances.

Application and Prudence in Ethics vs Techné

In this an important distinction must be made between techné and ethics. In techné action is governed by an idea as an exemplary cause which is fully determined and known by objective theoretical knowledge (*epistême*). Skill consists in knowing how to act according to a well understood idea or plan. When this cannot be carried out some parts of it are simply omitted in the execution.

In ethics the situation, though similar in being an application of a practical guide to a particular task, differs in important ways. First, in moral action the subject makes oneself as much as one makes the object: the agent is differentiated by the action itself. Hence, moral knowledge as an understanding of the appropriateness of one's actions is not fully determined independently of the situation.

Secondly, the adaptations by the moral agent in applying the law or traditions found in the various cultures do not diminish them, but rather correct and perfect them. In themselves laws and traditions are imperfect for, inasmuch as they relate to a world which is less ordered, they cannot contain in any explicit manner the response to the concrete possibilities which arise in history. It is precisely here that man's freedom and creativity are located. This does not consist in the response being arbitrary, for Kant is right in holding that freedom without law or some traditional guiding nomos has no meaning. Nor does it consist in a simply automatic response determined by the historical situation, for relativism too would undermine the notion of human freedom. Human freedom consists rather in shaping the present according to a sense of what is just and good and in a way which manifests and indeed create for the first time more of what justice and goodness means.

That laws and tradition are perfected by their application in the circumstances appears also from the way they are not diminished, but perfected by epoche and equity. Without these, by simple mechanical replication the law would work injustice rather than justice. Ethics, therefore, is not only knowledge of what is right in general but the search for what is right in the situation. This is a question, not of mere expediency, but of the perfection of the law and tradition; it completes moral knowledge.³

The question of what the situation is asking of us is not answered by sense knowledge, which simply registers a set of concrete facts. It is answered rather in the light of what is right, that is, in the light of what has been discovered about appropriate human action and exists normatively in the tradition. Only in these terms can moral consciousness go about its major job of choosing means which are truly appropriate to the circumstances. This is properly the work of intellect (*nous*) with the virtue of prudence (*phronesis*), that is, thoughtful reflection which enables one to discover the appropriate means in the circumstances. These now include the new components in

² *Ibid.*, pp. 278-279.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 281-286.

one's own living cultural tradition; they include as well the other participants of a pluralist civilization. Indeed in the new global context they include all civilizations with all their differences.

In sum, application is not a subsequent or accidental part of understanding, but rather codetermines this understanding from the beginning. Moral consciousness must seek to understand the good, not as an ideal to be known and then applied, but rather by and in relating this to oneself as sharing the concerns of others. In this light our sense of unity with others begins to appear as a condition for applying our tradition, that is, for enabling it to live in these global times.

There is then a way out of the hermeneutic circle. It is not by ignoring or denying our horizons and prejudices, but by recognizing them as inevitable and making them work for us. To do so we must direct our attention to the objective meaning of the text in order to draw out, not only its meaning for the author, but its application for the present. Through this process of application one serves as midwife for the historicity of tradition or culture, and enables it to give birth to the future.⁴

Hermeneutic Interpretation of Other Cultural Traditions

We must now see how hermeneutics can help toward a better understanding of the structure of communication between peoples. What dynamisms separate us, make sagacity (*sunesis*) difficult, impede our judgment and thus inhibit living our tradition in a pluralistic context?

Thus far we have treated, first, the character and importance of tradition as the bearer of long human experience interacting with the world, with other men and with God. It is constituted not only of chronological facts, but of insights regarding human perfection, values and virtues. Over time these have been forged into cultures and civilizations in man's concrete striving to live with dignity, e.g. the Indian ideal of peace, the Greek notion of democracy, the enlightenment notions of equality and freedom. By their internal value each stands as normative in relation to the aspirations of those who live within that culture.

Secondly, we have seen the implications for the content of tradition of the continually unfolding circumstances of historical development. These not merely extend or repeat what went before, but constitute an emerging manifestation of the dynamic character of the classical vision articulated in epics, in law and in political movements.

It remains now to look at how, conscious of our own tradition, we can live faithfully and fruitfully with others in a time of intensifying intercultural engagement and cultural pluralism. In truth, the glorious character of a cultural tradition has its down side. For the greater be that tradition and the more beautiful, successful and satisfying the life it engenders, the more one is liable to remain therein in a process of mere repetition. Innovation and creativity shrivel and the response to new challenges is less vigorous, innovative and successful. If we hear only the same stories, fables and proverbs we remain locked into one mind-set or horizon. The way out requires access to new stories which reflect the life experience and creative responses of other peoples. Their effect is not so much to add to our culture from without elements that are alien and incongruous, but to enable us to look afresh at our own cultural tradition and to draw out in a creative manner new responses to the emerging challenges.

Dialectic of Horizons

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 235-242.

In encountering other cultural traditions we begin to look more consciously into our own tradition and come to a prior conception of its content. This anticipation of meaning is not simply of the tradition as an objective or fixed content over against us. It is rather what we reproduce uniquely in our hearts and minds as we participate in the evolution of the tradition, thereby further determining ourselves as a community. This is a creative stance reflecting the content, not only of the past, but of the time in which I stand and of the overall life project in which I am engaged. For the cultural traditions it is a creative unveiling of its content as this comes progressively and historically into the present and, through the present, passes into the future.⁵

In this light time is not a barrier, a separation or an abyss, but rather a bridge and an opportunity for the process of understanding; it is a fertile ground filled with experience, custom and tradition. The importance of the historical distance it provides is not that it enables the subjective reality of persons to disappear so that the objectivity of the situation can emerge. On the contrary, it makes possible a more appreciative meaning of our own and other cultural traditions, not only by removing falsifying factors, but by opening new sources of self and inter-subjective understanding, and hence new perspectives. These reveal in our tradition unsuspected implications and even new dimensions of meaning of which heretofore we were unaware.⁶

Of course, not all our acts of understandings are correct, whether they be about the meaning of another culture, its set of goals or a plan for future action. Hence, it becomes particularly important that our understandings not be adhered to fixedly, but be put at risk in dialogue with others.

In this the basic elements of meaning remain the substances which Aristotle described in terms of their autonomy or of standing in their own right, and, by implication, of their identity. Hermeneutics would expand this to reflect as well the historical and hermeneutic situation of each person or cultural tradition in the dialogue, that is, their horizon or particular possibility for understanding. An horizon is all that can be seen from one's vantage point. In reading a text or in a dialogue with other cultural traditions it is necessary to be aware of our horizon as well as that of our partners. When our initial projection of the meaning of another's words, the content of a cultural tradition or a sacred text, will not bear up in the progress of the reading or the dialogue, our desire to hear our interlocutor in the conversation drives us to make needed adjustments in our projection of their meaning.

The assessment of what is truly appropriate requires also the virtue of sagacity (*sunesis*), that is, of understanding or concern for the other. One can assess the situation adequately only inasmuch as one in a sense undergoes the situation with the affected parties. Aristotle rightly describes as truly terrible the one who can make the most of the situation, but without orientation towards moral ends or concern for the good of others in this situation. Hence, there is need for knowledge which takes account of the agent as united with the others in mutual interest or love.

This enables us to adjust not only our prior understanding of the horizon of the other with whom we are in dialogue, but especially our own horizon. One need not fear being trapped in the horizons of one's own cultural tradition or religion. They are vantage points of a mind which in principle is open and mobile, capable of being aware of its own horizon and of reaching out to the other's experience which constitutes their horizons. Our horizons are not limitations, but mountain tops from which we look in awe at the vast panorama of all humankind and indeed of all creation.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 261-274.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

It is in making us aware of this expansion of horizons that hermeneutic awareness accomplishes our liberation.⁷

In this process it is important that we remain alert to the new implications of our cultural tradition. We must not simply follow through with our previous ideas until a change is forced upon us, but must be sensitive to new meanings in true openness. This is neither neutrality as regards the meaning of our tradition, nor an extinction of passionate concern regarding action towards the future. Rather, being aware of our own biases or prejudices and adjusting them in dialogue with others implies rejecting what impedes our understanding of our own tradition and that of others. Our attitude in approaching dialogue must be one of willingness continually to revise, renew and enrich our initial projection or expectation of meaning.

Dialectic of Question and Answer

The effort to draw upon a tradition and in dialogue to discover its meaning for the present supposes authentic openness. The logical structure of this openness is to be found in the exchange of question and answer. The question is required in order to determine just what issue we are engaging — whether it is this issue or that — in order to give direction to our attention. Without this no meaningful answer can be given or received. As a question, however, it requires that the answer not be settled or determined. In sum, progress or discovery requires an openness which is not simply indeterminacy, but a question which gives specific direction to our attention and enables us to consider significant evidence. (Note that we can proceed not only by means of positive evidence in favor of one of two possible responses, but also through dissolving counter arguments).

If discovery depends upon the question, then the art of discovery is the art of questioning. Consequently, whether working alone or in conjunction with others, our effort to find the answer should be directed less towards suppressing the position of another culture and the questions it raises, than toward reinforcing and unfolding these questions. To the degree that their probabilities are built up and intensified they can serve as a searchlight. This is the opposite of both opinion which tends to suppress questions, and of arguing which searches out the weakness in the other's argument. Instead, in conversation as dialogue with other cultures and civilizations one enters upon a mutual search to maximize the possibilities of the question, even by speaking at cross purposes. By mutually eliminating errors and working out a common meaning, we discover truth.⁸

Further, it should not be presupposed that a text or tradition holds the answer to but one question or horizon which must be identified by the reader. On the contrary, the full horizon and above all its transcendent source is never available to the reader. Nor can it be expected that there is but one question to which the global text or its multiple traditions hold an answer. The sense of any text, (a fortiori the global text,) reaches beyond what any human author intended.

Because of the dynamic character of being as it emerges in time, the horizon is never fixed, but is continually opening. This constitutes the effective historical element in understanding. At each step new dimensions of the potentialities of the tradition open to understanding. Especially, the meaning of a text or tradition lives with the consciousness — and hence the horizons — not of its author, but of the many who live the tradition with others through time and history. It is the broadening of their horizons, resulting from their fusion with the horizon of a text or a partner in dialogue, that makes it possible to receive answers which are ever new.⁹

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 263-274.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 333-341.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 267-274.

In this the personal attitudes and interests of the various cultures are, once again, highly important. If the interest in developing new horizons were simply the promotion of one's own understanding then one culture could be interested solely in achieving knowledge for the purpose of domination over others. But this would lock one into an absoluteness of one's prejudices; being fixed or closed in the past or in oneself they would disallow new life in the present. In this manner powerful new insights become with time deadening prejudices which suppress freedom.

In contrast, an attitude of authentic openness appreciates the nature of one's own finiteness. On this basis it both respects the past and the multiple cultural traditions and is open to discerning the future. Such openness is a matter, not merely of new information, but of recognizing the historical nature of man. It enables one to escape from limitations which had limited vision thusfar, and enables one to learn from new experiences. It is recognition of the limitations of our finite projects which enables us to see that the future is still open.¹⁰

This suggests that openness does not consist so much in surveying others objectively or obeying them in a slavish and unquestioning manner, but is directed primarily to ourselves. It is an extension of our ability to listen to others and other cultures, and to assimilate the implications of their answers for entering more deeply into our own cultural heritage. In other words, it is an acknowledgement that our cultural heritage has something new to say to us. The characteristic hermeneutic attitude of effective historical consciousness is then not methodological sureness, but devout listening and a readiness for experience.¹¹ Seen in these terms our cultural heritage is not closed, but the basis for a life that is ever new, more inclusive and more rich.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 336-340.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 319-325.

4.

Globalization and Hermeneutics

Thusfar we have been analyzing a progressive hermeneutic for the dialogue of cultures and civilizations in the presently expanding context. We may now, however, be at a crucial turning point, for the opening of horizons no longer proceeds arithmetically by the addition of one to another with the global as a distant possibility. Instead in economics, politics and information – and especially through the conjunction of them all – we now appear to be in a truly new global age in which the proximate horizon is global and the dialogue is primarily not with another part, but with the whole itself and only within this context with the other parts. We must now extend our hermeneutic considerations to take account of this new, yet salient, reality.

During the 1950s and 1960s the development of technological capabilities made it possible to design vehicles with sufficient thrust and precision to be able to break the bonds of earth and soar towards the planets. By the end of the 60s, as projected by President Kennedy, Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. What he saw *there* was of little interest — a barren rocky terrain, alternating between great heat and frigid cold. But the view *from there* was of the greatest consequence. With a few of his predecessor in space exploration, he was able for the first time in human history to look at the Earth and see it whole. Throughout the millennia humankind had always seen fragments, piece by piece; now for the first time the earth was seen globally.

At the time, astronomers sought avidly to learn about the moon. But for philosophers the questions were rather what would be found about humankind, about relations between peoples and about their presence in nature. More importantly, they wondered if this would change the way in which people understood themselves in all these regards: Would this intensify the trend to see all and everyone as an object? Or could it contribute to overcoming alienation and *anomie*, to transforming antipathies into bonds of friendship? But, if this were to take place, would life be reduced to a deadly stasis? Though the stakes were high, the philosophical questioning at first was languid. Now, as we enter the new millennium these questions of globalization emerge with full and fascinating force.

Why now rather than then? This would seem to relate notably to the end of the Cold War, especially if this be traced deeply to the roots of the modern outlook as a whole. Professor Lu Xiaohe¹ has pointed out how, at the very beginnings of modern times, Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744) identified the limitations of the new modern way of thinking as bearing the potential for leading to violent opposition for lack of an adequate capability to take account of the unity of the whole. If the cold war was the final denouement of this fatal flaw, and the world is no longer structured in a bipolar fashion, then it is no longer the parts which give sense to the whole, but the converse: the global is the horizon in which its participants have their meaning.

Proximately, this is a matter of communication and commercial interchange, but their full deployment depends in turn upon a politique of positive human cooperation in an integral human project. Thus today we reread Kennedy's words about bearing any burden in defence of freedom in terms of his positive context, namely, his invitation to all humankind to transcend limiting divisions and join together to make real progress. Of this his promise to break beyond a divided planet and go to the noon by the end of that decade was symbol and harbinger. The process of

¹ Lu Xiaohe, "G.B. Vico and the Contemporary Civil World," in Wang Miaoyang, Yu Xuanmeng and M. Dy, *Civil Society in a Chinese Content: Chinese Philosophical Studies XV* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1997), pp. 37-45.

globalization transcends regional concerns. This is not to deny them, but to respond to them from a more inclusive vantage point in term of which all can have their full meaning and the opportunity to work together to determine their own destiny. This is the heart of the issue of globalization and cultural identities.

Until recently the term ‘globalization’ was so little used that it warranted only two lines in Webster unabridged international dictionary.² For the term ‘global,’ however, three meanings are listed:

- first, geometric, namely, a spherical shape;
- second, geographic, namely, the entire world, with the connotation of being complete. This was extended by the ancient Greeks to signify perfection itself: Parmenides spoke of the One, eternal and unchanging as being spherical; and
- third, qualitative, namely, the state of being comprehensive, unified or integrated.

It is interesting to note that Webster’s saw this third character of global as implying “lacking in particularizing detail” or “highly undifferentiated.” Today’s challenge is more complex and more rich, namely, to achieve a comprehensive vision whose integration is not at the expense of the components, but their enhancement and full appreciation.

For insight on these issues we might turn to Nicholas of Cusa, born almost six hundred years ago (1401-1464) at a special juncture in Western thought. Often he is described as the last of the medievals and the first of the moderns. In the high middle ages Thomas Aquinas and others had reunited the traditions of Plato and Aristotle on the basis of the Christian discovery of the special significance of existence. In this synthesis primacy was given to Aristotle whose structure for the sciences began with *Physics* as specified by multiple and changing things, whence it ascended to its culmination in the unity of the divine life at the end of his *Metaphysics*.³ The ladder between the two constituted a richly diversified hierarchy of being

John Dewey⁴ stressed — perhaps too strongly — the relation of that ancient hierarchic world view to the Ptolemaic system in which the earth is the center around which the sun and the planets revolve at a series of levels in a finite universe. He traced the development of the modern outlook to the Copernican heliocentric model of an infinite but undifferentiated universe.

Nicholas of Cusa bridged the two. He continued the sense of a hierarchical differentiation of being from the minimal to the infinite, but almost a century before Copernicus (1473-1543) he saw the earth as but one of the spheres revolving around the sun. His outlook with regard to the relations between peoples was equally pioneering. As Papal legate to Constantinople shortly after it had been taken by the Turks — much to the shock of all Europe — Cusa was able to see the diversity of peoples not as negating, but as promoting unity.

We shall proceed by looking first at the manner of thinking involved and second at Nicholas of Cusa’s reconciliation of unity and diversity in a harmony which Confucius might be expected to find of special interest. On these bases, we will look third at the special dynamism with which this endows his sense of global order, and fourth at the contribution this makes to the pressing contemporary issue of the hermeneutics of pluralism.

² *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (Springfield, MA: Merriam, 1969).

³ XII, 7, 1072b 26-19.

⁴ *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon, 1920).

Global Thinking

Any understanding of the work of the mind in the thought of Nicholas of Cusa must be situated in the context of the Platonic notion of participation (*mimesis* or image) whereby the many forms are images of the one idea. For Plato, whose sense of reality was relatively passive, this meant that the many mirrored or were like (assimilated to) the one archetype or idea. Correspondingly, in knowing multiple things the mind, as it were, remembers having encountered and been impressed by, or assimilated to, the one archetypic or idea which they image, all converging progressively toward a supreme One. For Cusa, as with Plato, this appreciation of the One remains foundational for the knowledge of any particular. Here it will be important to note how Cusa reconceives the nature of this one — not only, but also — in global terms.

To this Aristotle, beginning from the processes of physical change, added a more active role for the mind. This not only mirrors, but actively shapes the character, if not the content, of its knowledge. As an Aristotelian, Aquinas too considered the mind to be active, but in the end the objectivity of its knowledge depended upon the passive aspect of its relation to its object: beings “can by their very nature bring about a true apprehension of themselves in the human intellects which, as is said in the *Metaphysics*, is measured by things.”⁵

Cusa’s sense of mind unites both emphases: the original measures the image, which in turn becomes like, or is assimilated to, the original. Sense knowledge is measured by the object; this is part of its process of assimilation to the divine mind.⁶ But, as E. Cassirer⁷ notes, Cusa shifts the initiative to the mind operating through the senses, imagination, reason and intellect. Rather than being simply formed by sense data, the mind actively informs the senses and conforms and configures their data in order that the mind might be assimilated to the object. Thus both “extramental objects and the human mind are measures of cognitive assimilation, that is to say, we become like the non-mental things we know, and we fashion the conceptual and judgmental tools whereby we take them into ourselves as known.”⁸

But in saying this Miller seems not to have reached the key point for our concerns with global awareness — or of Cusa’s, for that matter. This is not merely the classical realist distinction between what is known, which is on the part of the thing, and the way in which it is known, which reflects the mind by which the thing is known. Cusa has added two steps. First, the One of Plato becomes not an ideal form, but the universe of reality (and this in the image of God as the absolute One); second, the human mind (also in the image of the divine mind) is essentially concerned with this totality of reality, in terms of which global awareness all its knowledge is carried out.

Discursive Reasoning

In his study on mind,⁹ Cusa distinguishes three levels of knowledge, the first two are discursive reasoning, the third is intellection. The first begins from sense knowledge of particular material objects. This is incremental as our experiences occur one by one and, to use a simile of L. Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*,¹⁰ we begin to construct a map of the region.

⁵ *De Veritate*, q. 1, 8. “Truth in the intellect is measured by things themselves,” *Ibid.*, 1, 5.

⁶ *De Mente*, 4, p. 53 and 55.

⁷ *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963).

⁸ C. L. Miller in Introduction to Nicholas of Cusa, *Idiota de Mente/The Layman about Mind*, trans. and ed. Clyde Lee Miller (New York: Abaris, 1979), p. 24.

⁹ *De Idiota de Mente*.

¹⁰ Trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (New York: Humanities, 1961).

But for Cusa the knowledge of the multiple physical things by the lower powers of sensation and imagination raises the question of the unity of things which must be treated in terms of the concepts of reason and intellect,¹¹ for the forms in things are not the true forms, but are clouded by the changeableness of matter.¹² The exact nature of anything then is unattainable by us except in analogies and figures grounded essentially in the global sense had by our higher powers.¹³

But, while sense knowledge is inadequate for a global vision, Cusa considers innate knowledge or a separated world of ideas to be unnecessary and distractive. Hence, he concludes: (a) that sense knowledge is required; (b) that both the physical object and the mind are active in the assimilation or shaping of the mind, (c) that in this process the mind with its global matrix is superior in that it informs or shapes the work of the senses, and (d) that it is unable fully to grasp the nature of the object in itself.

As a result discursive reasoning as regards physical objects is limited in a number of ways. First, it is piecemeal in that it develops only step by step, one thing at a time, in an ongoing temporal progression. Hence, on the macro level discursive reasoning can never know the entirety of reality. On the micro level it cannot comprehend any single entity completely in its nature or quality. This is true especially of the uniqueness or identity, which for humans are their personal and cultural identities.

The paradox of attempting to think globally in these terms is that the more we try to form overall unities the more we abstract from what distinguishes or characterizes free and unique persons. Hence, the process becomes essentially depersonalizing – this is the drama of globalization as the central phenomenon of the present change of the millennia.

In the 20th century the technological implementation of depersonalization reached such a crises that millions were crushed or exterminated — hundreds of thousands in pogroms, 6 million in the holocaust, 50 million in the Second World War, entire continents impoverished and exploited. In effect the limitations Cusa identifies in discursive reasoning now simply are no longer tolerable and new modes of thinking are required in order to enable life to continue in our times.

Cusa recognized a second type of discursive reasoning, namely, that of mathematics, which does not share the limitations noted above. But here the objects are not living beings, but mental objects of the same nature as mind. Hence, the mind can pivot on itself using its own resources to construct and process concepts; its judgements are exact because concerned with what is not changing or material.¹⁴ This is Humes' world of relations between ideas.¹⁵ But as it deals only with the formal, rather than the existential, it cannot resolve the above human problems; rather it serves to exacerbate them to the degree that its mode of discursive reasoning becomes exclusive.

Intellection

Hence Nicholas of Cusa turns to a third mode of mental assimilation, which is beyond the work of discursive reason, namely, intellection. Eugene Rice contrasts the two approaches to knowledge by likening discursive reasoning to a wayfarer walking through a valley and encountering things one by one, whereas intellection is likened to being on a hill whence one

¹¹ *De Mente*, 7, p. 63.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁵ *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Chicago: Regnery, 1960), pp. 14-21.

surveys the entire valley all at once.¹⁶ The latter view is global and the particulars are understood as component parts; each thing has its proper reality, but is also an integral constituent of the whole. It is important to note that the unity of the scene as known by intellection is constituted not by a mere assemblage of single entities juxtaposed in space or time, but as multiple participations in a unity. (Indeed, as we shall see in the next section, the multiple things in the physical order are also limited images of the whole.)

To express this in terms of the modern distinction of analytic and synthetic modes of thought would help, but not at all suffice. With Descartes moderns undertook a search for knowledge that was clear in the sense of identifying the simple natures of each thing, and distinct in the sense that such knowledge should be sufficient at least to be able to distinguish one type of thing from all others.¹⁷ This gave primacy to the analytic process of distinguishing all into its component set of simple natures. The supposition was that these were finite in number, that they could all be identified clearly and distinctly by the mind, and that they could then be reassembled by equally clear and distinct links in a process of synthesis.

This has marked the modern mind and set its goals and its limitations. Having determined that only what was clear and distinct to the human mind could qualify for inclusion, due to the limitations of the human mind it was inevitable that the uniqueness of each entity would be omitted as not clear. Further, any organic character of the whole also would be omitted, for synthesis could assemble only what was clear and distinct.

For Cusa in contrast, intellection is knowledge in terms not of the parts, but of the whole in which all participate. Here the intellect grasps the meaning and value of the whole. It works with the imagination and reason to work out the full range of possibilities and to grasp how the many fit together: it “depends not upon the number of things which are known, but upon the imaginative thrust of the mind” to be able to know “all the multifarious possibilities which are open to being.”¹⁸ Finally it is guided by the senses to know which of these possibilities are actual. The significance of the actual beings is not merely what we can garner by the senses, but what is known primarily in terms of the whole by the intellect.

The Aristotelians build knowledge from concrete, changing and hence limited things. Cusa’s more Platonic heritage has him build knowledge rather in the global terms of the whole, and ultimately of the One, of which the mind as well as things are the images. Where these were but form for Plato, for Cusa they are existents sharing in the active power of being.

The Enlightenment was so intent upon knowledge that it wound up tailoring all to what it could know clearly and distinctly. As with the Procrustean bed, what did not fit these specification was lopped off and discarded as hypothetical or superstitious. Cusa’s attitude is notably different, for it includes humility before reality which it recognizes, and even reveres, above all where it exceeds the human capacity for clarity of conception and power of control.

The human mind, he would recognize, has limitations at both ends of the scale of being. Even a minimal being cannot be exhaustively known. Like attempting to adapt a polygon to a circle, no matter how many sides are added, more remain always possible; a circular shape can never be attained in this manner. Such knowledge, though partial and incomplete, is valid as far as it goes, but can always be improved upon. One can only project the circle by the thrust of the imagination.

¹⁶ Eugene Rice, “Nicholas of Cusa’s Idea of Wisdom,” *Traditio* 13 (1957), 358.

¹⁷ Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 2.

¹⁸ David De Leonardis, *Ethical Implications of Unity and the Divine in Nicholas of Cusa* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998), p. 60.

Knowledge of the absolute, in contrast, cannot be improved upon. Moreover, it is basically unreliable for there is nothing to which the Absolute can be compared.¹⁹ Hence, the negative way of saying what God is not, and the recognition of our ignorance in that regard, constitute the relevant real knowledge; for this reason Cusa entitled a major work: *On Learned Ignorance*.²⁰

We have seen the limitations of knowledge constructed on the basis of multiple limited beings understood as opposed one to another. Unity which is constructed thereupon not only never manages to grasp such beings fully, but simply discards what is not known. Thus the uniqueness of the person cannot be recognized and is lost. Conversely, the unities which can be constructed of such contrasting realities remains external and antithetical. Hence, to the degree that it succeeds discursive reasoning is in danger of oppressing the uniqueness of the participants. This is the classical dilemma of the one and the many; it is the particular challenge of globalization in our day and the basic reason why it is feared as a new mode of (economic) imperialism and oppression.

In contrast, Cusa's suggestion of another mode of thinking whereby we think in terms of the whole is promising, indeed essential for our new age; but it faces a great test. Can it take account of diversity; if so how can this be understood as within, rather than in opposition to, unity? Is it possible to conceive diversity as a contribution to unity, rather than as its negation?

Parmenides had shown unity to be the first characteristic of being by opposing being to non being. In these terms each being was itself and nothing less. But such reasoning in terms of the opposition of being to non being bespoke also contrast and opposition between beings, each of which in its being was precisely not any other being. Today the global reality makes it necessary to ask whether there are more positive and relational modes of conceiving multiplicity.

Global Structures: Diversity in Unity

To summarize, we have seen the new global political, cultural and economic phenomena in which we are situated and in terms of which we are called to act. In looking toward the thought of Nicholas of Cusa we have seen that such a global response requires a new dimension of thinking. The characteristic modern discursive reasoning with its analytic approach of breaking all down into its minimum components and reassembling them synthetically, as proposed by Descartes in his *Discourse on Method*, proceeds essentially in terms of parts rather than of the whole, of the discrete components without taking account of the overall unity.

As indicated by De Leonardis, this entails that relations between peoples and conflict resolution can be carried out only in terms of compromises which leave no one satisfied and plant the seeds of further conflicts. If now the means for conflict are so powerful as to be capable of overwhelming the means for survival, we are faced with the imperative of finding how to proceed in terms of a capacity to grasp the whole.

This pointed to Cusa's power of intellection, joined with that of the imagination, to project what we cannot clearly conceive of the individual person and the divine, to protect what we can only acknowledge of our creative freedom and that of others, and to promote the growth of which we are capable but which lies hidden in a future which is not yet.

As such knowledge is directed toward an ordered reality — ours and that of the entire globe — the central questions are not merely epistemological, but ontological and ethical, namely, what is the global whole in which we exist, and how can we act in relation to others peoples and cultures in ways that promote a collaborative realization of the global community in our times?

¹⁹ H. Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa* (London: Meuthen, 1932), p. 180.

²⁰ Trans. G. Heron (London: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1954).

The Unity of the Whole

In response to this question Cusa would begin by identifying four types or levels of unity:

1. Individual unity — the identity by which each exists as in contrast to others.
2. The unity of each individual being as within the whole of being. This is important in grappling with the issue of globalization in our times and is within the focus of the remainder of this chapter.
3. The unity of the universe by which the individuals together form not merely a conglomeration of single entities, as with a pile of rocks, but a unified whole which expresses the fullness of being. This may be the central contribution of Cusa's thought for a study of globalization and the focus below.
4. Absolute Unity — the One, God or Being Itself, which, being without distinction, plurality or potentiality, is all that being can be, the fullness of being, and hence not subject to greater or lesser degree.²¹

The fourth is central and foundational for religions and for a metaphysics of the issue of globalization. Here, however, we shall focus rather on the ontology and its ethical implication. This directs our attention to the second and especially the third of Cusa's senses of unity to which the recent development of a global awareness corresponds, namely, to the whole or total universe in which we have our being, live and intersect with nature and with others.

This has been appreciated in various ways in the past: to cite but a few, in the totem which was the unifier for the life and universe of primitive peoples, in the myths which united gods and nature in a genetic whole, in the One of Parmenides as the natural first step for metaphysics, and in the eschatologies and the classical hierarchies of being. Now, however, after a long period of analytic and atomic thinking, under the impact of technologies which make conflict too costly and inundate us with global communications, there is special need to take up once again this sense of unity. For no longer can hermeneutics be concerned with the interpretation of a single work from the past or even of a single culture across the street in our pluralistic societies, or in the next nation across the border. Instead we live now in a global context in which each and every culture including our own must be interpreted in terms of the one total or global whole.

Diversity as Contraction

The situation is delicate however, for in attending to the whole it is imperative to avoid the kind of abstractive thinking described above in which personal uniqueness is dismissed and only the universal remains.²² Cusa's solution is found in the notion of contraction, that is, to begin from the significance of the whole and to recognize it in the very reality of every individual, so that the individual shares in something of the ultimate or definitive reality of the whole of being. One is not then an insignificant speck, as would be the case were I to be measured quantitatively and contrasted to the broad expanse of the globe. Rather I have the importance of the whole as it exists in and as me — and the same is true of other persons and of the parts of nature.

²¹ De Leonardis, pp. 47-50.

²² *Of Learned Ignorance*.

The import of this can be seen through comparison with other attempts to state this participation of the part in the whole. For Plato this was a repetition or imaging by each of the one ideal form. Aristotle soon ceased to employ the term participation as image (*mimesis*) because of the danger it entailed of reducing the individual to but a shadow of what was truly real. Cusa too rejected the separately existing ideas or ideal forms. Instead, what had been developed in the Christian cultures was a positive notion of existence as act²³ whereby each participant in being was made to be or exist in itself. This is retained by Nicholas of Cusa.

But he would emphasize that the being in which each person or thing participates is the whole of being.²⁴ This does not mean that in a being there is anything alien to its own identity, but that the reality of each being has precisely the meaning of the whole as contracted to this unique instance. To be then is not simply to fall in some minimal way on this side of nothingness, but rather to partake of the totality of being and the meaning of the whole of being, and indeed to be a realization of the whole in this unique contraction or instance. Things retains their identity, but do so in, and of, the whole.

De Leonardis formulates this in two principles:

- The principle of Individuality: Each individual contraction uniquely imparts to each entity an inherent value which marks it as indispensable to the whole.

- The principle of Community: The contraction of being makes each thing to be everything in a contracted sense. This creates a community of beings interrelating all entities on an ontological level.²⁵

Let us stop at this insight to explore its implications for diversity. Generally multiplicity and diversity are seen as opposed to unity: what is one is not many, and vice versa; many beings imply contrast and even possibly conflict. When, however, each individual is appreciated as a unique contraction of the one whole, others which are distinct and different are complementary rather than contradictory; they are the missing elements toward which one aspires and which can help one grow and live more fully; they are the remainder of the whole of which I am part, which supports and promotes me, and toward whose overall good my life is directed. Taken together they enhance, rather than destroy, the unity. This, of course, is true not of the Parmenidean absolute and unlimited One which is the complete and full perfection of being, the fourth instance of unity cited above. But it is true of the third of the above unities which is precisely the global unity, and the second type of unity which is its components seen precisely as members of the global whole.

GLOBAL RELATIONS

Hierarchy

After the manner of the medievals Cusa saw the plurality of beings of the universe as constituting a hierarchy of being. Each being was equal in that it constituted a contraction of the whole, but not all were equally contracted. Thus an inorganic being was more contracted than a

²³ G. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation: The Unity of Man in God* (Madras: University of Madras, 1978); *Tradition, Harmony and Transcendence* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), pp. 95-102.

²⁴ *Of Learned Ignorance*, pp. 84-88.

²⁵ De Leonardis, p. 228.

living organism, and a conscious being was less contracted than either of them. This constituted a hierarchy or gradation of beings. By thinking globally or in terms of the whole, Cusa was able to appreciate the diversity of being in a way that heightened this ordered sense of unity.

Lovejoy wrote classically of *The Great Chain of Being*²⁶ in which each being was situated between, and in relation to, the next lower and the next higher in the hierarchy. We had, in other words, our neighbors with whom we shared, but there was always the danger that we were correspondingly distanced from other beings. Thus the sense of the human as “lord of nature” could and did turn into exploitation and depredation. Cusa’s sense of beings as contractions of the whole unites each one intimately to all other realities in one’s being, one’s realization, and hence one’s concerns. This converts the sense of master into that of steward for the welfare of the parts of nature which do not possess consciousness or freedom. These become the ecological concerns of humankind.

Another approach, built upon this sense of each distinct being as equal inasmuch as each participates in the whole, would image the overall reality as a mosaic. But Cusa’s sense of each of those piece as also a contraction of the whole went further by adding the importance not only of each to the whole as in a mosaic, but of the whole in and by each being. Unity then is enhanced and is the concern of each being to the full extent of its own reality understood as an integral participant in the whole.

However, both these metaphors of a chain of being and of a mosaic are static. They leave the particular or individual beings as juxtaposed externally one to the other. Neither takes account of the way in which beings interact with the others or, more deeply, are even constituted internally by these relations to others. This is what Cusa sees for the realm of being, namely, relationships which are not externally juxtaposed, but internal to the very make-up of the individuals.

Internal Relations

This internal relationship is made possible precisely by a global sense of the whole.²⁷ For this Cusa may have drawn more directly from the Trinity, but this in turn is conceived through analogy to the family of which individuals are contractions. This, in turn, is lived in the interpersonal relations in a culture grounded in such a theology and especially now in the global reality constituted of economics and politics information and relations between civilizations. The philosopher can look here and find special manifestation of being. Indeed, hermeneutics²⁸ would suggest that this constitutes not only a *locus philosophicus* whence insight can be drawn, but the prejudgments of philosophers which constitute the basic philosophical insights themselves. The critical scientific interchange of philosophy is a process of controlled adjustment and perfection of these insights.

In a family all the persons are fully members and in that sense fully of the same nature. But the father generates the son while the son proceeds from the father. Hence, while mutually constituted by the same relation of one to the other, the father and son are distinct precisely as generator and generated. Life and all that the father is and has is given from the father to the son. Correspondingly, all that the son is and has is received from the father. As giver and receiver the two are distinguished in the family precisely as the different terms of the one relation. Hence each shares in the very definition of the other: the father is father only by the son, and vice versa.

²⁶ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (New York: Harper, 1960).

²⁷ *Of Learned Ignorance*, I, 9-10.

²⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

Further, generation is not a negative relation of exclusion or opposition; just the opposite — it is a positive relation of love, generosity and sharing. Hence, the unity or identity of each is via relation (the second unity), rather than opposition or negation as was the case in the first level of unity. In this way the whole that is the family is included in the definition of the father and of the son, each of whom are particular contractions of the whole.

To highlight this internal and active sense of contraction and hierarchy Cusa uses also the analogy of a seed.²⁹ This is able to develop and grow only by heat from the sun, water from the clouds and nourishment from the earth. Hence, all of these elements of the whole are interrelated in mutual dependence. Moreover, thereby the seed brings new being into existence — which in turn will be creative, etc. Finally, by this action of the sun and clouds, the seed and the earth, precisely as contractions of the whole, the universe itself is made fruitful and unfolds. But as this is identically to perfect and fulfill the universe, the plurality of beings, far from being detrimental to the unity and perfection of the universe, is the key thereto.

Explicatio-Complicatio

Cusa speaks of this as an *explicatio* or unfolding of the perfection of being, to which corresponds the converse, namely, folding together (*complicatio*) the various levels of being which constitutes the perfection of the whole. Hence Cusa's hierarchy of being has a special richness when taken in the light of his sense of a global unity. The classical hierarchy was a sequence of distinct levels of beings, each external to the other. The great gap between the multiple physical or material beings and the absolute One was filled in by an order of spiritual or angelic beings. As limited these were not the absolute, yet as spiritual they were not physical or material. This left the material or physical dimension of being out of the point of integration.

In contrast, Cusa, while continuing the overall gradation, sees it rather in terms of mutual inclusion, rather than of exclusion. Thus inorganic material beings do not contain the perfection of animate or conscious being, but plants include the perfections of the material as well as life. Animals are not self-conscious, but they integrate material, animate and conscious perfection. Humans include all four: inorganic, animate and conscious and spiritual life.

In this light, the relation to all others through the contraction of being is intensified as beings include more levels of being in their nature. On this scale humans as material and as alive on all three levels of life: plant, animal and spirit, play a uniquely unitive and comprehensive role in the hierarchy of being. If the issue is not of simple individuality by negative and exclusive contrast to others (the first level of unity), but uniqueness by positive and inclusive relation to others, then human persons and the human community are truly the nucleus of a unity that is global. This line of reasoning Cusa carries to its epitome in his theology of Christ as both man and God.

Global Dynamism

Thus far we have been speaking especially in terms of existence and formal causality by which the various beings within the global reality are to specific degrees contractions of the whole. To this, however, should be added efficient and final causality by which the ordered universe of reality takes on a dynamic and even developmental character. This has a number of implications:

²⁹ *Dato Patris Luminum* in Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Metaphors of Contraction* (Minneapolis: Banning, 1983), p. 25.

directedness, dynamism, cohesion, complementarity and harmony.³⁰ Cusa's global vision is of a uniquely active universe of being.

Direction to the Perfection of the Global Whole: As contractions of the whole, finite beings are not merely products ejected by and from the universe of being; rather they are limited expressions of the whole. Their entire reality is a limited image of the whole from which they derive their being, without which they cannot exist, and in which they find their true end or purpose. As changing, developing, living and moving, they are integral to the universe in which they find their perfection or realization, and to the perfection of which they contribute by the full actuality and activity of their reality.

This cannot be simply random or chaotic, oriented equally to being and its destruction, for then nothing would survive. Rather there is in being a directedness to its realization and perfection, rather than to its contrary. A rock resists annihilation; a plant will grow if given water and nutrition; an animal will seek these out and defend itself vigorously when necessary. All this when brought into cooperative causal interaction has a direction, namely, to the perfection of the whole.

Dynamic Unfolding of the Global Whole: As an unfolding (*explicatio*) of the whole, the diverse beings (the second type of unity) are opposed neither to the whole (the third type of unity) nor to the absolute One (the fourth type of unity). Rather, after the Platonic insight, all unfolds from the One and returns thereto.

To this Cusa makes an important addition. In his global vision this is not merely a matter of individual forms; beings are directed to the One as a whole, that is, by interacting with others (unity three). Further, this is not a matter only of external interaction between aliens. Seen in the light of reality as a whole, each being is a unique and indispensable contraction of the whole. Hence finite realities interact not merely as a multiplicity, but as an internally related and constituted community with shared and interdependent goals and powers.

Cohesion and Complementarity in a Global Unity: Every being is then related to every other in this grand community almost as parts of one body. Each depends upon the other in order to survive and by each the whole realizes its goal. But a global vision, such as that of Cusa, takes a step further, for if each part is a contraction of the whole then, as with the DNA for the individual cell, "in order for anything to be what it is it must also be in a certain sense everything which exists."³¹ The other is not alien, but part of my own definition.

From this it follows that the realization of each is required for the realization of the whole, just as each team member must perform well for the success of the whole. But in Cusa's global view the reverse is also true, namely, it is by acting with others and indeed in the service of others or for their good that one reaches one's full realization. This again is not far from the experience of the family and civil society, but tends to be lost sight of in other human and commercial relations. It is by interacting with, and for, others that one activates one's creative possibilities and most approximates the full realization of being. Thus, "the goal of each is to become harmoniously integrated into the whole of being and thereby to achieve the fullest development of its own unique nature."³²

³⁰ De Leonardis, pp. 233-236.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 236.

Conclusion: Implications for Contemporary Issues

There is much more to be said on these topics. The role of the imagination should be exploited to understand the nature and role of cultures. If a global outlook be evolved in which unity is promoted by diversity, then the progress of world unification could be, not at the cost of the multiple cultures, but through their deployment and interaction. Strategy could move beyond the dichotomy of business or begging to the true mega project for the new millennium, namely to develop a global community in which all are looked upon with appreciation, and progress is evoked by mutual respect.

For this Cusa's global view has pervasive hermeneutic implications for the development of human life. To overcome past human tendencies to subdue and exploit nature, some would want to eliminate the unique role of humans in the hierarchy of being. Cusa would recognize the equality of all as irreducibly individuals within the whole. Yet he would also recognize the unique position of humankind in that hierarchy as integrating all possible levels of the being — inorganic, living, conscious and spiritual — within the One existing being. To express that humankind realizes all the types of possibilities of life, Cusa uses the term "poss-est."

This, however, is not a license to plunder and exploit the rest, but a commission and destiny to assist in bringing out of others and of the whole realizations not otherwise possible. It is the view of Teilhard de Chardin³³ that it is precisely in man that we must look for further global evolution.

The relation of person to person also is shaped notably by such a vision. Generally it has been seen that order rather than conflict is the condition for the exercise of freedom. This is to appreciate the whole globally, rather than merely as a set of contrasting individuals. It is this context which truly enables and promotes the exercise of human freedom.

To see each as a contraction of the whole provides not only equality, but assures the definitive status of each as endowed by the significance of the whole. One cannot be instrumentalized, much less reduced either abstractively or concretely to a least common denominator. Thus equality can be promoted without the reductionism entailed by egalitarianism. At the same time, by thinking in global terms it becomes possible to see that diversity is the key to enriching the whole and thereby drawing it closer to the fullness of perfection.

De Leonardis says this well when he concludes that:

human endeavors can be successful only to the extent that they achieve this integration whereby the isolation of the lone individual is overcome by social participation and the emptiness of alienation is transformed by unifying love into an active and liberating communal existence.³⁴

³³ *Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper, 1959).

³⁴ De Leonardis, p. 241.

Part II
Lectures on Hermeneutics for a Global Age
Shanghai and Hanoi

Lecture I

Etymology and History of Hermeneutics

The title of a recent book from the Shanghai Institute of International Relations is *Cultural Impact on International Relations*.¹ This theme, cultural identity, appears to be a constant in the work of scholars across China. In a recent survey it echoed from all quarters. In the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences is working on Urbanization in order to see how Chinese culture, developed largely in small rural villages, can give life and dignity to families living one above the other in apartment buildings soaring 30 to 40 stories into the sky. In Wuhan scholars were working on how the culture of the Central Kingdom can function in the economic atmosphere of the WTO. In Xian researchers spoke of culture as a key element in the human development of the great Northwest. In Urumuchi scholars spoke of their cultural qualities as based on the Koran and sought to relate these to Confucian culture.

There was confidence that technically and economically China would inevitably be built again. What was not known was if and how what emerged for their children and their children's children would still be China, indeed, whether they as the Chinese people would long endure.

The method of working on this issue of the communication and transformation of culture is called hermeneutics. We shall begin by seeing why it has this name and what it can tell us about its task. Moreover, it will be important for us to know the particular difficulties it faces in our day and the new resources there are for appreciating cultures and civilizations, as it were, from within. In this light we will proceed in three steps to look in detail at the hermeneutics first for retrieving the cultural resources of one's own tradition, second for relating to other cultural traditions, and third for living in the global age in which we suddenly find ourselves.

Etymology

The term hermeneutics is derived from the name of the Greek messenger God.² His task was to bear messages from the gods living on mount Olympus to the humans down below. Hermeneutics is the method for carrying out such a mission. Upon reflection this process appears to be as varied as human life itself.

The poles of the process, that is, from whom and to whom, could be simply from you to me or vice versa, or they could be between peoples with their distinct languages, ways of thinking and feeling, whole cultures or, Huntington would note, whole civilizations.

The times involved are also most varied. They could be between generations — the continually experienced generation gap between parents and children — or between whole epochs as we try to retrieve the wisdom of the ancient and see how it can be lived today.

The mode of this process of communication is also most varied. It may be spoken and whole civilizations are built upon in oral culture and its proverbs. Most often this content is put down in writings or texts, though now this term is used more broadly for any mode of human expression. This is often brought together as a way of life, namely, the whole complex of ways of doing things such as experiencing and communicating respect, regret or welcome, etc.

¹ Yu Xintian, ed. *Cultural Impact on International Relations: Chinese Philosophical Studies, XX* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2002).

² Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. 12-32.

The content of this communication is, of course, not only sounds or visible markings, but the information they bear. Moreover, this consists not merely of facts but of meaning, for which is required interpretation that enables understanding. Hermeneutics in general is this process of interpretation. That the process is named by the messenger of the God suggests, moreover, that the meaning sought is not merely that of surface phenomena immediately available to the senses, but a higher, transcendent overview of the ways things hold together to form an overall pattern and the deeper more penetrating insight into the values involved.

Premodern³

This sense of the basic meaning of life must be characteristically human, without which life would be merely animal. Thus we find it at each stage in the evolution of human experience. These can be understood on the basis of the sequence of human cognitive capacities. While all are operative, life is marked successively by one after the other, which progress constitutes the stages of human development.

In the totemic stage life is not merely that of the external senses, yet the understanding works in terms of things as available to the external senses. Thus, each tribe has some animal or bird as its totem with which each person identifies and in term of which they interpret their relations to the cycle of planting and harvesting, or to other people, e.g., whom they can or cannot marry.

In the mythic stage understanding is carried out in terms of the figures and story lines created by the human imagination. These myths are elaborated as ways of understanding both external and internal phenomena. What is to be said of such stories. Some have called them useless distractions and superstitions, but then in these terms were written such ancient epics as the *Mahabarata* fundamental to the life of people throughout Southeast Asia and the Greek tragedies. The golden age of Athens as an epitome of Western civilization was realized at this stage of thought. It might be acknowledged that there is there the human content brought out conceptually by Sigmund Freud in identifying, e.g., the oedipus complex. But this is but one factor. Multiplying such insights indefinitely would be similar to trying to constitute a circle by adding radii or the points in a circle. The sweep and mystery of life expressed by the imagination in the form of myths can never be captured or recounted conceptually.

Philosophy begins when the imagination is replaced by the intellect as the basic coordination of insight. Thus Parmenides moved immediately to establish Being as one and Plato soon followed to understand all else as participation in that one.

The religions of Christianity and Islam made use of the philosophical conceptions of Parmenides and Plato, to which Averroes and Aquinas integrated the more structured philosophy of Aristotle in the middle ages.

The Modern Challenge

If then the message from the gods, the deep understanding on which cultures are founded, had been so well integrated into philosophy, how did we lose this so that we experience today such difficulty in understanding and working with culture. Understanding this will be the key to understanding the task of hermeneutics in our day.

³ George F. McLean, *Ways to God: Personal and Social at the Turn of the Millennium: The Iqbal Lecture* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999), pp. 75-161.

The exaggerated hope of the enlightenment was that man could master and control all. Thus something new emerged at the beginning of modern times which divided it so strikingly from ancient times. Rather than building on the human experience of our predecessors or “standing on their shoulders” philosophers began to sweep away all that preceded them. Francis Bacon proposed smashing the “idols” which contained the cultural heritage of the ancestors, John Locke suggested beginning by supposing the mind to be a blank tablet and René Descartes put all under a methodic doubt.

Instead they proposed proceeding on the basis of notions that would be clear and distinct, not to the All-wise minds of the gods, but to the limited mental capabilities of humans. Moreover, the content of this knowledge would be separated from the subject as free and creative, and would concern only objects or things. Its terms then would be only universal and applicable everywhere; they would need to be necessary or what always had to be and for all people, not the way of life or culture of a particular people as freely shaping their future.

In this the goal was power. For Bacon knowledge was power and for Descartes it would give control so that man could “walk with confidence in this world.”

This launched a great campaign to transform the world and indeed much, very much, was accomplished. The great human populations simply could not survive, much less thrive, without its achievements. But after World War II when the powers of the new knowledge were applied in a more coordinated manner it began to appear that all was not progress or even that progress itself as understood in modern terms was destructive and hence self-defending. We began to discover that the life supports in nature (the environment) were being destroyed; that technology unchecked and undirected was destroying the human habitat, and even generated a balance of terror; that fascination with the national order had reduced the sense of living in an ocean of truth as the source of meaning and of goodness as our ultimate concern to that of mere survival of the fittest.

This, in turn, generated a major difficulty for receiving Herme’s message of ultimate meaning. What previously had been done spontaneously in terms of totem, myth or classical philosophy, now had to be done consciously and according to a recognized method. But as the method of the modern project was that of objective science, the attempt to apply this method led inexorably to reducing all attempts to the human capacity for clear and distinct knowledge and the loss of anything that transcended or grounded this, i.e., the message of the gods regarding ultimate human meaning and goals.

As a result man must now create man, but, in fact, can create only robots that, in turn, are programmed by man. The name of Joyce’s famous poem comes to mind here: “Only God can make a tree,” not to mention making man, or creating human society.

Thus the big issue — and the reason people now talk of the post-modern — is whether human life will be reduced to the object of human science, that is, to what man can create. Or will the method and mind be opened to Being and truth that is itself unlimited, i.e., to the message of the gods, by hermeneutics.

The Development of a Hermeneutic Response⁴

Frederick Schleiermacher (1768-1834) early noted the danger in modern thought and attempted to mine the potentialities of an interior path. In the context of modern rationalism this has been interpreted as a recognition of the psychological dynamics of the human person. It was that, but more deeply it was the life of faith itself. Thus biblical hermeneutics had been limited by

⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975), pp. 153-173.

the physical exigencies of the text and focused on external and practical techniques, e.g., in Spinoza and Hegel. Schleiermacher focused rather on the inner intentional process of the faith of the reader of the text. Further he saw the unity of God as the creator of all to be the key to the unity between persons. Perhaps especially he saw the converse, namely, that conscious unity with other persons is the path to unity with God.

This opened a delicate transformation of religious horizons. Influenced by the emerging force of modernity he wanted to attain objective religious knowledge. Hence, he did not remain with the lived experience of the faith but sought to reduce this to laws and principles of understanding. This path led inexorably not to grounding man in God, but to substituting God by man. Thus, Paul Tillich would write two centuries later and from the viewpoint of his own despair that this path had led to the egregious expectation in the 1920s that Hitler's new German Socialism would be more authentically religious than were the Churches.

When Hitler soon proved the contrary, Tillich reported that all had come to the conclusion that the previous two hundred years of liberal Protestantism since Schleiermacher had proven to be essentially erroneous.

Hans-Georg Gadamer complemented this reading of Schleiermacher's religious vision with that of two historians. Ludwig Von Ranke reoriented science from recounting external actions to the interior freedom of human action as its essential element. J.C. Droysen broadened this focus on individual freedom to its many ramifications, thereby broadening the horizon to a much more rich and complex understanding of history as the attempt to express an ethical ideal.

By these three authors Gadamer attempts to illustrate the dilemma between the attempt to recognize the intention of the person (or of the author in hermeneutic terms), on the one hand, and the restrictive requirements of science, on the other.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911)⁵ made an immense contribution to hermeneutics. He recognized the need to take account of what was distinctive about human life developed the distinctive field of sciences involved with the human spirit (*geisteswissenschaften*). For this he looked not into the inner heart or reflective consciousness about life, but to the external life practices as the spirit engages in the processes of human life itself. What he sought was not facts but their meaning, for which he looked not through private introspection but in their objective cultural expressions.

There were problems, however. Essentially, under the influence of rationalism and what had come to be considered the norms of valid, respectable, scientifically justified content he objectivized the elements of subjectivity upon which he touched. Moreover, on the supposition that time was a succession of discrete parts from past to future all such meaning was relativized to the particular temporal or local point of observation and reflection. What was needed, however, was not only this horizontal dimension, but a corresponding vertical dimension grounding all such moments in truth and goodness and hence relating them one to another.

It is significant then that the broadest criticism of the work of Gadamer is that his thought is relativistic. In the light of the above modern fascination with scientific objectivity one can see why this is charged. For Gadamer to introduce the inner work of human consciousness with its freedom and creativity is precisely to reintroduce those elements which had been intentionally removed at the beginning of modern times in order to generate knowledge that was universal and necessary. To rerecognize these essential elements of human meaning and value, however, requires the lost metaphysics capable of integrating their ground in being. Without this the recognition of the

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-204.

essential temporality of human awareness would be disjunctive to the extent of being relativistic as each observation would be locked in itself.

In the last half of the 20th century it became increasingly clear that the modern scientific project, while amazingly productive could not regulate itself and indeed threatened grave dangers. To nature it posed the threat of exploitation to the extent of destroying the ecology, to humanity it in posed the nuclear threat of mutual annihilation, and to the divine it threatened Nietzsche's 'death of God,' the loss of meaning and hope for human life, and the too real emergence of the *übermensch* in its various totalitarian forms dressed in black shirts and brown.

Could the human subject be retrieved and with it the openness of the spirit to Being? Gabriel Marcel pointed out a fatal flaw in the subject-object model of knowledge exasperated by the modern rationalism, namely, the elusiveness of that which is proper to human subjectivity. To know subjectivity we constitute it as an object for ourselves as subject, which subject is retired from the area of consideration. When, in turn, we constitute this subject as an object of attention, the knowing subject in turn immediately retires, and so on indefinitely.

What will be needed is a new method for bringing the subject out into the light – the very etymology of “phe-nomen-ology” as the process of bringing meaning into the light. In philosophy this would correspond to the achievement in physics of breaking into the atom, which totally transformed the whole field of physics. The ability for philosophy to see within the reality of the subject and its conscious, free and creative life would have no less effect in transforming the field of philosophy.

This path was opened by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)⁶ as his search for the ground of mathematics took him from objective universal knowledge, independent of the observer, to the temporal and intentional process of continuous reinterpretation in the spiral of interaction between experience and understanding. His attempt to base this in relation to a transcendental ego seemed to dead end in a realm of ideas. The same was true of the process of bracketing in search of what was essential, the result of which was the constitution of a world of consciousness which threatened to be a half of mirrors, that is, of consciousness of consciousness without end. What appeared to his direct successors to be needed was a grounding in being (Heidegger) and in the life of cultures, traditions and heritages (Gadamer).

For Heidegger⁷ consciousness must be of concern not itself, but what is or being. Hence in his *Being and Time* Heidegger added the needed vertical dimension by focusing upon the *dasein*, i.e., the conscious human reality through which Being emerges into time. In this earlier period he saw the work of man as questioning being, making it speak and reveal its meaning. In this later period Heidegger seems to have shifted his perspective from man to Being as transcendent. Truth then becomes the process of unveiling being and the human task is not so much to question as to wait upon the appropriate time and to shepherd the being thus made manifest. In this light all is sacred, all is gift. The human task is to protect this gift and pass it on in the same generous sense in which it was received.

Is this thought of Heidegger religious? It has been used very broadly in this sense and richly so, e.g., by Karl Rahner whose thought was a most active element in the thinking of the Second Vatican Council. For example, by letting go we allow God to live in us; to live truly is to live in God; to live is to serve God and neighbor in gratitude and generosity.

But Heidegger himself would not refer to Being as God though he progressively expressed it with linguistic religious modalities and properties. Samuel Huntington has pointed out that all the

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 214-224.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 225-241.

great civilizations are rooted in a major religion and vice versa (with the exception of Buddhism) and Iqbal would note that whereas philosophy tends to be distant and abstract, religion is much warmer and involved. In this model Heidegger's thought might well be considered austere, focused solely on the process of the unveiling of Being; some would fault him for being slow to recognize the potentialities for evil that this process might take in Nazi hands in his time.

Hans-Georg Gadamer sees a corrective for this, namely, that the process of unveiling Being in time is carried out by not the isolated thinkers, but by the community over time as it faces the real challenges of life and through its successful practice forms a culture and a tradition. This brings the interior life of faith and freedom, of which Schleiermacher and Droysen spoke, into horizontal human effort through time and history. But by being consciously vertical as well it is able to judge and correct in dialogue with other its efforts to bring out in life more of unity and truth, goodness and beauty.

Lecture II

Cultures and Civilizations in Hermeneutics

The Making of Cultures and Civilizations

What then is culture? One could begin from the basic stance of ‘being against non being’ which was first stated formally by Parmenides at the very beginnings of Greek philosophy. In these terms reality holds to its being and according to its nature seeks to bring this to completion or perfection (*per-fecta*).

To introduce this properly philosophical insight at (and indeed as) the very point of transition from mythic to properly philosophical thought, Parmenides used in mythic terms to write a proemium to his philosophical poem.¹ It describes him as asleep and being awakened by the muses who embodied the various arts and the creative imagination – music, poetry and the like. They put him on a chariot and send him off up the inclining path of the great road that traverses the universe. As he goes up he leaves the darkness and enters gradually into the light until he comes to a gate ruled by the goddess Justice who is then capable of making right judgments discriminating truth from falseness. She unlocks the gate, welcomes him in and instructs him to examine all things.

For this task she gives him, as a special set of glasses, a principle. It is, never to confuse ‘is’ with ‘is not’, ‘what is’ with ‘what is not’, ‘being’ with ‘non being’ or nothing. To do so would mean that ‘ $2 + 2$ ’ which equals 4 would be the same as ‘ $2 - 2$ ’ which equals 0; or that “equals” would be the same as “not equals.” Were that to be the case I could not say “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ”; indeed I could not even think “ $2 + 2 = 4$ ” for to say or think “plus” would be the same as to say or think “minus”; to say or think “equals” would be the same as to say or think “not equals.”

Being. More basically and properly, to say or think “is” would be the same as to say or think “is not.” Now, the infinitive form of “is” is “to be” of which the participial or active form is “being.” Thus, the principle (or glasses) given to Parmenides by the goddess, according to which he would be able correctly to judge regarding all things, is that “being is; non being is not,” or “being is not non being.” The opposite she describes as “an all impossible way” in which to think, to act or to exist. If hermeneutics is concerned with bringing messages from the gods then the first and most basic message is this. It will be the key to all that philosophy can do as a process of interpretation.²

We find this stance of being against nonbeing at every level. It appears passively as resistance at the inorganic level where a rock can be subject to massive pressure that breaks it down into sand, but human forces cannot annihilate it. The difficulty with attempts to commit the perfect crime is precisely this impossibility of ever truly annihilating the *corpus delicti* or the evidence, that is, of reducing its being to nonbeing or nothing.

Being, however, is not merely a negative force of resistance, but especially a positive, active force of self realization according to the nature of the being. Thus a plant absorbs the moisture and nutrients that allow it to fulfill its life cycle or to be realized through and through, that is, to achieve its full perfection (*per-fecta*) according to its nature. An animal adds consciousness to this which

¹ George F. McLean, *Ways to God: Personal and Social at the Turn of the Millennia: The Iqbal Lecture, Lahore* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999), pp. 171-172.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 172-175.

gives it greater range in seeking out its life support or in defending its life fiercely and with all its might when threatened.

The human person has yet more capabilities for knowledge and reasoning, for willing and self direction, and thus for self realization in terms of what really or objectively does lead to one's protection, growth and development throughout one's life cycle.

Values can be understood in these terms. As human persons have both intellect and imagination they can envisage numberless ways of caring for themselves and others and for seeking their self realization. As the "powers of acting are limited, however, it is necessary to choose among these or at least to set an order of preferences. That is, certain things are given greater importance or weight (*valere*) and hence preference.³ These can be either objects outside of us as we prefer one kind, e.g., of food, over another, or they can be characteristics of our very person such as ways of acting or interrelating with others: harmony or initiative, love of family or patriotism.

Moreover, these more or less conscious decisions are not only individual and isolated; but are lived with others. Over time these choices or preferences reflect the cumulative exercises of freedom by a people and shape its world of meaning, as Dilthey notes. These preferences or values differ by community and whole peoples, e.g., harmony may characterize an Asian people, while initiative and competitiveness might characterize other peoples. Hence, the most basic and pervasive change at the most fundamental level of the self development of peoples in this time of change and global interaction is precisely how they balance and integrate these values in their personal and public life.

Virtues emerge in this process. For when a value pattern is operational over time, and reinforced by community habits, expectations and rewards, the salient value preferences are practiced and become familiar. With this comes facility and spontaneity, and hence special capacity or strength (*virtus*) in so acting. This is the meaning of virtues, which rightly are said to be the basic determinant of what our life will add up to over time.

Culture is the complex of values and virtues as these come together to constitute a way of cultivating (*cultura*) the soul. This is not the set of objects produced by a people, as would be described in the empiricist term, e.g., of Tyler.⁴ Rather it is a matter of self-cultivation and self-constitution; it is what we make of ourselves, it is my identity or 'who I am' and 'what I stand for'. Like a giant telecommunication dish it shapes, intensifies and extends the range of one's personal sensitivities, free decision making and mutual concerns. Thus it shapes all dimensions of one's life, material and spiritual, economic and political, into a whole which is characterized by unity and truth, goodness and beauty. This is the key to the meaning and quality of one's life and that of one's people.⁵

Culture⁶ is, moreover, the key to the education of the young. One born into a community is shaped by its vision of the good. Like a pair of glasses a culture does not create objects, but one

³ Ivor Leclerc, "The Metaphysics of the Good," *Review of Metaphysics*, 35 (1981), 3-5.

⁴ E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London, 1871), VII, 127.

⁵ Plato, *Laches*, 198-201.

⁶ McLean, pp. 334-344; V. Mathieu, "Cultura" in *Enciclopedia Filosofica* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1967), II, 207-210; and Raymond Williams, "Culture and Civilization," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), II, 273-276, and *Culture and Society* (London: 1958); Tonnelat, "Kultur" in *Civilisation, le mot et l'idée* (Paris: Centre International de Synthèse), II.

sees and evaluates objects in its terms. Hence, it is the basic orienting factor for one's intellectual and effective life. It is then the way of educating the next generation and enabling it to live a life of meaning, dignity and beauty. The Greeks called this *paideia*, to the Germans it is *bildung*.

In sum it is the very purchase or grasp one has on a life of meaning and value, for oneself and one's children, and hence is the integrating concern of one's life. It will be provided for, and defended against attack, desperately and fiercely when necessary. This ultimate concern is the basic reason why civilizations clash when one seems to suppress or damage another.

Civilization is culture and values when seen especially in relation to public life and governance in the community; hence, its root *civis* or city. Some would relate it to the development of life through science and its attendant technology, but this would seem to reflect the fascination with technology characteristic of the 19th century. Some see it as the desire to justify the process of colonialization in which those without that knowledge and its attendant technical capabilities were considered "uncivilized" and hence proper objects of tutelage by colonial powers. That interpretation of "civilization" reflects rather the restriction of modern rationalism upon the humane spirit.

Instead, a civilization is best understood as a cluster of cultures which, when joined with land and blood and rooted in a great religion, form a broad identity – what Samuel Huntington would call the largest "we."⁷

Role of Cultural Traditions in Hermeneutics

Two Views

In view of what was said above regarding the development of modern rationalism as beginning with a smashing of the idols and a reduction of the mind to a blank tablet, it could be expected that culture would be sedulously avoided and that "value free" would become almost synonymous with science. To the degree that 'scientism' took hold, education followed and took pride in being, if not "value free," at least "value neutral."

Thus the content of a culture was considered an impediment to valid understanding and decision making for it was looked upon:

- as irrational or even anti-rational as it would introduce into Descartes' aseptic laboratory of ideas elements without the requisite clarity and distinctness, universality and necessity;
- as coercive since it constituted the context of life from one's earliest years in family and community, rather than being a matter of neutral choice;
- as inert and deadening because received and from the past, rather than being the result of pressed creative exploration; and
- as a matter of automatic acquiescence, rather than of consent.

Gadamer for his part would think just the opposite:

- rather than irrational, he would consider culture to be the necessary basis for a rational approach to life;
- rather than coercive, he would see it as the product of the cumulative freedom of a people;

⁷ Samuel Huntington, pp. 40-48.

- rather than inert and deadening, he would see it as being sedulously protected and cultivated by a people as their very purchase in life; and
- rather than being received by inertia, he would see it as reflecting the struggles of a people to live with dignity through all their crises.

In sum where the moderns would see cultural traditions as impediments, Gadamer would see them as the basis for a humane understanding and life.

Cultural Traditions as Seen by:

<i>Modernity</i>	<i>H.-G. Gadamer</i>
Irrational	Rational
Coercive	Free
Inert	Cultivated
Automatic	Affirmed

The Role of Pre-judgments

The idea of beginning from a blank tablet is seen as unreal, both in fact and in principle. In fact, we are born in a community which has its own culture or way of life, without which it would have ceased to be. We depend on this tradition for language and education, that is for the ability to know and to interpret life. Consequently, we need to perfect the tradition and make it serve life. This is the task of hermeneutics.

In principle, too, it should be noted that only a whole is intelligible. Just a three cannot be thought of if it lacks one of its elements, it is only in terms of a whole that understanding can proceed. This is the basis of the hermeneutic circle, namely, “that the parts can be understood only in terms of the whole, and conversely that an understanding of the whole depends upon the parts.”

In this light, Gadamer notes that we come to the work of understanding with “prejudgements” – the “prejudices” dreaded by rationalism. These are had from family and community, past and present; these are both inevitable and indispensable. Hence, we need to make them work for us. For this we need to keep a questioning mind open to novelty or newness.

The example of reading a book can be suggestive here. Throughout we need to hold to the text. The goal is not to adapt the text to our mind, for then we would be trapped in ourselves and unable to know or to grow. Rather our goal is to adapt our mind to the text in order to learn. On approaching the text I need to project its general nature and meaning, that is, whether it is on mathematics or politics, history or philosophy; hence, I come with a prejudgement or prejudice. As I proceed in reading the text I continually revise this expectation and bring it into conformity with the text. This is the process of interpreting the text.

Lecture III

Hermeneutics of Cultural Traditions

Hermeneutics of One's Own Tradition

Cultural Tradition

The factor of time means that a culture is not simply a one time thing, but needs to be passed on to the next generation; indeed it must shape the education and hence the personality of each succeeding generation. Like its root, *tradere* – “to pass on” – tradition¹ is active and forward looking. It is not history which looks to the past and includes all, whether good or bad. Rather, as the passing on of a culture to a new generation and in changing circumstances, its content must be reevaluated by, and for, that generation. What is reaffirmed and creatively passed on is what appears significant to people in the circumstances of their day. Hence what was originally committed to, often times most deeply and passionately in a period of great sacrifice, is gradually elaborated and passed on as a precious inheritance. For, as seen above, it is the very purchase that a people has on life.

Thus it bridges between past and future. It is a way back to our origins as a people and reflects their cumulative work of creative freedom over the ages in responding to the needs of life. It is as well a basis for moving forward in elaborating a way of life satisfying for its dignity and beauty. The goal here is then not simply to repeat the past, for that would restrict life to the past. Jaroslav Pelikan calls that traditionalism which he describes as “the dead faith of the living.”² In contrast tradition in its active sense is a creative passing on of the culture heritage; it is “the living faith of the dead.”

There is then novelty in the flow of tradition. Indeed this temporal unfolding is the proper task of man. Hence, one is not merely determined, or even enabled, by tradition. Rather, one is determinative of tradition through the exercise of one's creative freedom. As will be seen below this is a matter of the exercise of moral consciousness in concrete circumstances.

Hermeneutics then is rightly named after the Greek messenger god, Hermes, for its work is to bring the message from one to another, from a written text to the reader, from the past of one's ancestors to the present, from one people to another. The communication of meaning, however, is not simply a flow of words or of data, of information about an object. It is rather a process on which subjects are enabled to enter more consciously into the lived heritage of their people and their commitments as to how life can be lived with dignity. This is an issue of understanding, and hence of interpretation. This, in turn, is encased in the human effort through time and hence is an issue of freedom, values and culture.

Today, this has a number of dimensions which will be treated serially. The first is a hermeneutics of one's own heritage in order to find the needed cultural resources in one's heritage

¹ H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975), pp. 245-253. *Ibid.* Gadamer emphasized knowledge as the basis of tradition in contrast to those who would see it pejoratively as the result of arbitrary will. It is important to add to knowledge the free acts which, e.g., give birth to a nation and shape the attitudes and values of successive generations. As an example one might cite the continuing impact had by the Magna Carta through the Declaration of Independence upon life in North America, or of the Declaration of the Rights of Man in the national life of so many countries.

² Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New York: Yale University Press, 1984).

for one's own identity and to apply them for today. The second is to interpret the cultural heritages of other peoples for life in our pluralistic world. The third is to understand the work and methods of hermeneutics for the new global age upon which we now embark.

Application

In the work of applying one's heritage it is important to distinguish ethics from *techné*. In *techné* the model is completely determined beforehand and generally by another person, e.g., by the architect as distinct from the construction engineer. The blue prints are the exemplar for the building to be constructed. They must be complete and must be followed in every detail. It is the task of the builder to replicate concretely this ideal schema exactly and without missing any detail.

In ethics, in contrast, the focus is not only on the object, but on the subject as well, for in acting to the subject makes, not only the object, but him- or herself as well. The human person is determined not only from without, but especially from within. As persons see, evaluate and determine their responses they shape the kind of person they will be.

Hence, the appropriateness of an act is not determined independently of the self, but is very much dependent upon the self and its attitude. This is the meaning of responsible freedom. The moral consciousness does not first know the ideal and then simply apply it; it consists rather in relating the ideal to ourselves in the process of sharing the concerns of others.

Thus, the exercise of one's moral consciousness³ and creativity in the process of application of the tradition does not diminish the cultural heritage, but perfects it by creating more of what goodness, value and culture mean. Rather than the tradition being fixed beforehand the subject is in action in applying its meaning to the present. In this process the subject itself is growing and evolving.⁴ The tradition then lives in the one who applies it. Hence, we might better say, not that we live the tradition as if it were a fixed thing which we replicate, but rather that the tradition lives us; or better still, we are the living tradition; our life is that of the tradition.

From this it follows that application is not an accidental or subsequent addition to the tradition; rather it codetermines the cultural heritage as tradition. We co-constitute the tradition. This may help us to understand the hermeneutic circle in a living manner: the whole tradition depends on the part, while the part depends on the whole in as much as it draws upon the tradition for meaning and inspiration.

Hermeneutics and Other Cultural Traditions – Pluralism

In proportion as we are conscious of subjectivity and of our cultural identity we are aware, as well, of differences in cultures, whether of other generations within our own tradition as discussed above, or with other peoples of other traditions as to be discussed here. This latter case constitutes the pluralism which is increasingly common as peoples move either as immigrants or refugees and as our means of communication and interchange engage us with different peoples and cultures. In this case we become increasingly conscious of the difference in horizon between cultures.

Horizons

³ Gadamer, pp. 274-289.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 235-242.

An horizon is all that can be seen from the perspective of a particular cultural tradition. It is important that we not ignore our cultural horizon, for then we trapped in and by it. Rather we must recognize it and make it work for us. This is not done by looking at it objectively, that is, as an object or artifact produced by its authors in the past. Rather our task is to apply our horizon in the present, so that we serve as midwives enabling our tradition to give birth to the future.⁵

The danger here is that our horizon will become not enabling, but restrictive if we focus on the pass and concentrate on its replication. This is what J. Pelikan terms traditionalism.⁶ Indeed, the stronger and richer a tradition is the greater the danger that it will encapsulate us due to our hearing always and only the same stories and proverbs. Because our tradition is not infallible, infinite or absolute, we need to hear other stories.

To really do so, however, requires that we put our tradition at risk, enabling it to be questioned. To do this we need to treat others, their stories and cultural heritage not as a dead or fixed object without its living core or treat it by abstract universalizing observation. Rather we need to take account of its subjective character, its fascinations, dedications and commitments. For this we need to put ourselves in the situation of the other – what Aristotle calls *sunesis* – so that we live, as it were, their experiences and suffer their concerns.

*The Logic of Question and Answer*⁷

A question is not a matter of indetermination of the mind or a lack of conviction on the part of the will. Rather, a question focuses our attention and directs it. Like a spotlight in the darkness, it enables us to consider relevant matters.

In this our attention should be not that of opinion which suppresses the question, or of arguing which looks for the weak points in the answers of others. Instead, the effort should be to maximize the truth in the position of the other. As we depend upon encountering new truths, then our task is to reach out to find them, even if hidden within a complex of confusion. Like fishing for pearls or prospecting for oil we need to look attentively for any signs of a new horizon or insight. We need to process a lot of material in order to find that which can be helpful. Thus, in conversation our effort is to give others the best chance to make their case, and even to assist them where weaknesses appear.

As the key to an answer, ever a partial answer, begins to appear in the others tradition it would not be helpful to attempt simply to add it to our own. This would inject an alien element which would confuse our identity and set off defensive reactions, as with organ transplants. Indeed, even success in grafting on alien parts would resemble the proverbial camel which, due to its ungainly manner as an assemblage of contrasting elements, has been compared to a horse made by a committee. Instead, the new insight should be applied to our task of bringing about a new evolution in our own tradition as discussed above.

In so doing we learn in turn a number of things about our tradition. First, it can answer more than one question, that is, not only the questions from the past, but other questions which have not been raised till now. Here, the religious foundation of a culture is particularly important, for at that level we break beyond our culture as a fixed and limited individual concrete object and become aware of the infinite, unlimited and inexhaustible ground of our being.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 261-264.

⁶ Jarsolav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition*.

⁷ Gadamer., pp. 333-341.

Thus, our tradition can continually open with, and as, the dynamic expression of being in time. This is never finished and done with. It lives not in the intention of the author or those who have generated the tradition, but in the lives of the many who read that text, and adhere actively to its message by applying it in new ways in new times.

What then should be our purpose in encountering other traditions? It should not be to gather more information in order to dominate them. This only leaves one locked in one's own tradition, one's own self and one's own prejudices.

Rather, the purpose should be to enable us to recognize the limitations of one's own and to set us to searching within our tradition. This directs us more deeply into our own tradition has something new to say to us and with the conviction that it forward in new ways. This, indeed, is real fidelity to one's tradition.⁸

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 310-341.

Lecture IV

Hermeneutics for a Global Age

Today the horizon is no longer particular, within which we plumb our own or peer out at this, but universal and all encompassing. This is due in part to the development beyond the cold war of a unipolar, all-inclusive economy, to the emergence of a series of interlocking regional and world wide organizations such as the United Nations, to the promotion of world wide standards and cooperation in the fields of the environment, health and education, and perhaps most of all to the present flow of information. All of this constitute a new global whole in which the issue of culture – of how to cultivate the soul – becomes the basic human issue.

Global Thinking

In this situation it is no longer adequate to follow the basic formula of modernity, namely, Descartes' analytic method of dividing all into its minimal clear and distinct components and then assembling these by equally clear and distinct linkages. Such thinking is tactical and short range. It generates steps that are ill suited for the global reality in which the particulars have their present meaning and future potential. There is a new need also for synthetic thinking. But even this betrays our past if it consists simply in bringing together of units which are essentially parts which of themselves are alien one to another.

Thus, Nicholas of Cusa distinguishes discursive thinking from intellection. The former proceeds in terms of the parts. It begins from sense intuition of particular and concrete material objects. A unity of these objects is developed by reason, which works in terms of the forms in the things and the concepts in the mind.

The difficulty here is that the form in the thing is clouded by the changeableness of material things, while the form in the mind or concept is obtained by abstraction from the concrete individuality. Hence, the more we try to think globally in these terms the more we abstract from what distinguishes and characterizes free and unique persons and peoples.

(Mathematics also is discursive, but as only formal it does not treat human problems. Indeed these are exacerbated when reduced to matter.)

In contrast intellection considers each thing in its proper reality and as an integral constituent of the whole. The whole, in turn, is not for intellection a mere assemblage of single and juxtaposed entities; rather the multiple realities are participations in the whole.

Hence, the intellect works in terms of the whole. With the imagination and reason it can elaborate the range of possible participations. By the senses we can know which of the possibles are, in fact, actual. The significance of the particular beings, however, is known not from the senses, but by working in terms of the whole of which the particulars are parts.

This thinking in terms of the whole contrasts with reasoning in which modern rationalism consisted, and to which it attempted to reduce all knowledge and human interaction. As E. Rice¹ describes the difference between reasoning and intellection, the former corresponds to the experience of a person walking through a valley, encountering serially the flora and fauna, the topography and the streams. The latter is the view of the person on the hilltop who can see at once

¹ E. Rice "Nicholas of Cusa's Idea of Wisdom," *Traditio*, 13 (1957), 358.

and as a single whole all the elements and their interrelations – why this area without water and vegetation is wind blown and stunted, while other parts are verdant and arable.

To think globally or in an wholistic manner is new and unaccustomed. We should not expect to find that capability developed with its logic and epistemology all worked out and the implications elaborated and tested, for we enter a truly new epoch for which distinctively new ways of thinking are required. Nor can we suppose that all will be progressive. Here the example of the discovery of the Americas is sobering in its spread of diseases to which there were no antibodies that killed literally 90 percent of the population of large parts of Central America.

Particulars as Contractions of the Whole

The development of a hermeneutics for working with cultural heritage in the global age now upon us is desperately needed. Indeed, it may be hoped that the classical hermeneutic issue of whole and part first articulated by Schleiermacher² may set us on the right track. He observed that the whole is intelligible only in terms of the parts, while the parts are intelligible in terms of the whole. This seems now to have become the urgent and pervasive issue as the parts are no longer isolated and the mind is ever challenged to think relationally and to reach beyond the particular to the whole. For this the thought of Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) may be particularly suggestive.

At the end of the Middle Ages he opened a path for new thinking. In contrast to, and much earlier than Descartes Cusa suggested thinking in terms of the whole and thus exploiting the human capacity of intellection, in contrast to reasoning. In this way the approach to the perennial issue of unity and diversity was dramatically reversed. He did not proceed in the manner of Aristotle from encountering individuals and abstracting or omitting the differences in order to obtain a univocal nature in the members of a set or class — and which then could be universalized.³ Rather, he began from the whole whence he came to see the particular as a contraction: each particular is the whole contracted. In some ways this is similar to Leibniz's monads each of which is the view of the whole from a distinctive point of view and hence with a distinctive horizon. For Cusa, to be is not minimally to exceed the threshold of non being or nothingness; it is rather to partake of the totality of being which it realizes as contracted to this unique instance.

David De Leonardis suggests here two principles.⁴ One is the principle of individuality: contraction imparts to each entity an inherent value as indispensable to the whole; the other is the principle of community: each being is everything in a contracted sense. All then are interrelated on an ontological basis.

Global Structures

In this light we can take account of the unity within which all things appear as ordered according to their degree of greater or lesser contraction. Here the order or interrelatedness is not external, but internal. The whole is included as basic in the very definition of each, while their distinctions are not negative or exclusionary of one from the other, but positive in terms of the

² Schleiermacher, see H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975), pp. 162-173; see also Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. 87-88.

³ *Of Learned Ignorance*.

⁴ David De Leonardis, *Ethical Implications of Unity and the Divine in Nicholas of Cusa* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998), p. 228.

interrelation of all.⁵ Just as a father is father only in terms of the son which must be included in the definition of what father is, so too the whole is basic to the definition of any particular which therefore includes all others.

The basic pattern here is that of an unfolding of the one (*explicatio*) and a folding of all back together (*complicatio*). Hence, the relationship here is not one of mutual exclusion and oppression, but of mutual inclusion. Just as the inorganic is included in the plant, the characteristics of vegetative life are included in, and realized more perfectly, in the animal, whose characteristics are included, in turn and more perfectly, in humans. Thus, each being is less an individual that excludes others, than unique through positive inclusion of the other.

In this light the human person, as including an inorganic, organic and spiritual level, must not be dismissed or lost in the globalizing process, for it serves rather as the key to the unity of all creation. For Cusa this extends especially to Christ who, as both God and man, is the lynch pin, not only of creation, but of being as such.

A Global Dynamic⁶

The above has considered the whole in terms of its existence and formal structure. But its existential character is realized especially in terms of efficient and final causality, in which terms the dynamism of the global order emerges. This has three dimensions: directedness, unity and hence cohesion.

First, the dynamism inherent in the global reality is directed to the good of the whole. Finite beings are not merely produced and ejected from the whole, but constitute limited expressions of the whole. Hence, they are integral to the whole to whose perfection they contribute by their full actualization or perfection. This is not chaotic, which would be destructive of the whole; but rather is directed to realizing the perfection or finality of the whole.

Second, the dynamic unfolding is distinctively that of the whole. Thus whereas Plato's initiation or participation of the forms constituted individuals, Cusa adds that beings are directed to the whole by interacting with others. Beings as thus interacting constitute an internally related community in which persons are integrated through shared goals.⁷

Finally, the global whole is marked by cohesion and complementarity. Thus not only is every being related to every other in a grand community, but each is dependent on the others in order to survive and to realize its good.

Moreover, the other is not alien but part of one's very definition. Hence, the realization of each is required for the realization of the whole. This is beyond the character of a team in which the performance of each is required to achieve the objective of the whole. Here, it is precisely by acting for the good of the other that each achieves one's own full realization. As in a family, by acting with, and for, the others one activates one's creative possibilities and most approximates the full realization of one's being.

Understood in these terms globalization holds not only threats known and unknown, but also great potential for contributing to progress in the realization of being.

⁵ *Of Learned Ignorance*, I, 9-10.

⁶ De Leonardis, pp. 233-236.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235, 250-253.