

Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change  
Series I. Culture and Values, Volume 38  
*General Editor*  
*George F. McLean*

# **Religion and Culture**

by  
*George F. McLean*

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Box 261  
Cardinal Station  
Washington, D.C. 20064

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Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication

McLean, George F.  
Religion and culture / by George F. McLean.  
p. cm. — (Cultural heritage and contemporary change. Series I, Culture and  
values ; v. 38)  
Includes index.  
1. Religion and culture. I. Title. II. Series.

BL65.C8M3655 200  
201'.7—dc22

2008024409  
CIP

ISBN 978-1-56518-256-1 (pbk.)

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## FOREWORD

### THE PHILOSOPHER'S CALLING

The present work, *Religion and Culture*, in many ways, sums up the long philosophical calling of George McLean. The life work of this 80 year young philosopher-hermeneut-priest provides a template for the changes that have taken place in twentieth and twenty-first century philosophical reflection, and augurs further changes still to come.

Indeed, the 200 plus volumes of the series, "Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change," of the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, provides a whole library on recent issues in Philosophy: philosophy emerging from culture, globalization, technology, the reconstruction of civil society, the clash and/or convergence of world religions, and the growing global interaction of the sacred and the secular. McLean has been not only the General Editor of this multifaceted series but also, and more importantly, mentor and motivator of the contributors, mainly young philosophers from around the world. He is the behind the scene architect and pied-piper, as well as tireless workhorse, of a global movement of "philosophies emerging from local cultures." His manner of philosophical leadership, as this volume illustrates, has had more to do with questions, research and dialogue, than with answers, arguments, and systems. He looks for resources of the spirit, and deep insight and motivation. These provide the means for enlightened, free and responsible decision making opening a path forward.

This volume mirrors some of the great changes in Philosophy and the unfolding dimensions of McLean's own approach. It exemplifies his life-long fascination, not only with western philosophy, both classical and modern, but his long involvement with Indian, Chinese and Islamic thought.

The new century has seen an intensification of cultural awareness which has generated positive interest in one's own cultural identity and hopefully mutual enrichment from other cultures. However, this new awareness, as McLean has indicated, has generated also negative and violent cultural imperialisms "which deepen the vortex of fundamentalisms, one radicalizing the other in a pattern of mutual fear, defense and rejection." These parallel but opposed fundamentalisms have influenced all forms of religious, cultural, social, political, and economic interaction. The long-range strategy of McLean's *corpus* might be summed up in the question: how might Philosophy help to elevate thought, clarify basic issues, and enable people to dialogue within and across cultures in order to work for the common good?

This is what this volume is about. Professor McLean begins by seeking an enrichment of classical objective knowledge with a new awareness of human subjectivity, self-awareness and freedom. From there he moves to a discussion of person and human consciousness as mapped

out along the path of values and virtues honed by cultures and traditions but always freely open to the attraction, at once both imminent and transcendent—to unity—and the true, the good, and the beautiful. As the road is full of potholes and contradictions which cannot be avoided, the “ultimate concern of human life” must burst forth from the dialectic of good and evil.

In this way Religion emerges as the root of cultures and traditions which each people have shaped in their own way through their own sacrifice and creativity. Nonetheless, building on Tillich and Gadamer, McLean maintains that culture and tradition should not be viewed as straightjackets, but rather blueprints for freedom and transcendence. He readily endorses Pelican’s famous quote, “Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.”

Hence digging into our traditions should not turn us in on ourselves, but rather should open to the “other” and to intercultural understanding and cooperation. A shared life of philosophy identifies basic polarities: life as good; life become destructive; and life reconciled. Metaphysics sees these as stages: essence or nature; existence; and “their reconciliation in a dynamic harmony of being.” Christians would describe this dialectic as: life as gift (paradise); life as fallen (sin/death); and new life as redeemed (resurrection).

We can only be grateful for the broad vision presented here. Professor McLean brings together whole traditions, eastern and western, and shows us a path through the battlefields of current prejudice and violence. He readily calls upon old friends to help map the arduous journey: Nicholas of Cusa, Hans Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Cornelio Fabro, Paul Tillich, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Karol Wojtyla, among others.

Philosophy is a calling to define and describe, to get to the root of the question, to interpret and bring into harmony. Most importantly, the calling includes the priestly role of mediating meaning—from gods to men and thence to God, the One. Philosopher, hermeneut, priest—George McLean fills all these roles with this volume. He is a sage guide whose philosophy both elevates thought and adds the practical dimension of contributing to the common good in this new global age.

*John P. Hogan*

## INTRODUCTION

For Cicero culture was the manner of cultivating the human soul. He reasoned that just as a field left untended becomes a useless weedpatch, so the human soul without care and education degenerates from its true dignity. In his day it was, moreover, unthinkable that this cultivation of the soul could be a merely human matter for life and culture had, of necessity, a transcendent context.

With the origin of modern times—and even as its essence—the focus of human concern shifted from God to man who became the center and norm of all things. Much indeed has been accomplished through subjecting nature and forcing it to serve human ends. The present population of the world could hardly survive without the scientific, technological, and industrial means that this focus upon human implementation has produced. Yet there are reasons to wonder whether this is now an adequate context, for all has not been well with the world. Indeed, the recent 20<sup>th</sup> century proved to be the bloodiest of them all and the violence of this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century suggests that the new millennium could be marked not by human progress but by human conflict.

The challenges here are multiple and interlocking. First, it is with the products of an increasingly broader range of peoples that we now feed and cloth ourselves, and supply our energy needs for transportation and industry. In answering these needs we have overcome the physical barrier of time and place and interact on a truly global scale. Truly we now live, and must be able to cooperate with others, on the world stage of commerce and communication.

Second and in many ways more importantly, such physical or external interaction now challenges our inner self-conscious and the self-identity we freely construct. We are born into a language and culture as a specific set of values and virtues which reflects the cumulative life experience of our people. This is a culture in Cicero's sense. Today as we interact with an ever expanding range of peoples this identity is continually buffeted by an ever expanding range of discrete cultures.

Fortunately, these cultures, and more broadly the mega civilizations they constitute, share a similar structure being layered from their more surface and diverse characteristics to their religions. These are their deepest, most penetrating self-understandings and the ultimate commitments which shape their mode of life. Hence, today, religion has become a matter of the most urgent attention as key to the ability to live together in our global times. This is no longer only a fixed body of teachings and practice taken objectively, but especially also the way these are understood and lived interiorly or subjectively, personally and socially, and engender a culture or way of life. This is the lived reality, the way people engage their environment, interact socially and respond to God, not only as origin and end, but as provident guide who motivates and enables

## 2 *Introduction*

their every action. While unique in mode to each culture, this is their shared striving to live in the image of the divine.

The concern of the present work is to study the development of religion as this understanding and living of the relation of the human to the divine. This is divided into three parts.

Part One studies the human person and the transcendent in especially objective terms. This means not stepping back from both as an impartial observer, but entering ever more deeply into human life and action to find at its root the substantial being by which persons are constituted as free and responsible. It means as well tracing the personal and social dignity of the human self to its transcendent source and goal in the absolute unity, truth and goodness which characterizes the divine.

Part two turns to the subjective order, to human consciousness. There it will be possible to follow the path of values and virtues to the formation of cultures and civilizations in which the divine appears not only as transcendent but as immanent. In this light religion can be appreciated not only as external actions, but as the internally suffused inspiration and aspirations by which all life has its meaning, stimulus and orientation. This will be examined in two chapters, the first on subjectivity as the emergence of cultures. The second on the dialectic of good and evil in which the divine is manifest not only as the ground of being, but also the life's ultimate concern.

Part three draws out the implications of the above. Its first chapter is on the origin and development, the application and deployment, of religious meaning approached in terms of culture. The second examines the way in which religious horizon provide the wholistic context needed as a paradigm for understanding in a global age. The final chapter concerns the ways in which religious dedication in response to the gift of one's life provides a paradigm also for global interaction characterized by progress and peace.



**PART I**

**THE CONJOINT DISCOVERY OF  
THE HUMAN PERSON AND GOD**



## CHAPTER I

### THE PERSON AND MORAL GROWTH

For the last half century, from John Dewey's emphasis upon socialization to the more recent emphasis upon character, education has retained one general goal, namely, not merely to provide information but to develop the integral person. Though the need for content has often required reaffirmation, the time is long passed when schools were considered to be only repositories of knowledge upon which students might draw. The ancient respect and even veneration of one's teacher as one who creatively affected the student's life and personality survives in the conviction that, along with information and even knowledge in its broadest sense, real education and character development must promote the development of the student's powers to examine and evaluate, to create and communicate, to feel and to respond.

Progress in identifying more adequate goals and in enriching the content of such moral education programs depends upon improving our understanding of the nature of moral growth. This, in turn, requires clarifying both the place of moral growth and character development in the life of the person and the nature of the person as a distinct and responsible agent in the community. Such understanding is not, of course, fabricated upon the moment, but is derived from the long experience of humankind. Hence, we should review our heritages for answers to three crucial questions about the person as the subject of a moral life and of moral education.

(a) Is the person only a set of roles constituted entirely in function of a structure or system in which one plays a particular part? If so, one could not refuse to do whatever the system demanded or tolerated. Or is the person a subject in his or her own right, with their proper dignity, heritage, goals and standards?

(b) Is there merely a stream of consciousness which becomes a person only upon the achievement of a certain level of self-awareness? If so, it becomes difficult to integrate the experiences of early childhood and the emotions of adult life which play so central a role in moral maturity. Or is the person an essentially free and responsible psychophysical and indeed metaphysical subject?

(c) Finally, does a person's freedom consist merely in implementing a pattern of behavior encoded in one's nature. If so, there would be little place for the anguish of decision, the pains of moral growth, or the creativity of a moral life. Or is this free subject a creative center whose basic dynamism consists in realizing a unique inner harmony and outer community for which moral education should contribute both form and content?

To respond to such basic concerns in a pluralistic society one must be clear about the potential dimensions of the person: what they are,<sup>1</sup> how they are rooted in our cultural heritages, how they affect the aims and methods of education, and how they can be interrelated in a mutually reinforcing manner toward the development of a more integrated person and a more cohesive society. Indeed, there might be a certain correlation of the above-mentioned questions both with the dimensions of the subject as a distinct-yet-related responsible moral agent and with the progressive development of the person throughout his or her life.

For orientation in this task we shall begin by contrasting the person to a number of other notions. These contrasts will serve subsequently as guideposts for a series of positive and progressively deepening insights regarding the nature of the person, their moral growth, and self- fulfillment.

First and most notably, persons are contrasted to possessions. We object most strongly to any suggestion whether in word, gesture, or deed by which a person is treated as a commodity subject to manipulation or as a mere means by which others attain their goals. This, indeed, has become a litmus test for acceptable behavior.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, persons are considered to be irreducible to the community. Any structures or situation which considers only the whole without taking account of the individual and his concerns is rejected precisely as depersonalizing. Thirdly and conversely, those who are so individualistic as to be insensitive to the concerns of others are themselves considered impersonal. These exclusions direct our search for the meaning of the human person toward a responsible self which is neither reducible to, nor independent of, the physical and human context in which one abides.

This positive notion of the person has not always had an identical or unchanging meaning. By natural growth, more than by mere accretion,

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<sup>1</sup> For a psychological analysis of the person see *The Psychological Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*, ed. by Richard Knowles and George F. McLean (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), other volumes in this series are *Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development: Act and Agent*, ed. by George F. McLean and F. Ellrod; *Character Development in Schools and Beyond*, ed. by Kevin Ryan and Thomas Lickona; *The Social Context and Values: Perspectives of the Americas*, ed. by O. Pegoraro; *Chinese Foundations for moral Education and Character Development*, ed. by Tran van Doan; as well as Gordon Allport, *Personality: A Psychological Study* (New York: Holt, 1948) and *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961); M. Arnold and J. Gasson, *The Human Person: An Approach to an Integral Theory of Personality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971); R. Ruddock, ed., *Six Approaches to the Person* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1972); and J. Dagenais, *Models of Man: A Phenomenological Critique of Some Paradigms in the Human Sciences* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> Some, notably those sensitive to environmental concerns, extend this to the need to promote the natural qualities of the land even in our use of it.

the notion has managed to incorporate the great achievements of human self-discovery, for which it has been both the stimulus and the goal. This continuing process has been central to philosophy from its earliest days. Like all life processes, the search for the person has consisted in a sequence of important steps, each of which has resulted in a certain equilibrium or level of culture. In time each has been enriched and molded by subsequent discoveries. Seen over time this search appears to be the very heart of our personal life.

To look into this experience it will be advantageous to study the nature of the person through reflection on a series of paired and progressively deeper dimensions: first, as a role and as the one who lives out this role; second, as free self-consciousness and as the subject of that freedom; and third, as moral agent and as searching for one's moral development and fulfillment. The first member of each pair is integral to an understanding of the human person, moral growth and character development, but it requires also the corresponding member of that pair and evokes the pair on the next and deeper level.

## ROLE AND INDIVIDUAL

### *Role*

One means for finding the earliest meaning of a particular notion is to study the term by which it is designated. As earliest, this meaning tends to be more manifest and hence to remain current. The major study<sup>3</sup> on the origins of the term 'person' concludes that, of the multiple origins which have been proposed, the most probable refers to the mask used by actors in Greece and subsequently adopted in Rome. Some explain that this was called a '*persona*' because by 'sounding through' (*per-sonando*)<sup>4</sup> its single hole the voice of the wearer was strengthened, concentrated, and made to resound clearly. Others see the term as a transformation of the Greek term for the mask which symbolized the actor's role.<sup>5</sup> Hence, an original and relatively surface notion of person is the assumption of a character or the carrying out of a role. As such it has little to do with one's self; it is defined

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<sup>3</sup> Adolf Trendelenburg "A Contribution to the History of the Word Person", *The Monist* 20 (1910) 336-359. This posthumously published work is now over 100 years old. See also "Persona" in *Collected Works of F. Max Muller* (London, 1912), vol. X pp. 32 and 47; and Arthur C. Danto, "Persons" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), vol. VI, pp. 110-114.

<sup>4</sup> This was pointed out by Gabius Bassus. See Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* V, 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Prosopeion*. This explanation was given by Forcellini (1688-1769), cf. Trendelenburg, p. 340.

rather in terms of the set of relations which constitutes the plot or story-line of a play.

This etymology is tentative; some would document an earlier and more rich sense of person in Homeric literature.<sup>6</sup> There can be no doubt, however, that the term has been used broadly in the above ethical sense of a role played in human actions. Ancient biblical literature described God as not being a respecter of persons, that is, of the roles played by various individuals.<sup>7</sup> The Stoics thought of this in cosmic terms, seeing the wise person either as writing their role or as interpreting a role determined by the Master. In either case, to be a wise person was to be consistent, to play out one's role in harmony with oneself and with reason as the universal law of nature. From this ethical sense of person as role it was but a short step to a similar legal sense. This generally is a distinct and characteristic relation, although, as Cicero noted, it could be multiple: "Three roles do I sustain . . . my own, that of my opponent, that of the judge."<sup>8</sup>

Far from being archaic,<sup>9</sup> the understanding of person as the playing of a role seems typical of much modern and American thought. John Dewey in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* characterized the essence of the modern mentality in just these terms: in the case of ancient or classic usage "we are dealing with something constant in existence, physical or metaphysical; in the other [modern] case, with something constant in function and operation."<sup>10</sup> The social and psychological sciences focus upon these roles or functions and in these terms attempt to construct, through operational definitions, their entire conceptual field.

This undergirds much of the progress in the social and behavioral sciences. As the same individual can play multiple roles, even in the same circumstances, studying the person in terms of roles makes it possible to identify specific dimensions of one's life for more precise investigation and to analyze serially the multiple relations which obtain in an interpersonal situation. William James, for example, distinguishes in this manner the self shown to family from that which one shows to professional colleagues or to God. Further, determining to pursue this exclusively on the basis of data

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<sup>6</sup> C. J. De Vogel, "The Concept of Personality in Greek and Christian Thought", *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, ed. John K. Ryan (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), II, 20-60.

<sup>7</sup> "That accepteth not the persons of princes", *Job* 3 and 4:19. See also *Deut* 10:17; *Acts* 10:34-35; *Rom* 2:10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis* I, 28 and 31; *De Orator* II, 102; and Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> A. Danto. See n. 2 above.

<sup>10</sup> (Boston: Beacon, 1957), p. 61.

which is subject to empirical verification<sup>11</sup> has made possible an immense collaborative effort to achieve a scientific understanding of human life.

Though much has been accomplished through understanding the person in terms of roles, there may have been a distant early warning of the limitations of this approach in Auguste Comte's (1798-1857) *Cours de philosophie positive*. By rejecting psychology as a scientific discipline and reducing all data concerning the person to either biology or sociology he ignored introspection and the corresponding dimensions of the individual's conscious life. The person was not only one who could play a role, but one whose total reality consisted in playing that role.

More recently Gabriel Marcel has pointed up a number of unfortunate consequences which derive from considering the person only in terms of roles or functional relations. For in that case no account can be taken of one's proper self-identity. If only "surface" characteristics are considered, while excluding all attention to "depth",<sup>12</sup> then the person is empty; if the person can be analyzed fully in terms of external causes and relations it becomes increasingly devoid of intrinsic value. What is more, lack of personal identity makes it impossible to establish personal relations with others. Even that consistency between, or within, one's roles—which the Stoics as early proponents of this understanding of person considered to be the essence of a personal life—is left without foundation. Life could be reduced "in the words of Shakespeare 'to a tale told by an idiot'".<sup>13</sup>

### *The Individual*

These difficulties suggest that attention must be directed to another level of meaning if the person is to find the resources required to play its roles. Rather than attempting to think of a role without an actor, it is important to look to the individual who assumes the role and expresses him or herself therein. Caution must be exercised here, however, lest the search for the subject or the self appear to reinforce the excesses of self-centeredness and individualism. This could be a special danger in the context of cultures whose positive stress on self-reliance and independence has been rooted historically in an atomistic understanding of individuals as single, unrelated entities. This danger is reflected, for example, in the common law understanding of judicial rulings, not as defining the nature of

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<sup>11</sup> Rudolf Carnap, Hans Hahn, and Otto Neurath, "The Scientific World View: The Vienna Manifesto", trans. A. E. Blumberg, in *Perspectives in Reality*, eds. J. Mann and G. Kreyche (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 483.

<sup>12</sup> R. Carnap *et al*, *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung: Der Wiener Kreis*, ch. 2, trans. A.E. Blumberg, in J. Mann and G. Kreyche, *Perspectives on Reality* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), pp. 483-87.

<sup>13</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: Citadel Press, 1956), p. 14.

interpersonal relations, but simply as resolving conflicts between individuals whose lives happen to have intersected.

In this context it is helpful to note that when Aristotle laid the foundations for the Western understanding of the person he did so in the context of the Greek understanding of the physical universe as a unified, dynamic, quasi-life process in which all was included and all were related. Indeed, the term 'physical' was derived from the term for growth and the components of this process were seen always with, and in relation to, the others. (Similarly, modern physical theory identifies a uniform and all-inclusive pattern of relations such that any physical displacement, no matter how small, affects all other bodies). Within this unified pattern of relations the identification of multiple individuals, far from being destructive of unity, provides the texture required for personal life. Where individuals are differentiated by the moral tenor of their actions which in turn make a difference to other persons, distinctiveness becomes, not an impediment to, but a principle of, community.<sup>14</sup>

In order better to appreciate the members of a community it is helpful to consider them on three progressively more specific dimensions, first as instances of a particular type, that is, as substances; secondly as existing, that is, as subsisting individuals; and thirdly as self-conscious, that is, as persons. The order in which these three will be considered is not accidental, for while it is necessary to be of a certain definite type, it is more important to exist as an individual in one's own right; for the person, finally, it is important above all that one be self-conscious and free. Hence, our exposition begins with substance and the subsisting individual in order to identify some general and basic—though not specific or exclusive—characteristics of the person, whose distinctive self-awareness and freedom will be treated in the following sections.

1. *Substance*. It was Aristotle who identified substance as the basic component of the physical order; his related insights remain fundamental to understanding the individual as the subject of moral life. His clue to this first discovery appears in language. Comparing the usage of such terms as "running," and "runner" we find that the first is applied to the second, which in turn, however, is not said of anything else.<sup>15</sup> Thus, one may say of Mary that she is running, but one may not say that she is another person, e.g., John. This suggests the need to distinguish things that can be realized only in another (as running is had only in a runner) whence they derive their identity, from those which have their identity in their own right (e.g., John, the runner). A first and basic characteristic of the moral subject, and indeed of any substance, is that it have its identity in its own right rather than through another; only thus could a human being be responsible for one's

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<sup>14</sup> See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper, 1959); Wilfrid Desan, *The Planetary Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1961).

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I, 4 73 a 3-b 25.



action. Without substances with their distinct identities one could envisage only a structure of ideals and values inhabited, as it were, by agents. In this light the task of moral education would be merely to enable one to judge correctly according to progressively higher ideals. This, indeed, would seem to be the implicit context of Kohlberg's focus upon moral dilemmas which, as seen earlier in this volume, omits not only the other dimensions of moral development but this personal identity as well. Aristotle points instead to a world of persons realizing values in their actions. In their complex reality of body, affections and mind they act morally and are the subjects of moral education. (See W. Kirkpatrick in R. Knowles, ed., *The Psychological Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*.)

Secondly, as the basic building blocks in the constitution of a world, these individuals are not merely undetermined masses. As the basic points of reference in discourse and the bases for the intelligibility for the real world these individual components must possess some essential determinateness, they must be of one or another kind or form. The individual, then, is not simply one thing rather than any other; he or she is a being of a definite—in this case, a human—kind,<sup>16</sup> relating to other beings each with its own nature or kind. Only thus can one's life in the universe have sense and be able to be valued.

Thirdly, being of a definite kind the individual has its own proper characteristics and is able to realize a specific or typical set of activities. These activities derive from, or are "born of" (from the latin, *natus*), the specific nature of the thing. The determination of what activity is moral will need to include not only the good to be derived from the action, but respect for the agent and his or her nature.

In the search for the subject of moral education, the work of Aristotle has made an essential contribution by directing our attention to three factors, namely: (a) individual beings, (b) who are particular instances of a definite kind, and hence (c) capable of specific types of activities. It should be noted that all three are concerned with the kind or type of the agent.<sup>17</sup> This is important, but it is not enough for moral education. One can know well enough what kind of thing a unicorn is but, as none has ever existed, they have never acted or entered the field of activity in which morality is found. Similarly, one might know what kind of musician is needed in order to complete an orchestra, but this does not mean that one is available to be engaged for a concert. In sum, in order to consider the field of moral action it is important to take account not only of the nature or kind of agent involved, but also of his or her existence and actions.

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<sup>16</sup> René Claix "La statut ontologique du concept de sujet selon le metaphysique d'Aristot. L'aporie de *Metaphy.* VII (Z) 3," *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 59 (61), 29.

<sup>17</sup> *Metaphysics* VII 4-7.

2. *Subsisting Individual*. Something of the greatest importance was bound to take place, therefore, when the mind expanded its range of awareness beyond the nature of things to what Shakespeare was to call the question: "to be or not to be." At that point the mind became able to take explicit account not only of the kind, but of the existence of the individual, by which it is constituted in the order of actual, and hence of acting, beings.

From this there followed a series of basic implications for the reality of person. It would no longer be considered as simply the relatively placid distinct or autonomous instance of some specific type. Rather, it would be understood in a much more dynamic manner as existing. This means not only being in its own right or, as it were, 'standing on its own two feet' (subsisting), but bursting in among the realities of this world as a new and active center (existing). This understanding incorporates all the above-mentioned characteristics of the individual substance, and adds three more which are proper to existence, namely, being complete, independent, and dynamically open to actions and to new actualization. Since existing or subsisting individuals include not only persons but rocks and trees, however, these characteristics, though fundamental, still will not be exclusive to the person.

First, a person must be whole or complete. As regards its nature it must have all that is required to be of its distinctive kind, just as by definition a three digit number cannot be made up of two digits. Hence, if humans are recognized to be by nature both body and mind or body and soul, then the human mind or soul without the body would be neither a subsisting individual nor by implication a person, for it would lack a complete human nature. This is of special importance in view of the tendency of some to reduce the human person to only the mind, soul, or consciousness or to consider the person to be adequately protected if these alone are cared for. In fact the essential inclusion of body in the human person is as central to education as it is to human rights. The same, of course, is no less true of the mind or spirit in view of the tendency of others described by William James<sup>18</sup> to reduce the person to "nothing but" the inert by-products of physiology or functions of the structure of production and distribution of goods.

Further, the existing individual requires not merely a complete nature, but his or her proper existence. As existing, the individual is not merely an instance of a specific nature or kind, but a concrete reality asserting oneself and dynamically struggling to achieve one's fulfillment. In the person this goes beyond merely walking a course whose every step is already charted; it includes all the unique, fully individual choices by which a life is lived. It is subject then to combinations of the precarious and the stable, of tragedy and triumph in its self-realization. These were described

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<sup>18</sup> William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), ch. I.

by the American pragmatists and Continental existentialists as the very stuff of life, and hence by Dewey as the very stuff of education.

Secondly, as subsistent the person is independent. Being complete in its nature it is numerically individual and distinct from all else. In accord with this individual nature, one's existence is, in turn, unique, and establishes the subject as a being in its own right, independent of all else. This, of course, does not imply that the human or other living subject does not need nourishment, or that it was not generated by another: people do need people and much else besides. There is no question here of being self-sufficient or absolute. What is meant by independence is that the needs it has and the actions it performs are truly its own.

In turn, this means that in interacting with other subsistent individuals one's own contribution is distinctive and unique. This is commonly recognized at those special times when the presence of a mother, father, or special friend is required, and no one else will do. At other times as well, even when as a bus driver or a dentist I perform a standard service, my actions remain properly my own. This understanding is a prerequisite for education to responsibility in public as in private life. It is a condition too for overcoming depersonalization in a society in which we must fulfill ever more specialized and standardized roles.

Another dimension of this independence is that the human person as subsisting cannot simply be absorbed or assimilated by another. As complete in oneself one cannot be part of another, for as independent in existence one is distinct from all else. Hence, one cannot be assumed or taken up by any other person or group in such wise as to lose one's identity. In recent years awareness of this characteristic has generated a strong reaction against the tendencies of mass society totally to absorb the person and to reduce all to mere functions in a larger whole called the state, the industrial complex, or the consumer society.

As noted above it is perhaps the special challenge of the present day, however, to keep this awareness of one's distinctive independence from degenerating into selfishness, to keep individuality from becoming individualism. The individual existent, seen as sculpted out of the flow and process of the physical universe, cannot be rightly thought of as isolated. Such an existent is always with others, depending on them for birth, sustenance and expression. In this context, to be distinct or individual is not to be isolated or cut off, but to be able to relate more precisely and intensively to others. My relation to the chair upon which I sit and the desk upon which I write is not diminished but made possible by the distinction and independence of the three of us. Their retention of their distinctness and distinctive shapes enables me to integrate them into my task of writing. Because I depend still more intimately upon food, I must correlate more carefully its distinctive characteristics with my precise needs and capacities. On the genetic level it is the careful choice of distinctive strains that enables the development of a new individual with the desired characteristics. On the social level the more personable the members of the

group the greater and more intense is its unity. Moving thus from instruments such as desks, to alimentation, to lineage, to society suggests that as one moves upward through the levels of beings' distinctness, far from being antithetic to community, is in fact its basis. This gives hope that at its higher reaches, namely, in the moral life, the distinctiveness of autonomy and freedom may not need to be compromised, but may indeed be the basis for a community of persons bound together in mutual love and respect.

The third characteristic of the subsistent individual to be considered is this openness to new actualization and to interrelation with others. The existence by which one erupted into this world of related subjects is not simply self-contained; it is expressed in a complex symphony of actions which are properly one's own: thus, running can be said only of an existing individual, such as Mary, who runs. What is more, actions determine their subject, for it is only by running that Mary herself is constituted precisely as a runner. This will be central to the last part of this study: the person as moral agent.

It is important too for our relations to and with others. For the actions into which our existence flows, while no less our own, reach beyond ourselves. The same action which makes us agents shapes the world around us and, for good or ill, communicates to others. All the plots of all the stories ever told are about this; but their number pales in comparison with all the lives ever lived, each of which is a history of personal interactions.<sup>19</sup> The actions of an individual existent reflect one's individuality with its multiple possibilities, and express this to and with others. It is in this situation of dynamic openness,<sup>20</sup> of communication and of community that the moral growth of persons takes place. As subsistent therefore the person is characteristically a being, not only in oneself, but *with* other beings. About this more must be said below.

To summarize: thus far we have seen the early derivation of the notion of person from mask. For this to evolve into the contemporary notion of person a strong awareness both of the nature and of the existence of independent individuals needed to be developed. The first was achieved by the Greeks who identified within the one physical process basically different types of things. Substances are the individual instances of these specific types or natures. This provides the basis for consciousness of one's own nature and for relating to others in its terms within the overall pattern of nature(s).

There were limitations to such a project, for in its terms alone one would be ultimately but an instance of one's nature; in the final analysis the goal of a physical being would be but to continue one's species through

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<sup>19</sup> See also Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 181ff.

<sup>20</sup> Gabriel Pastrana, "Personhood and the Burgeoning of Human Life", *Thomist*, 41 (1977), 287-290.

time. This was true for the Greeks and may still be a sufficient basis for the issues considered in sociobiology. It does not allow for adequate attention to the person's unique and independent reality. This required the subsequent development of an awareness of existence as distinct from nature or essence, as that by which one enters into the world and is constituted as a being in one's own right. On this basis the subsisting individual can be seen to be whole and independent, and hence the dynamic center of action in this world.

Still more is required, however; for the above characteristics, while foundational for a person, are had as well by animals and trees. These too, each in their own ways, are wholes that are independent and active in this world. In addition to the above realities of substance and of subsisting individuals, therefore, it is necessary to identify that which is distinctive of the human subsistent and constitutes it finally as personal, namely, self-consciousness and freedom.

### **THE PERSON: A SELF-CONSCIOUS AND FREE SUBJECT**

Self-consciousness and will had been central to philosophies of the person in classical times; indeed, at one point Augustine claimed that men were nothing else than will. After Descartes' reformulation of metaphysics in terms of the thinking self, however, the focus upon self-consciousness by John Locke and upon the will by Kant brought the awareness of these distinctive characteristics of the person to a new level of intensity and exclusivity. This constituted a qualitatively new and distinctively modern understanding of the person. It is necessary to see in what these characteristics consist and how they relate to the subsisting individual analyzed above.

#### *Self-Consciousness and Freedom*

John Locke undertook to identify the nature of the person within the context of his general effort to provide an understanding which would enable people to cooperate in building a viable political order. This concentration upon the mind is typical of modern thought and of its contribution to our appreciation of the person. By focusing upon knowledge Locke proceeded to elaborate, not only consciousness in terms of the person, but the person in terms of consciousness. He considered personal identity to be a complex notion composed from the many simple ideas which constitute our consciousness. By reflection we perceive that we perceive and thereby are able to be, as it were, present to ourselves and to recognize ourselves as distinct from all other thinking things.<sup>21</sup> Memory, which is also

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<sup>21</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, ch. 27, n. 11 and 9-10, ed. A. C. Grassier (New York: Dover, 1959), Vol. I, 448-

an act of consciousness, enables us to recognize these acts of consciousness in different times and places. Locke saw the memory, by uniting present acts of awareness with similar past acts, as not merely discovering but as creating personal identity. This binding of myself as past consciousness to myself as present consciousness constitutes the continuing reality of the person. Essentially, it is a private matter revealed directly only to oneself, and only indirectly to other persons.

Because Locke's concern for knowledge was part of his overriding concern to find a way to build social unity in a divided country he saw his notion of the self as the basis of an ethic for both private and public life. As conscious of pleasure and pain the self is capable of happiness or misery, "and so is concerned for itself".<sup>22</sup> What is more, happiness and misery matter only inasmuch as they enter one's self-consciousness as a matter of self-concern directing one's activities. He sees the pattern of public morality, with its elements of justice as rewarding a prior good act by happiness and as punishing an evil act by misery, to be founded upon this identity of the self as a continuing consciousness from the time of the act to that of the reward or punishment. 'Person' is the public name of this self as open to public judgment and social response; it is "a forensic term appropriating actions and their merit".<sup>23</sup>

This early attempt to delineate the person on the basis of consciousness locates a number of factors essential for personhood such as the importance of self-awareness, the ability to be concerned for oneself, and the basis this provides for the notions of responsibility and public accountability. These are the foundations of Locke's *Letters Concerning Toleration* which were to be of such great importance in the development of subsequent social and political structures in many parts of the world.

There are reasons to believe, however, that, while correct in focusing upon consciousness, he did not push his analysis far enough to integrate the whole person. Leibniz, in his *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, was quick to point out some of these reasons in a detailed response. Centering personal identity in consciousness, Locke distinguished it from the notion of the person as that which could be identified by a body of a particular shape. This led him to admit that it is conceivable that the one consciousness, self or person could exist in different bodies a thousand years remote one from another<sup>24</sup> or, conversely, that multiple selves could inhabit the same body.

This is more than an issue of "names ill-used";<sup>25</sup> it is symptomatic of the whole cluster of problems which derive from isolating human

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452. The person is "a thinking, intelligent being, that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself."

<sup>22</sup> *Essay*, n. 17.

<sup>23</sup> *Essay*, nn. 18 and 26.

<sup>24</sup> *Essay*, n. 20.

<sup>25</sup> *Essay*, n. 29.

consciousness from the physical identity of the human self. These include problems not only regarding communication with other persons for which one depends upon physical signs, but regarding the life of the person in a physical world in whose unity and harmony one's consciousness has no real share, and indeed in contrast to which it is defined.<sup>26</sup> Recently, existential phenomenologists have begun to respond to the perverse, desiccating effect this has had even upon consciousness itself, while environmentalists have pointed up the destruction it has wrought upon nature.

This implies a problem for personal identity itself. Locke would claim that this resides in the continuity established by linking the past with the present in one's memory.<sup>27</sup> But, as there is no awareness of a substantial self from which this consciousness proceeds,<sup>28</sup> what remains is but a sequence of perceptions or a flow of consciousness recorded by memory.

Finally, Leibniz would question Locke's claim to have provided even that public or forensic notion of the self by which he sought to provide a sufficient basis for legal and political relations. Memory can deal with the past and the present, but not with the future; whereas planning and providing for the future is the main task of a rationally ordered society. Further, Locke's conclusion, that since the self is consciousness the same self could inhabit many bodies of different appearances, would undermine the value of public testimony, and thereby the administration of justice.<sup>29</sup> Though self-consciousness is certainly central and distinctive of the person, more is required for personhood than a sequence of consciousness, past and present.

Another approach was attempted by Kant whose identification of the salient characteristics of the person has become a standard component for modern sensitivity. Whereas Locke had developed the notion of the person in terms of consciousness predicated upon experience, Kant developed it on the requirements of an ethics based upon will alone. Both the strengths and the weaknesses of this approach to the person lie in his effort to lay for ethics a foundation that is independent of experience. He did so because he considered human knowledge to be essentially limited to the spatial and temporal orders and unable to explain its own presuppositions. Whatever be thought of this, by looking within the self for a new and absolute beginning he led the modern mind to a new awareness of the reality and nature of the person.

For Kant the person is above all free, both in oneself and in relation to others; in no sense is the person to be used by others as a means. From

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<sup>26</sup> G. W. Leibniz *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. II, ch. 27, 9, trans. A. G. Langley (Chicago: Open Court, 1916).

<sup>27</sup> Locke, *Essay*, ch. 27, n. 15.

<sup>28</sup> Leibniz, *New Essays*, II, ch. 27, n. 14. This consequence was recognized and accepted by Hume who proceeded to dispense with the notion of substance altogether.

<sup>29</sup> *New Essays*, nn. 20-66.

this he concluded that it is essential to avoid any dependence (heteronomy) on anything beyond oneself and, within oneself, on anything other than one's own will. The fundamental thrust of that will is its unconditional command to act lawfully; this must be the sole basis for an ethics worthy of man. In turn, "the only presupposition under which . . . (the categorical imperative) is alone possible . . . is the Idea of freedom."<sup>30</sup> As free the person must not be legislated to by anyone or on the basis of anything else; to avoid heteronomy one must be an end-in-oneself. It was Kant's self-described goal to awaken interest in the moral law through this "glorious ideal" of a universal realm of persons as ends-in-themselves (rational beings).<sup>31</sup> The person, then, is not merely independent, as is any subject; he is a law-making member of society. This means that the person has, not only value which is to be protected and promoted, but true dignity as well, for he is freely bound by and obeys laws which he gives to himself.<sup>32</sup> As this humanity is to be respected both in oneself and in all others one must act in such wise that if one's actions were to constitute a universal law they would promote a cohesive life for all rational agents.

This "glorious ideal" has been perhaps the major contribution to the formation of our modern understanding of ourselves as persons. At the minimum, it draws a line against what is unacceptable, namely, whatever is contrary to the person as an end-in-him-or-herself, and sets thereby a much needed minimal standard for action. At the maximum, as with most *a priori* positions, it expresses an ideal for growth by pointing out the direction, and thereby providing orientation, for the development of the person. In Kohlberg's schema of moral development it constitutes the sixth or highest stage, and hence the sense and goal of his whole project—though he notes rightly that this is not an empirically available notion.

Further, this bespeaks a certain absoluteness of the individual will which is essential if the person is not to be subject to domination by the circumstances he encounters. If one must be more than a mere function of one's environment—whether this be one's state, or business, or neighborhood—then Kant has made a truly life-saving observation in noting that the law of the will must extend beyond any one good or particular set of goods.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to think that still more is needed for an understanding of the person. In Part I of his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant correctly rules out anything other than, or heteronomous to, human freedom and will as an adequate basis for ethics, at least as far as using one's own ability to think and to decide are concerned. Nor does he omit the fact that these individuals live their lives with others in this world. As the good is mediated by their concrete goods,

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<sup>30</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, III, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), p. 80.

<sup>31</sup> *Foundations*, III, p. 82.

<sup>32</sup> *Foundations*, II, pp. 53-59.



however, a role for experience must be recognized if right reason is to conform to the real good in things. Further, there is need to know more of the reality of the person in order to understand, (a) not only how will and freedom provide the basis for ethical behavior, but (b) by what standards or values behavior can be judged to be ethical and (c) how ethical behavior is integral to the project of the person's self-realization. (Various facets of this are treated in all the chapters above.) Something more than a postulation of freedom (along with the immortality of the soul and God) is essential to enable the development of the person to be guided throughout by his "glorious ideal".

In sum, Locke and Kant have contributed essentially to delineating the nature of the person for the modern mind. Both have pointed up that which distinguishes the person from other subjects. Focusing upon knowledge, Locke showed the person to be an identity of continuing consciousness which is self-aware and "concerned for itself". Focusing upon the will and its freedom, Kant showed the person to be an end-in-itself.

By attending directly to consciousness and freedom, however, both left out problems which are similar and of great importance to the present project. The first regards the way in which consciousness and freedom are realized in the person as a unique identity with a proper place in society and indeed in reality as a whole. It is true, as Locke says, that the term person expresses self-awareness and continuing consciousness, as well as its status in the public forum. But, for moral education one needs more than an isolated view of that which is most distinctive of man; one needs to know what the person is in his or her entirety, how one is able to stand among other persons as a subject, and how in freedom one is to undertake one's rightful responsibilities. One educates not consciousness or freedom, but conscious and free subjects or persons. Further, it is necessary to understand the basis of the private as well as the public life of the person, for one is more than a role, more than a citizen, or a function of state. The second problem regards the way in which the person can attain his goal of full self-awareness, freedom, and responsibility, namely, how the person can achieve his or her fulfillment through time and with others.

In sum, what Locke and Kant discovered about the person by considering self-awareness for the political arena, or in the abstract, needs now to be integrated with what was seen regarding the individual in Part I in order to constitute the integral person as a rational and free subject.

### *The Self Conscious and Free Subject*

While it has been said that ancient thinkers had no concept of the person, a very important study by Catherine De Vogel<sup>33</sup> has shown that there was indeed a significant sense of person and of personality among the ancient Greeks and Romans, as well as a search for its conditions and

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<sup>33</sup> C. J. De Vogel, 20-60.

possibilities. It will be helpful to look at this in order to identify some of the cultural resources for understanding the way in which self-consciousness and freedom are rooted in the subject and constitute the person with which moral education is concerned. Above, we saw a certain progression from the Greek philosophical notion of the individual as an instance of a general type to a more ample existential sense of the subject as an independent whole, which nonetheless shares with others in the same specific nature. It is time now to see how this relates to self-consciousness and freedom.

The Greeks had a certain sense for, and even fascination with, individuals in the process of grappling with the challenge to live their freedom. T.B.L. Webster notes that "Homer was particularly interested in them (his heroes) when they took difficult decisions or exhibited characteristics which were not contained in the traditional picture of the fighting man."<sup>34</sup> In the final analysis, however, the destiny of his heroes was determined by fate, from which even Zeus could not free them. Hence, an immense project of liberation was needed in order to appreciate adequately the full freedom of the moral agent.

This required establishing: (a) that the universe is ruled by law, (b) that a person could have access to this law through reason, and (c) that the person has command of his relation to this law. These elements were developed by Heraclitus around 500 B.C. He saw that the diverse physical forces could not achieve the equilibrium required in order to constitute a universe without something which is one. This cosmic, divine law or Logos is the ruling principle of the coherence of all things, not only in the physical, but in the moral and social orders. A person can assume the direction of his life by correcting his understanding and determining his civil laws and actions according to the Logos, which is at once divine law and nature. In this lies wisdom.<sup>35</sup>

This project has two characteristics, namely, self-reflection and self-determination. First, as the law or Logos is not remote, but within man—"The soul has a Logos within it"<sup>36</sup>—the search for the Logos is also a search for oneself: "I began to search for myself."<sup>37</sup> Self-reflection is then central to wisdom. Second, the attainment of wisdom requires on the part of man a deliberate choice to follow the universal law. This implies a process of interior development by which the Logos which is within "increases itself".<sup>38</sup>

A similar pattern of thought is found in the Stoic philosophers for whom there is a principle of rationality or "germ of logos" of which the

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<sup>34</sup> T.B.L. Webster, *Greek Art and Literature, 700-530 B.C.* (London, 1959), pp. 24-45 (cited by C. De Vogel, p. 27, fn. 17a).

<sup>35</sup> Heraclitus, fgs. 2, 8, 51, 112 and 114 (trans. by C. De Vogel).

<sup>36</sup> Heraclitus, fg. 115 (trans. by C. De Vogel, p. 31). See also fg. 45.

<sup>37</sup> Heraclitus, fg. 101 (trans. by C. De Vogel, p. 31).

<sup>38</sup> Heraclitus, fg. 115 (trans. by C. De Vogel, p. 31).

soul is part, and which develops by natural growth.<sup>39</sup> A personal act is required to choose voluntarily the law of nature, which is also the divine will.

These insights of Heraclitus, though among the earliest of the philosophers, were pregnant with a number of themes which correspond to Kant's three postulates for the ethical life: the immortality of the soul, freedom and God. The first of these would be mined by subsequent thinkers in their effort to explore the nature of the person as a physical subject that is characteristically self-conscious and free. The implications of Heraclitus' insight that the multiple and diverse can constitute a unity only on the basis of something that is one gradually became evident, binding the personal characteristics of self-consciousness and freedom to the subject with its characteristics of wholeness, independence and interrelatedness. The first step was Plato's structure for integrating the multiple instances of a species by their imitation of, or participation in, the idea or archetype of that species.<sup>40</sup> This, in turn, images still higher and more central ideas, and ultimately the highest idea which is inevitably the Good or the One.

Aristotle took the second step by applying the same principle to the internal structure of living beings. He concluded that the unity of their disparate components could be explained only by something one, which he termed the soul or *psyche*, whence the term 'psychology.' The body is organized by this form which he described as "the first grade of actuality of a natural body having life potentially in it."<sup>41</sup> For Aristotle, however, the unifying principle of a physical subject could not be also the principle of man's higher mental life, his life of reason. Hence, there remained the need to understand the person as integrating self-consciousness and freedom in a subject which is nonetheless physical.

Over one-thousand years later Thomas Aquinas took this third step, drawing out of Heraclitus' insight its implications for the unity of the person with its full range of physical and mental life. He did not trace the physical to one form or soul and the higher conscious life to another principle existing separately from the body as had the Aristotelian commentators, nor did he affirm two separate souls as did Bonaventure. Rather, Thomas showed that there could be but one principle or soul for the entire person, both mind and body. He did this by rigorously carrying out under the principle of non-contradiction the implications of the existence of the subject noted above. One subject could have but one existence—lest it be not one but two. This existence in turn could pertain to but one essence or nature, again lest it be and not be of that nature; and for the same reason the one essence could be of but one form. Hence, there could be only one formal principle or soul for both the physical and the free self-conscious dimensions of a person. This rendered obsolete Aristotle's

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<sup>39</sup> Diog. L. VII 136; Marcus Aurelius IV 14, VI 24.

<sup>40</sup> Plato, *Republic* 476, 509-511: *mimesis*.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* II, 2 412 a 28-29.

duality of these principles for man and founded the essential and integral humanness of both mind and body in the unity of the one person.<sup>42</sup>

This progression of steps leading to the one principle, which enables that which is complex to constitute nonetheless a unity, points, in the person, to the one form which is commonly called the soul. By this single formal principle what Locke articulated only as a disembodied consciousness and Kant as an autonomous will are able to exist as a properly human subject. This is physical truly but not exclusively, for it transcends the physical to include also self-consciousness and freedom. Similarly, it exists in its own right, yet does so in such wise that it exists essentially with others as a person in society.

There are pervasive implications for education in such an integration of the physical with the self-conscious dimensions of the person through a single principle. One does not become a person when one is accepted by society; on the contrary, by the form through which one is a person one is an autonomous end-in-oneself and has claim to be responded to as such by others. Hence, though for his or her human development the person has a unique need for acceptance, respect and love, the withholding of such acceptance by others—whether individuals, families or states—does not deprive them of their personhood. One does not have to be accepted in order to have a claim to acceptance. (Hence, even in circumstances of correction and punishment, when a person's actions are being explicitly repudiated, he cannot be treated as a mere thing.) The right to an education is based within the person who has claims or human rights which must be responded to by family and society.

Similarly, it is not necessary that the person manifest in overt behavior signs of self-awareness and responsibility. From genetic origin and physical form it is known that the infant and young child is an individual human developing according to a single unifying and integrating principle of both its physical and its rational life.<sup>43</sup> The rights and the

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<sup>42</sup> George F. McLean "Philosophy and Technology", in *Philosophy in a Technological Culture*, ed. G. McLean (Washington: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1964), pp. 14-15. The same Heraclitean line of reasoning is reflected by recent structuralist insights regarding the need which structures have for a single coordinating principle. Inasmuch as the structure is continually undergoing transformation and being established on new and broader levels this principle must be beyond any of the contrary characteristics or concepts to be integrated within the structure. It must be unique and comprehensive in order to be able to ground and to integrate them all. Jean Piaget, *Structuralism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 139-142. Cf. also George F. McLean *Plenitude and Participation* (Madras: Univ. of Madras, 1978), pp. 12-15.

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed consideration of the first weeks after conception and of the point at which an individual life is clearly present see Andre E. Helligers, "The Beginnings of Personhood: Medical Consideration", *The Perkins School*

protection of a human person belong to a person by right prior to an ability consciously to conceive or to articulate them. Further, the physical actions of young children through which they express themselves in their own way and respond to others are truly human. Indeed, though the earlier the stage in life the more physical the manner of receiving and expressing affection, the earliest months and years appear to be the most determinative of one's lifetime ability to relate to others with love and affection.

Finally, attempts to modify the behavior of a person must proceed according to distinctively human norms if they are not to be destructive. Despite at earlier life stages greater operational similarities to some animals, only by an abstraction can infants and very young children be said to be small animals. They are, in fact, human persons and integrally so in each of their human actions and interactions. Not to attend to this is to fail to realize who in fact is being educated to the detriment and dishonor of both the person and the educative process.

There is a second insight of great potential importance in the thought of Heraclitus. When he refers to the Logos<sup>44</sup> as being very deep he suggests multiple dimensions of the soul. Indeed, it must be so if human life is complex and its diverse dimensions have their principle in the one soul. Plato thought of these as parts of the soul; in these terms the development of oneself as a person would consist in bringing these parts into proper subordination one to another. This state is called justice, the "virtue of the soul".<sup>45</sup> Both the *Republic* and the *Laws* reflect amply his concern for education, character formation, and personal development understood as the process of attaining that state of justice. The way to this is progressive liberation from captivity by the objects of sense knowledge and sense desires through spiritual training, as described in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. All this prepares the way for what is essential, namely, the contemplation of the transcendent Good. This alone establishes that inner harmony of soul through which the person is constituted as free and responsible, both in principle and in act. Because this vision, not only of some goods, but of the transcendent Good, cannot be communicated by teaching but remains "an extremely personal interior vision",<sup>46</sup> the uncalculating and unmeasured love shared in family, Church and other communities has special importance for moral education.

By the human form or soul the human individual as a person is open in principle, not only to particular states of affairs or events, but to the one source, logos and goal of all. Through this, in turn, one is able to take account of the full meaning of each thing and freely to relate oneself to

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of *Theology Journal*, 27 (1973) 11-15; and C. R. Austin, "The Egg and Fertilization", in *Science Journal*, 6 [special issue] (1970).

<sup>44</sup> Heraclitus, fg. 45.

<sup>45</sup> Plato, *Republic* I 353 c-d; and IV 43 d-e, 435 b-c, and 441 e, 442 d.

<sup>46</sup> *Republic* VI 609 c. See De Vogel, pp. 33-35.

others in the coordinating virtue of philanthropia, the love of all mankind.<sup>47</sup> As it is of foundational importance for a truly moral life to have not merely access to some goods, but an ability to evaluate them in terms of the Good, the form or soul as the single organizing and vivifying principle of the person is the real foundation for the person as an end in oneself.

Correlatively, recent thought has made crucial strides toward reintegrating the person in one's world. The analytic process of identifying the components of the world process initiated by the Greeks was inherently risky, for any imperfection in the understanding of personal identity would distract from grounding the person in the One. Cumulatively, the intensive modern concentration upon freedom in terms of self-consciousness would generate an isolating and alienating concentration upon self.<sup>48</sup>

Some developments in recent thought have made important contributions to correcting this individualist—even potentially solipsist-bias. One is the attention recently paid to language and to the linguistic character of the person. Our consciousness is not only evoked, but shaped, by the pattern of the language in which we are nurtured. In our highly literate culture—many would say in all cultures—the work of the imagination which accompanies and facilitates that of the intellect is primarily verbal. Hence, rather than ideas being developed and then merely expressed by language, our thought is born in language. As this language is not one's private creation but that of our community over a long period, conscious acts, even about ourselves, involve participation in that community. To say that our nature is linguistic is to say that it is essentially with others.

A similar point, but on another level of insight, was developed by Martin Heidegger and laid the basis for the stress among many existential thinkers on the importance of considering the person as being in community. As conscious and intentional, one is essentially, not closed within oneself, but open to the world; one's self-realization depends upon and indeed consists in one's being in the world. Therefore it is not possible to think of persons in themselves and then to add some commerce with their surroundings; instead persons exist and can be conceived only as beings-in-the-world. Here the term 'in' expresses more than a merely spatial relation; it adds an element of being acquainted or familiar with, of being concerned for, and of sharing. At root this is the properly personal relation.<sup>49</sup>

From what was said of being-in-the-world it follows that the person is also being-with-others, for one is not alone in sharing in this

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<sup>47</sup> De Vogel, pp. 38-45.

<sup>48</sup> Different cultures, of course, are variously located along the spectrum from individualism to collectivism.

<sup>49</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 52-57 and 118; see Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Martin Heidegger* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 24-25 and 56-57.

world. Just as I enter into and share in the world, so also do other persons. Hence, as essentially sharing-in-the-world, our being is also essentially a sharing-with-others; the world of the person is a world in which we are essentially with others. In this light a study of the existence of the rational subject with its hopes and its efforts toward self-realization with others must center ultimately upon understanding the moral development of the person through education.

### **MORAL GROWTH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER**

Recent advances in this project are being made by interweaving two main streams of thought regarding the person: one considers the subject as existing in one's own right as conscious and free; the other situates this consciousness and freedom in the person as acting in the world with other persons. Together they provide a context for understanding the development of the moral awareness of the person.

#### *The Person as Moral Agent*

In Aristotle's project of distinguishing the components of the physical process, actions and attributes were found to be able to exist and to be intelligible only in a substance which existed in its own right. (There could be no running without a runner.) Actions, as distinct from the substantive nature or essence, could appear to be added thereto in a relatively external or "quantitative" manner. Subsequent developments in understanding the subject in terms of existence have provided a protection against this externalism. In relation to existence, essence does not merely specify the specific nature or kind of the thing; it is rather the way in which each thing is or each living being lives. Hence, for a person it implies and calls for the full range of activities of a human being. Indeed, essence is often termed nature (from *natus* or born) precisely as that from which these life-acts derive.<sup>50</sup> These actions, in turn, cannot be mere additions to the person; they are the central determinants of the quality of one's very life. It is not just that one can do more or less, but that by so doing one becomes a more or less kind, loving, or generous person.

A person should be understood also in terms of his or her goals, for activities progressively modify and transform one in relation to the perfection of which one is by nature capable and which one freely chooses. Thus, though infants are truly and quite simply human beings, they are good only in an initial sense, namely, as being members of the human species. What they will become, however, lies in the future; hence they begin to be categorized as good or bad people only after and in view of their

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<sup>50</sup> H. Rousseau, "Etre et agir", *Revue Thomiste*, 54 (1954); Joseph de Finance, *Etre et agir dans la philosophie de Saint Thomas* (Rome, P.U.G., 1960).

actions. Even then it is thought unfair to judge or evaluate persons at an early age, before it can be seen how they will “turn out” or what they will “make of themselves”, that is, what character and hence constant pattern of action they will develop.

Further, one’s progress or lack thereof can be judged only in terms of acting in a manner proportionate to one’s nature. A horse may be characterized as good or bad on the basis of its ability to run, but not to fly. One must be true to one’s nature, which in that sense serves as a norm of action; in this new sense I am a law to myself, namely, I must never act as less than one having a human nature with its self consciousness and freedom. Below we shall see a way in which being true to this nature implies constituting both my self and my world.

Boethius defined classically the person as “an individual substance of a rational nature”.<sup>51</sup> In this Locke focused upon self-consciousness. Conscious nature can be understood on a number of levels. First, it might be seen as a reflection or passive mirroring in man of what takes place around him. This does not constitute new being, but merely understands what is already there. Secondly, if this consciousness is directed to the self it can be called self-knowledge and makes of the subject an object for one’s act of knowledge. Thirdly, consciousness can regard one’s actions properly as one’s own. By concerning the self precisely as the subject of one’s own actions, it makes subjective what had been objective in the prior self-knowledge; it is reflexive rather than merely reflective.

This self-conscious experience depends upon the objective reality of the subject with all the characteristics described above in the section on the self conscious and free subject. This, in turn, is shaped by the reflexive and hence free experiences of discovering, choosing, and committing oneself. In these reflexive acts the subject in a sense constitutes oneself, being manifested or disclosed to oneself as concrete, distinct, and indeed unique. This is the distinctively personal manner of self actuation of the conscious being or person.

The result for the person is a unique realization of that independence which above was seen to characterize all subsistent individuals. Beyond the mirroring of surrounding conditions and of those things that happen to one, beyond even the objective realization of oneself as affected by those events, the person exists reflexively as their subject and as a source of action. As a person one has an inward, interior life of which one alone is the responsible source. This implies for the person an element of mystery which can never be fully explicated or exhausted. Much can be proposed by other persons and things, much can even be imposed upon me. But my self-consciousness is finally my act and no one else’s. How I assess and respond to my circumstances is finally my decision, which relates to, but is never simply the result of, exterior factors. Here finally lies the essence of freedom, of which the ability to choose between alternatives is

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<sup>51</sup> u, *De duabus naturis et una persona Christi*, c. 3.



but one implication. What is essential for a free life is not that I always retain an alternative, but that I can determine myself and carry through with consistency the implications of my selfdetermination even, and at times especially, in the most straightening of circumstances. In this the personal finally transcends that growth process originally called the *physis* or the physical and has been considered rightly to be spiritual as well.

This, of course, is not to imply isolation from one's physical and social world; rather it bespeaks in the world a personal center which is self-aware and self-determining. More than objective consciousness of oneself as acting, the inward reflexion at the origin of my action is that according to which I freely determine<sup>52</sup> and experience myself as the one who acts in freedom. The bond of consciousness with action as deriving from self-determination is crucial for a full recognition of subjectivity. It protects this from reduction to the subjectivism of an isolated consciousness which, being separated from action, would be finally more arbitrary than absolute.

Self-determination in action has another implication: in originating an action the person's experience is not merely of that action as happening to or in him, but of a dynamism in which he participates efficaciously. As a self I experience myself immanently as wholly engaged in acting and know this efficacy to be properly my own, my responsibility. Hence, by willing the good or evil character of an action, I specify, not only the action which results, but myself as the originator of that action.

Finally, I am aware of my responsibility for results of my actions which extend beyond myself and shape my world. The good or evil my actions bring about is rooted in good or evil decisions on my part. In making choices which shape my world I form also myself for good or evil. By their subjective character actions become part of the person's unique process of self-realization.<sup>53</sup>

Action then manifests an important dimension of the person.<sup>54</sup> On the one hand, the need to act shows that the person, though a subject and independent, is not at birth perfect, self-sufficient or absolute. On the contrary, persons are conscious of perfection that they do not possess, but toward which they are dynamically oriented. The person is then essentially active and creative.

On the other hand, this activity is essentially marked by responsibility. This implies that, while the physical or social goods that one can choose are within one's power, they do not overpower one. Whatever

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<sup>52</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), pp. 48-50; "The Person: Subject and Community", *Review of Metaphysics*, 33 (1979-80), 273-308; and "The Task of Christian Philosophy Today", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 53 (1979), 3-4.

<sup>53</sup> Wojtyla, pp. 32-47.

<sup>54</sup> This goes beyond Piaget's basic law that actions follow needs and continue only in relation thereto. Jean Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 6.

their importance, in the light of the person's openness to the good as such one can always overrule the power of their attraction. When one does choose them it is the person—not the goods—that is responsible for that choice.

Both of these point to two foundations of the person's freedom, and hence of one's ability to be a self-determining end-in-oneself. First, one's mind or intellect is oriented, not to one or another true thing or object of knowledge, but to truth itself and hence to whatever is or can be. Second and in a parallel manner, the person's will is not limited to—or hence by—any particular good or set of goods. Rather, because oriented to the Good itself, it is freely open to any and all goods.

### *Moral Growth and Character Development*

1. *Values*. We have seen how moral action not only effects its objects but its subject as well. Precisely as moral it orients the development of the person toward the good, that is, it “per-fects,” makes perfect or completes the person. Herein lies the glory of the person, for this means that the actions of the person must be free and yet consistently oriented toward the good which perfects. That is to say, the personal process of choice must be exercised according to a scale of preferences among the goods. Some persons will rank some goods more highly on this scale than others; they will give greater weight to some goods over others. This is their scale of values.

2. *Virtues*. Martin Heidegger describes a process by which the field of moral action is gradually shaped by a subject. It consists in the person's transcending oneself or breaking beyond mere self-concern. In this one projects outward as a being whose very nature is to share with others for whom one cares and is concerned. In this process one constitutes 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. In this light freedom becomes more than mere spontaneity, more than choice as examined in Ch. IV above, and more even than self-determination in the sense of causing oneself to act as described above in the present chapter. It shapes—the phenomenologist would say even that it constitutes—my world as the ambit of my human decisions and dynamic action.<sup>55</sup> This is the making of myself as a person in a community.

To see this it is necessary to look more closely at the dynamic openness and projection which characterize the concrete person—not only in one's will, but in one's body and psyche as well. In order to be truly self-determining the person must not merely moderate a bargaining session

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<sup>55</sup> Mehta, pp. 90-91.

among these three, but constitute a new and active dynamism in which all dimensions achieve their properly personal character.<sup>56</sup>

Bodily or somatic dynamisms, such as the pumping of blood, are basically non-reflective and reactive. They are implemented through the nervous system in response to stimuli; generally they are below the level of human consciousness, from which they enjoy a degree of autonomy. Nonetheless, they are in harmony with the person as a whole, of which they are an integral dimension. As such they are implicit in my conscious and self-determined choices regarding personal action with others in this world.

Dynamisms of the psyche are typified by emotivity. In some contrast to the more reactive character of lower bodily dynamism and in a certain degree to the somatic as a whole, these are based rather within the person. They include, not only affectivity, but sensation and emotions as well. These feelings range from some which are physical to others which are moral, religious and aesthetic. Such emotions have two important characteristics. First, they are not isolated or compartmentalized, but include and interweave the various dimensions of the person. Hence, they are crucial to the integration of a personal life. They play a central role in the proximity one feels to values and to the intensity of one's response thereto. Secondly, they are relatively spontaneous and contribute to the intensity of a personal life. This, however, is not adequate to make them fully personal, for personal life is not only what happens in me, but above all what I determine to happen. This can range beyond and even against my feelings.

It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish two directions or dimensions of one's personal transcendence. The first relates to one's world as the object of either one's knowledge or one's will. This might be called horizontal as an activation of a person inasmuch as he or she relates to other things and especially to other persons. This relation would be poorly conceived were it thought to be merely an addition to a fully constituted person. On the contrary, the person as such is essentially transcendent, that is, open to others. One requires this interaction with others in order to have a language and all that this implies for the formation of thought, to have a moral code to assist one in the direction of one's will, and above all to have a family and community and thus the possibility of sharing in the hope and anguish, the love and concern, which gives meaning to life.

The other, or vertical dimension of transcendence characterizes the person and his action in their most properly personal sense. Personal actions are carried out through a will which is open and responsive to the Good and as such able to respond to, without being determined by, any particular good or value. Thus, it is finally up to the person to determine him or herself to act. One is able to do this because personal consciousness is not

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<sup>56</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, p. 197.

only reflective of myself as an additional object of knowledge, but reflexive or self-aware in its conscious acts.

If such actions derived merely from my powers or faculties of knowledge or will, in acting I would determine only the object of my action. Instead, these actions derive from my self as subject or person; hence, in acting I determine equally, and even primarily, myself. This is self-determination, self-realization, and self-fulfillment in the strongest sense of those terms. Not only are others to be treated as ends in themselves; in acting I myself am an end.

This process of deliberate choice and decision manifests a dimension of the person which transcends the somatic and psychic dynamisms. Where the somatic was extensively reactive, the person through affection or appetite is fundamentally oriented to the good and positively attracted by a set of values. These are not merely known by the mind, but evoke an active response from the psychic dynamisms of the emotions in the context of a responsible freedom.

It is in the dimension of responsibility that one encounters the properly moral dimension of life. For in order to live, oneself and with others, one must be able to know and choose what is truly conducive to one's good and that of others. To do this the person 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 whether the act makes the person good in the sense of bringing true individual and social fulfillment or the contrary.

In this I retain that deliberation and voluntary choice whereby I exercise my proper self-awareness, self-possession, and self-governance. By determining to follow this judgment I am 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. This vertical transcendence in one's actions as willed enables the person to shape his or her self, as well as one's physical surroundings and community.

This can be for good or for ill, depending on the character of the actions. Only morally good actions contribute to the fulfillment of the person, that is, to one's development and perfection as a person. It is the function of conscience as man's moral judgment to identify this element of moral goodness in action.<sup>57</sup> Moral freedom consists then in the ability to follow one's conscience. This must be established through the dynamisms within the person, and must be protected and promoted by the related physical and social realities. This is a basic right of the person—perhaps the basic social right—because only thus can one transcend one's conditions and strive for self-fulfillment. Moral education is directed particularly at capacitating the person for the effective exercise of this right.

3. *Character.* The work of conscience is not a merely theoretical judgment, but the development and exercise of self-possession through

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

one's actions. In this one's reference to moral truth constitutes one's sense of duty, for the action that is judged to be truly good is experienced also as that which I ought to do. As this is exercised or lived, patterns of action develop which are habitual only in the sense of being repeated. They are modes of activity with which we are familiar; in their exercise—along with the coordinate natural dynamisms they require—we are practiced; and with practice comes facility and spontaneity. These constitute the pattern of our life, its basic, continuing and pervasive shaping influence. For this reason they have been considered classically to be the basic indicators of what our life as a whole will add up to or, as is often said, "amount to". Since Socrates the technical term used for these specially developed capabilities is virtues.

It is possible to trace abstractly a general table of virtues required for particular circumstances in order to help clarify the overall terrain of moral action. As with values, however, such a table would not articulate the particulars of one's own experience nor dictate the next steps in one's project toward personal realization with others in relation to the Good. This does not mean, however, that such decisions are arbitrary; conscience makes its moral judgments in terms of real goods and real structures of values and virtues. Nevertheless through and within the breadth of these categories it is the person who must decide, and in so doing enrich his or her unique experience of the virtues. No one can act without courage and wisdom, but each exercise of these is distinctive and typically one's own. Progressively they form a personality that facilitates one's exercise of freedom as it becomes more mature and correlatively more unique. This is often expressed simply by the term more 'personal'.

A person's values reflect then, not only his culture and heritage, but within this what he has done with its set of values. One shapes and refines these values through one's personal and hence free search to realize the good with others in one's world. Hence, they reflect not only present circumstances which our forebears could not have experienced, but our free response to the challenges to interpersonal, familial and social justice and love in our days.

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

Though free and hence properly personal, as was seen above, this is done essentially with others. For this reason the harmony sought within oneself for moral development must be mirrored in a corresponding harmony between modes of action and values in the communities and nations in which persons live. (Thus, Aristotle considered his ethics of individual moral action to be an integral part of politics.) If that be true then the moral development of the person as a search for self-fulfillment is most

properly the search for that dynamic harmony both within and without which is called peace.

## CHAPTER II

# THE TRANSCENDENT AS BASIS OF PERSONAL DIGNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### TRANSCENDENCE AND HUMAN FREEDOM

Just as one cannot truly be oneself if isolated from others, man alone is not able to achieve his full potential.

(a) Without a further context, even the exalted aesthetic sense of harmony tends to lose its original sense of creative adaptation of new insights and to discount novelty in favor of repetition and conservation.

(b) Hegel was concerned that philosophy integrate, but not conclude with the aesthetic. He sees a danger in remaining solely on that level, for aesthetic awareness grasps being through the imagination and expresses its meaning and value in physical media. While this renders the Absolute visible and makes manifest the spiritual meaning of the world, left to itself the aesthetic might conclude in a pantheism. But if nature were to become God, man would be enslaved by his own creations. In the end, being would come to be defined by man, who, thereby, would be forever entombed within the walls of his own ability to create, for in the end this must be as limited as is man himself. Thus the aesthetic sense, left to itself, would subject man to his own creations and trap him in a deadening idolatrous loop.

(c) Finally, given the vicissitudes of human character, harmony without a normative ideal can be used by leaders to suppress dissent and merge all into phases of the march of progress, as described in a recent study on Ernst Cassirer by George Pierson.

In order to be truly free, therefore, we must acknowledge not only that we are athletes but that we are playing in a vast—even limitless—arena. We must think not only in terms of ourselves, but must transcend ourselves in recognizing an adequate ground for the limitlessness of the radical creative potentialities we possess. For this purpose, Hegel pointed to the need, beyond art and the aesthetic, for religion—indeed, for revealed religion—in order to state the full content of transcendence. And beyond even religion he saw the need for philosophy to purify the content of religion from the limitations of its symbolic forms.<sup>1</sup>

More recently, however, the shift from an objective attitude to an appreciation of human subjectivity has made it possible to enter more deeply into the working of human consciousness. Here one can discover the generation of the cultural traditions by which we are first endowed with

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<sup>1</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, tr. J.B. Baille (New York: Harper, 1967), VII and VIII; see also James Collins, *God in Modern Philosophy* (Chicago: Regnery, 1959), VII, espec. pp. 232-37.

language and horizons of meaning and values. Moreover, rather than seeing philosophy as did Hegel, as following upon and correcting our understanding of revelation, it suggests instead the role of philosophy in allowing us to question our traditions (in Gadamer's sense) in order to retrieve and unfold the implications of elements deep within ourselves and our culture.

In this sense, philosophy encounters religion, not as a contrasting doctrine coming from without and alien to our particular culture, but as their deepest and most dynamic ground, as a leaven for the many cultures as they transform themselves from within. It looks to religion for its capacity to liberate and inspire the work of philosophy based upon the dignity of the human person and the meaning of nature and of human life. Such a philosophy is inevitably facilitated and inspired contextually by religion, whether revealed or natural, as a major factor in the process by which a people has shaped its culture. Yet as philosophy, it remains a work of natural reasons which does not require or depend upon a particular faith commitment.

Today as we enter upon global times and face the prospect of living together with all other civilizations each built upon its own distinct religious sense of life and meaning it becomes essential to tease out and relate these religious grounds. For it is on the relation of these one to another that the possibilities of a peaceful country of the peoples of the world will now depend. This is the concern of the chapters to follow. Indeed, it is in just such conscious efforts to draw forward the religious foundations in new patterns of mutual respect and cooperation that the future can be constructed and improved.

Hence, the chapters which follow will look first to the transcendent as the objective focus for human dignity. Then they will look into human subjectivity for the rediscovery of the divine which marks recent times. Here the reality of human freedom will itself provide a route to the rediscovery of divine from within the focus of modern thought upon human freedom. In these terms an examination of the dialectic of Paul Tillich will serve to lead through the vicissitudes of human life to God understood not only as Being itself, but phenomenologically as man's ultimate concern.

On this basis an examination of the nature of culture and its genesis in community will make manifest not only the horizontal development of cultural tradition through time but the vertical experience whereby they are grounded in the divine. In this light then a hermeneutic analysis of cultural tradition becomes an analysis of the manifestation, application and interaction of the religious roots of the particular cultures and civilizations through time and space.

## **TRANSCENDENCE IN PRE-PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING**

From earliest times human thought always had a sacred center. It is possible to track the evolution of this awareness by relating it to the three dimensions of the human mind. The first dimension is the external senses of sight, touch and the like, by which one receives information from the external



world. The second is the internal senses of imagination and memory by which one assembles the received data in a manner which enables it to represent the original whole from which the various senses drew their specific details, to rearrange these and other data in various combinations, or to recall it at a later time. Finally, beyond both of these dimensions of the senses is the intellect by which one knows the nature of things and judges regarding their existence. It was according to this threefold structure that Descartes proceeded step by step to place under doubt all that arises from a source of knowledge once a reason for doubt could be identified and until knowledge from that source could be certified as true.<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, upon examination it appears that the actual evolution of man's awareness of the sacred follows this sequence of his natural capacities for knowledge. In all cases, it is intellectual knowledge that is in play, but this is facilitated and articulated successively, first in terms of the external senses in the totemic stage, then in terms of the internal sense in the mythic period and, finally, in properly intellectual terms as the origin of philosophy or science. Indeed, one might define philosophy and science precisely as knowledge of the various aspects of reality in terms proper to human reason and, hence, proper to themselves.

To follow this evolution, it should be noted that, for life in any human society as a grouping of persons, a first and basic necessity is an understanding of oneself and of one's relation to others. It should not be thought that these are necessarily two questions rather than one. They will be diversely formalized in the history of philosophy, but prior to any such formalization, indeed, prior even to the capacity to formalize this as a speculative problem, some mode of lived empathy rather than antipathy must be possible. If, as Plato would later work out in detail, the unity of the multiple is possible only on the basis of something that is one, then the unity of social life will require that there be present in the awareness of the early peoples and according to their mode of awareness something that is one in terms of which all are related.

*Totemic Thought.* In the earliest form of thought and society this understanding by people of themselves and their unity with others was carried out in terms of a natural reality, such as an animal or bird, able to be perceived by them through their external senses. These peoples spoke of themselves by simple identity with the animal or bird which was the totem of their clan.

Levy-Bruhl expresses this in a law of participation. It expressed a discovery which his own positivist philosophy was unable to assimilate, namely, that in the primitive or foundational mode of thinking of the earliest peoples their root identity was itself that of the totem. It was not that such persons saw themselves as in some manner like, or as descendent from, their

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<sup>2</sup> R. Descartes, *Meditations*, II, in E. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1972), vol I.

totem, e.g., lion; instead, they said directly: "I am lion." It was in these terms that they founded their identity and dignity, considered themselves bound to all others who had the same totem, and understood by analogy of their totem with that of other tribes the relations between their two peoples for marriage and social interaction.<sup>3</sup>

The totem was, of course, not simply one animal among others. It was in a sense limitless in that no matter how many persons were born to the tribe its potentialities were never exhausted. Further, it was shown special respect, such as not being sold, used for food or other utilitarian purposes which would make it subservient to the individual members of the tribe or clan. And, whereas other things might be said to be possessed, the totem was the subject of predication by direct identity: one might say that he had a horse or other animal, but only of the totem would one say that he is e.g., horse or lion. This was the sacred center of individual and community life in terms of which all had meaning and cohesion. It made possible the sense of personal dignity and the interpersonal relations which were the most important aspects of human life and it did so with a sense of direct immediacy that would be echoed, but never repeated, in subsequent stages of thought.

*Mythic Thought.* Though the totem was able to provide for unity and meaning while the life of all members of the tribe remained similar, its manner of expressing unity became insufficient as society became more specialized and differentiated. Then the bonds between members of the tribe came to depend not merely upon similarity and sameness, but upon the differentiated capabilities of, e.g., hunters, fishers and, eventually, farmers. At that point, with the ability to look upon others as both united and differentiated, came an appreciation as well of the special distinctiveness of the sacred center as above the many individuals of which it was the principle and center. What in totemic thought had previously been stated simply by identity could now be appreciated as greater than and transcending the members of the tribe. This is reflected in the development of priesthoods, rituals and symbols to reflect what was no longer seen simply as one's own deepest identity.<sup>4</sup>

Such a reality could no longer be stated in terms immediately present to the external senses, but rather was figured by the imagination in terms drawn originally from the senses, but now redrawn in forms that expressed life that was above men and stood as the principle of their life. Such higher principles, as the more knowing and having a greater power of will, would be personal; as transcendent persons they would be gods. It would seem incorrect to consider this, as did Freud and Marx, to be simply a projection of

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<sup>3</sup>. L. Levy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), ch. II.

<sup>4</sup>. *Ibid.*, ch. XII. See also Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), ch. I; and G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven, *The PreSocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1960), pp. 26-32.

human characteristics. On the contrary, the development of the ability to think in terms shaped by the imagination released the appreciation of the principle of human life from the limitations of animals, birds and other natural entities available to the external senses. This did not create transcendence but allowed the real transcendence of the principle of unity to be expressed in a more effective manner.

But expression in terms of the forms available to the internal sense of imagination had its temptations; these limitations were pointed out by Xenophanes. He noted that by the time of Homer and Hesiod a perfervid imagination had gone from expressing the transcendence of the gods to attributing to them, as well, the many forms of evil found among men.<sup>5</sup> These principles of meaning and value thus pointed as well to their opposites. Thinking in terms of the imagination was no longer sufficient; the intellect needed to proceed in its own terms in order to enable the true sense of the gods as well as of nature to be expressed and defended against confusion and corruption. As the intellect proceeded to operate in properly intellectual terms rather than in terms of the images of mythic thinking, science and philosophy emerged to replace myth as the basic mode of human understanding.

Paul Tillich points out that the mythic mode of thinking never completely disappeared and that its contribution of imagery and its evocation of responses from all dimensions of the human personality remain essential components of human awareness. No ethical treatise will ever equal the power and penetration of the *Iliad* or the plays of Sophocles in penetrating the human condition. But once the intellect was able to conceptualize things in their own terms, rather than in terms of anthropomorphic gods, mythic thinking would no longer be taken as the literal truth. It became what Tillich would call "broken myth", in the sense that it helps and enriches human awareness and response without being the sole or basic mode in which all is appreciated.

#### **OPENING THE METAPHYSICAL DIMENSION OF PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT**

At this point, the way is opened for philosophy, and, in its terms, spectacularly rapid progress was made. Within but a few generations, the human intellect had worked out a structure of the physical world using basic categories of hot and cold, wet and dry available to the external senses, along with mechanisms of vortex motion.<sup>6</sup> Mathematical reason worked with the

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<sup>5</sup> Xenophanes, fragments 11, 14-16 in George F. McLean and Patrick J. Aspell, *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 31

<sup>6</sup> Anaximander, fragments, see McLean and Aspell, *Readings*, pp. 14-17; George F. McLean and Patrick J. Aspell, *Ancient Western Philosophy: The Hellenic Emergence* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1971), pp. 22-28.

internal senses to lay down the basic theorems of geometry.<sup>7</sup> In brief, by developing properly intellectual terms, the Greeks had revised and perfected the thought processes of the totemic and mythic ages, elaborating with new and hitherto unknown precision objective insights regarding physical reality.

But that had never been the root human issue. Totemic and mythic thought were not merely ways of understanding and working with nature, although they did that as well. The fundamental issue was rather what it meant to be, what life was based upon, and in what terms it should be lived. After the work of others in conceptualizing the physical and mathematical orders, Parmenides was able to take up the most basic questions of life and being in the properly intellectual terms of metaphysics.

When the procedure for this 'opening the mind' came later to be reflected upon and made explicit, it would become clear that the procedure for achieving this all inclusive vision must itself be unique. In particular, it could not be accomplished by abstraction which omits the differences in order to broaden the range of applicability of a notion, for omitting reality in order to open to all that is real would be self defeating. Hence, Thomas Aquinas concluded that the approach to metaphysics must not be by abstraction as in the other sciences, but by a judgment concerned directly, not with form or essence, but with existence, that is with the simple affirmation or assertion of reality. As a result the notion of being is not univocal and delimited as would be the case were it a form standing in contrast to all other forms, but analogous or open to affirming in positive terms the full range of being, namely, whatever is and in whatever way it is.<sup>8</sup>

Further, the form of the judgment is negative, setting aside whatever might restrict or limit that affirmation. It states that being with which metaphysics is concerned is not limited to those things which are of a changing or material nature and perceived by the intellect working in conjunction with the senses. Because not all reality is material, to be real does not as such imply to be material: being as being, or that according to which it is or is being, is then not material or changing.<sup>9</sup>

This judgment is negative; it does not question the reality of the material order, but negates only the limitation of being to that one type of being, namely, to material being. By this type of judgment, being, as the subject of the science of metaphysics, is liberated in principle from restriction to a particular kind or kinds of differentiated existence. It is opened to any being and every aspect of being, to whatever might prove either to characterize or to be required by being precisely as being. With this as its subject, the science of metaphysics will be a systematic process without shackles. It would be accountable before Parmenides' principle of contradiction never to reduce

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<sup>7</sup>. See McLean and Aspell, *Ancient Western Philosophy*, ch. III.

<sup>8</sup>. Thomas Aquinas, *The Method and Division of the Sciences*, Armand Maurer, ed. (Toronto: PMIS, 1953), q. 5.

<sup>9</sup>. *Ibid.*

being to nonbeing or nothing. In positive terms it would be open to every evidence of being, whether conditioned or Absolute.

Working out an adequate method for metaphysics took a millennium and a half; but from the beginning, beyond the notions of hot and cold, even and uneven, Parmenides recognized this issue of reality itself, or what it meant to be, and undertook to begin its investigation. How could this be understood? First, he bound the work of the intellect directly to being: "It is the same thing to think and to be" (fragment 3)<sup>10</sup>. Hence, the requirements of thinking would manifest those of being. Second, he contrasted being with its opposite nonbeing as something to nothing at all (fragment 2). This principle of non-contradiction was a construct of the mind; like  $\pi$  in geometry, it was something that is good to think with, for it enabled the mind, in reflecting upon being, to identify its requirements and avoid anything that would undermine its reality.

The proemium of Parmenides' famous poem had described a scene in which he was awakened by the goddesses and sent in a chariot drawn by a faithful mare along the arching highway that spans all things. In this process he moved from obscurity to light, from opinion to truth. When at last he arrived there, the gates were opened by the goddess justice as guardian of true judgments, and he was directed to examine all things in order to discern the truth.

Parmenides then images himself proceeding along the highway<sup>11</sup> until he comes to a fork in the road with one signpost pointing the way toward being as reality whose nature is precisely that of beginning, i.e., no such reality would be eternal, all would be of the type what at some point begins. Here, Parmenides must reason regarding the implications of such a route. "To begin" means to move from nonbeing or from nothingness to being. Hence, if "to be" meant essentially "to begin", being would include within its very essence nonbeing or nothingness. In that case, there would then be no difference between being and nothing; being would be without meaning; and the real would be nothing at all. (Conversely, when nonbeing is removed from this notion, no sense of beginning remains and it becomes clear that at the fork in the road, the path of being is not that whose sign reads "beginning," but rather the other path which is that of the eternal.) This, then, is a first requirement of being: having excluded at the fork the possibility of taking the path fork which led to being as essentially beginning is excluded; being is seen to be eternal and the chariot moves on along the highway of being.

The procedure is analogous at the two subsequent forks in the road where the signposts point to being as changing or multiple. Each of these, Parmenides' reasons, would include nonbeing within being, thereby destroy-

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<sup>10</sup> Parmenides, fragments, see McLean and Aspell, *Readings in Ancient Western Philosophy*, pp. 39-44.

<sup>11</sup> Fragment 8; see Alexander P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides: A Study of Word, Images, and Argument in the Fragments* (New Haven: Yale, 1970).

ing its character as being. Nonbeing is contained in the notion of change, inasmuch as a changing being is no longer what it had been and not yet what it will become. When, however, one removes that nonbeing being emerges as unchanging. Similarly, nonbeing is essential to the notion of multiplicity, inasmuch as this requires that one being not be the other. When, however, that nonbeing is removed what emerges is one. These then are the characteristics of being: infinite and eternal, unchanging and one.

Such being transcends the multiple and changing world in which we live and is realized in a manner more perfect than could be appreciated in the graphic terms of the internal senses of imagination which defined the nature of man's capabilities in the stage of myth.

In this way, Parmenides discerned the necessity of Absolute, eternal and unchanging being, whatever be said of anything else. Neither being nor thought makes sense if being is the same as nonbeing, for then to do, say or be anything would be the same as not doing, not saying or not being. But as the real is irreducible to nothing and being is irreducible to nonbeing, (as it must be if there is any thing or any meaning whatsoever), then being must have about it the self-sufficiency expressed by Parmenides' notion of the absolute One.

One can refuse to look at this issue and focus upon particular aspects of limited realities. But if one confronts the issue of being it leads to the Self-sufficient Being which as the creative source of all else, without which all limited beings would be radically compromised—not least, man himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that Aristotle would soon conclude his search for the nature of being in his *Metaphysics* with a description of divine life.<sup>12</sup>

The issue then is not how the notion of the divine entered human thought; it has always been there, for, without that which is one and absolute in the sense of self-sufficient, man and nature would be at odds, and mankind would lack social cohesion. Indeed, thinking would be the same as not thinking, just as being would be the same as nonbeing. The real issue is how effectively to assure the openness of the methods of philosophical thought to the full range of reality, including its divine source and goal, and to implement the search for meaning in a way that enables a vigorous itinerary of the human heart and, hence, enlivens temporal life.

Simplicius and others concluded from the first half of Parmenides' poem that there could be but one absolute being, but this does not fit well with the second, longer half of the Parmenides' poem, which treats at great length the many changing beings of our universe. Hence, it would appear to be a more correct reading of his mind to say that being requires the one infinite unchanging and eternal Being, i.e., an Absolute transcending the world of multiple and changing beings, and on which the universe of changing reality depends. How this universe is related to the One is not worked out by Parmenides, but it could be expected that whoever did work out this

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<sup>12</sup> *Metaphysics*, XII, 7, 1072 b 26-29.

relation of the many to the One would be the father of the Greek, and, hence, of the Western, philosophical tradition. In fact, this proved to be Plato.

*Opening the Objective Horizon of Western Philosophy*

While as just noted the great metaphysical challenge of the time was to reintroduce awareness of multiplicity along with unity, this was done by Plato in the particular political situation of the Athens of his time. At this point of the bare emergence of a systematic philosophy teaching fell to the Sophists who reduced it principally to rhetoric, that is, to persuasion independent of content.

The result was a society without orientation or guidance which in its confusion had just killed its own Socrates. For Plato then the need was for objective, stable principles outside of, and above humankind which could provide guidance for public life. For this he developed his theory of ideas as independent, above and cast over against (ob-ject) humankind. As eternal and unchanging these would constitute the principles needed for the human action and interaction which constituted the life of the *polis*.

This proved to be a fatal choice which separated and contrasted mind as subject from reality understood as object or thing. The achievements of Western philosophy must not be diminished, indeed marvelous metaphysical insights have been achieved in these terms which we will review in this chapter, namely, Plato's key notion of participation, Aristotle's ordering of being in terms of essence, the Christian development of the existential character of the person and its relation to God. Yet after over two millennia we find that the more rigorously we treat persons as objects, whether in philosophy or in life, something radically important has been omitted. Hence, the unfolding of this field of subjectivity with its constitution of culture whereby the religious foundations of human beings are lived will be the burden of the following chapters; indeed it gives the title to this work.

However, first we must examine these contributions of the long objective approach of philosophy. For these will remain as basic substructures for the subsequent stages of human thought when subjectivity as engaged in the process of self-discovery.

We shall then attend briefly to Plato's notion of participation and to Aristotle's sense of analogy, which Fabro terms the language of participation, before attending to the dramatic emergence of the appreciation of existence in the context of Christian thought.

For Plato the notion of participation operates on all levels because it is the mode of being itself. In logic, multiplicity requires that the many not be unrelated to each other, for then they could not be gathered in any set as multiple units. In nature, the multiple instances of any one type required the supereminent reality of the perfection according to which the many instances were similar or one. On the metaphysical level, this same dynamic required that, at the summit of all reality, there be the self-sufficient and infinite One

or Good in which all things share or participate for their being, identity and goodness.

This notion of participation according to which the many derived their being from the One which they manifest and toward which they are oriented and directed would subsequently provide the basic model for “outer” transcendence and the relation of creatures to God. In Plato’s thought, however, the order of forms was relatively passive, rather than active. Hence, the supreme One or Good was the passive object of contemplation for the highest soul which was conscious and active. Most scholars, therefore, consider the highest Soul in Plato’s thought rather than the highest One, to correspond to the notion of God.

This was reversed to some degree in the thought of Aristotle. His philosophy began with the changing beings available to the senses and discovered that such being must be composed of the principles of form as act and matter as potency. As a result, his sense of being was axised upon form as a principle of act in the process of change as active transformation. Consequently, when in his *Metaphysics* he undertook the search for the nature of being, which he rightly sought in the notion of substance, he tracked this from second substances as natures in the mind to first substances as the higher modes of being because they exist in themselves, and arrived inevitably at the highest act, the knowing on knowing itself (*noesis noeseos*), which he referred to as life divine. This is the culmination of his philosophy because it brings him to the very heart of the whole order of being and, hence, of reality itself. Joseph Owens would conclude from his investigation of being as the subject of Aristotle’s metaphysics that this was primarily the one Absolute Being and was extended to all things by a *pros hen* analogy; that is, all things are beings precisely the extent that they stand in relation to the Absolute One which transcends all else.

What would be the effect of a revealed religion based upon the manifestation of the divine mind to that of man? To examine this, we will look for the effect of Christianity upon the development of the Greek sense of being and to the consequent enrichment with which the resulting notion of the “outer” transcendent endowed the meaning of life.<sup>13</sup>

Here, it is important to note that, although Greek philosophy grew out of an intensive mythic sense of life in which all was a reflection of the will of the gods, nonetheless, it presupposed matter always to have existed. As a result, the focus of its attention and concerns was upon the forms by which matter was determined to be of one type rather than another. For Aristotle, physical or material things in the process of change from one form to another were the most manifest realities and his philosophizing began from that. This approach to philosophy through sense encounter with physical beings corresponds especially to our human nature as mind and body and could extend to

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<sup>13</sup> For a description of the evolution of the notion of being itself see Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: PIMS, 1961); and *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York: Scribner's, 1937).



the recognition of divine life. But the sense of reality needed considerable enrichment in order adequately to bring out the foundational significance for mankind of its grounding in a fully transcendent and infinite Being.

It was here that the development of the Christian context had an especially liberating effect upon philosophy. By applying to the Greek notion of matter, the Judeo-Christian heritage regarding the complete dominion of God over all things, the Christian Church Fathers opened human consciousness to the fact that matter, too, depended for its reality upon God. Thus, before Plotinus, who was the first philosopher to do so, the Fathers already had noted that matter, even when considered eternal, stood also in need of an explanation of its origin.<sup>14</sup>

This enabled philosophical questioning to push beyond the reality of form, nature or kind to that of existence and, hence, radically to deepen its sense of reality. If what must be explained is no longer merely the particular form or type of beings, but the reality of matter as well, then the question becomes not only how things are of this or that kind, but how they exist rather than not exist. Man's awareness of being thus evolved beyond change or form;<sup>15</sup> to be real could be seen to 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 the choice of various external objects and modalities of life in the first sense of circumstantial freedom of self-realization (see chapter III), or even to choosing as one ought after the manner of the acquired freedom of self-perfection set within the context of being as nature or essence. The sense of freedom now opened by the conscious assumption and affirmation of one's own existence was the natural freedom of self-determination and responsibly for one's very being.

One might follow the progression of this deepening awareness of being by reflection on 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

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<sup>14</sup> G. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation: The Unity of Man in God* (Madras: The University of Madras, 1978), pp. 53-57. This was elaborated as well in the course of the Trinitarian debates. To understand Christ to be God Incarnate, it was necessary to understand Him to be Son sharing fully in the divine nature. This required that in the life of the Trinity the procession of the Son or Logos from the Father be understood to be in a unity of nature: The Son, like the Father, must be fully of the one and same divine nature. Through contrast to this procession of a divine person, it became possible to see more clearly the formal effect of God's act in creating limited and differentiated beings. They would not be in the same divine nature, for creation resulted, not in a coequal divine person, but in a creature radically dependent for its being.

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle had taken the compossibility of forms as a sufficient response to the scientific question of 'whether it exists'. See Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics; A Study in the Greek Background of Medieval Thought* (Toronto: P.I.M.S., 1978).

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 and 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 being merely an affirmation of this or that kind of reality, to the act of existence rather than non-existence, of human life in all its dimensions and, indeed, of 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 a deeper sense of freedom, but itself was catalyzed by the new sense of freedom proclaimed in the Christian 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 Son of God, the eternal Word or Logos, through and according to whom all things had received as gift their created existence.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God,  
and the word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him: and without him was made  
nothing that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not  
comprehend it.

...

That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that  
cometh into this world.<sup>16</sup>

As the first to rise to new life in victory over sin, his victory had to be accepted by each person in a radical act of freedom opening oneself to, and affirming the transcending power of, the Creator and Redeemer in one's life. The sacramental symbol of this is not one of mere transformation or improvement, or even of dissolution and reformation, but of resurrection from the waters of death to radically new life. This is the power of being bursting into time.

It directs the mind beyond the ideological poles of species and individual interests, and beyond issues of place, time or any of the scientific categories. It centers, instead, upon the unique reality of the person as a participation in the creative power of God, a being bursting into existence, which is and which cannot be denied; it rejects being considered in any sense as nonbeing, or being treated as anything less than its full reality. It is a self, affirming its own unique actuality and irreducible to any specific group

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<sup>16</sup> John I:1-5, 8.

identity. It is an image of God for whom life is sacred and sanctifying, a child of God for whom to be is freely to dispose of the power of new life in brotherhood with Christ and with all mankind.<sup>17</sup>

It took a long time for the implications of this new appreciation of existence and its meaning to germinate and find its proper philosophic articulation. Over a period of many centuries the term 'form' was used to express the kind or nature 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 of existence, by which a being simply is, was expressed by 'existence' (*esse*).<sup>18</sup>

The notion of an "outer" transcendence, while traceable from Plato, Aristotle and Augustine (and, indeed, to the basic sense of the move from totemic to mythic thought), was developed classically in a systematic manner by Thomas Aquinas, using Plato's notion of participation, in terms of participated and unparticipated being.

In any limited being, its essence or nature constitutes by definition a limited and limiting capacity for existence: by it, the being is capable of this much existence but not more. Such an essence must then be distinct from the existence which, of itself, bespeaks affirmation, not negation and limitation. Such a being, whose nature or essence is not existence but only a capacity for existence, could not of itself or by its own nature justify its possession and exercise of existence. The Parmenidean principle of noncontradiction will not countenance existence coming from non-existence, for then being would be reducible to non-being or nothing. Such beings, then, are dependent precisely for their existence, that is, precisely as beings or existents. This dependence cannot be upon another limited being similarly composed of a distinct essence and existence, for such a being would be equally dependent; the multiplication of such dependencies would multiply, rather than answer, the question how a composite being with a limiting essence has existence. Hence, limited composite beings must depend for their existence upon, or participate in, uncomposite being whose essence or nature, rather than being distinct from and limiting its existence, is identically existence or being itself.

That uncomposite Being is simple, the One par excellence, and is participated in by all multiple and differentiated beings for their existence. The One, however, does not itself participate; it is the unlimited, self-sufficient, eternal and unchanging Being which Parmenides had shown to be the sole requisite for being. In sum, "limited and composite beings are by nature

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<sup>17</sup> C. Fabro called the graded and related manner in which this is realized concretely, an intensive notion of being. Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et causalité selon S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain: Pub. Univ. de Louvain, 1961).

<sup>18</sup> Cornelio Fabro, *La nozione metafisica de partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Torino: Società Ed. Internazionale, 1950), pp. 75-122.

relative to, participating in, and caused by the unique simple and incomposite being which is Absolute, unparticipated and uncaused.”<sup>19</sup>

On this insight, Thomas constructed his “five ways,”<sup>20</sup> which have remained the classic expression of *a posteriori* reasoning to the Absolute. Beings manifest to our intellect working through the senses undergo change, stand in a differentiated relation of contrariety to other beings, realize their perfection of being or goodness only to a certain greater or lesser degree and stand in graded and ordered relation to others. This manifests that their being is a composite of their essence, related as potency to their existence as act. This internal composition required that they depend for their existence upon that One which is incomposite and, hence, unchanging, unique, and unlimited; their being is predicated upon the simple Being Itself (*Ipsum Esse*). This alone is absolute, an outer transcendent. It is distinct from all else which must, however, be related to it or participate in it. Plato had been able to analyze this only externally in terms of the relation of the many to the one and on the basis of formal causality. Thomas, using Aristotle’s insight regarding internal structures and the Christian understanding of being as existence, was able to carry out an internal analysis. In its light, the internal structure of existence and essence for multiple beings manifests them to be participations, that is, effects of the active or efficient causality of the unparticipated One.

By means of the above structural and dynamic understanding of participation, Thomas Aquinas was able to philosophize in a systematic manner upon the theme of transcendence and participation. Indeed, in the view of Cornelio Fabro, L.B. Geiger, Arthur Little and others, this theme constituted the central discovery, the coordinating and fructifying principle, of his entire work. Here, we can identify but a few factors in order to illustrate the contribution of a systematic philosophy of participation to man’s awareness of an outer transcendent and to the sense of life in this world and with others.

It will be noted that, thenceforward, our considerations will proceed in an *a priori*, rather than in the above *a posteriori* manner from effect to cause. Unfortunately, ‘*a priori*’ has come to suggest arbitrariness. Etymologically, it means proceeding on the basis of that which comes first and is most basic, namely, proceeding from a cause to its effects. The importance of this *a priori* phase for metaphysics cannot be over-emphasized, for only by understanding being on the basis of that which is Self-sufficient or Absolute and transcends all else can we gain basic understanding of being as such and of participating beings. This was seen by Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, all of whom developed works in metaphysics which proceeded from the absolute to the relative and considered this synthetic procedure to be the proper method for metaphysics.

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<sup>19</sup> Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione*.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (New York: Benziger, 1947), I, q. 2, aa. 2-3; *Summa contra Gentiles*, trans. by A. Regis (New York: Hanover House, 1955), II, 10-21.

The realist character of Thomas' thought and his insistence upon the use of a scientific method for metaphysics led him to insist upon building this science around finite being as its subject. Once, however, the cause of that subject—the incomposite or unparticipated being—was discovered all could be seen more deeply and more richly through an awareness of that Absolute on which all depends. In particular, we shall consider the radical totality of the creative act.

First, note must be taken of the extent of the dependence of participated on unparticipated being. A preliminary, but not provisional, instance of great importance for our theme is the dependence of matter which the Greeks had presupposed to be a given—unquestioned and, hence, unexplained. Action consisted in the transformation of matter, that is, in its successive formation according to different forms. This process ultimately came full cycle, simply to begin once again. In this perspective, the individual had no further purpose or meaning than to continue the cycle; nothing was radically new, unique, or personal.

Above, we saw that early Christian thought directed attention to matter and to its origin from God. *A priori* reflection upon this transcendent source and cause of all can provide further understanding. As simple and not composed of a distinct limiting essence and existence, the Absolute Being Itself is existence or being unlimited. For this reason, no other reality can be equally original with it, for that would mean that being would be had only partially by each. In that case, what should be the absolute would in fact be limited, what should be simple would be composite; there would be no absolute. But then, the question concerning the origin of the existence of limited or composite beings would have no answer: not in themselves and not in a simple, absolute and transcendent cause; there would remain only Parmenides' all impossible way of Non-Being or nothingness.

Since, then, nothing can be equally original with the Absolute, all else for their total reality must be a participation in it. Each thing, to the full extent of its being, images in a partial manner the One. Further, as each limited being is in contrast to every other limited being, together they constitute an ever unfolding manifestation of being. Though there are more beings, however, there could never be more or less of being than the unlimited plenitude of the Absolute. (The checks one writes do not add to the money one possesses; still more marvelously, one does not lose the knowledge one shares, but multiplies its instances.) No matter how many participate in the One, it remains ever the Plenitude of Being and is in no sense augmented or diminished. The simple, incomposite being does not depend upon composite beings; composite beings depend upon the incomposite entirely.

This participated and caused character applies to all limited realities and components thereof; hence, it applies also to matter. As a potential principle, its proper reality is that of a relation of potency to form as its act, without which it could have neither meaning nor reality. As a constituent principle of the essences of physical beings, matter, too, must share in their reality and to that degree in their creation. Just as there can be no matter

existing independently of form, neither can there be matter which, with that form, does not constitute an essence and participate to the full extent of its reality in the Absolute.

Thus, the causal activity in participation is a creation from nothing. By this is not meant, of course, that there is no cause: actively considered participation is causing. What is meant is that there is involved here only (a) the act which is the Absolute or transcendent and (b) the effect as depending upon it and by which the transcendent is designated as cause or creator. What is excluded is any independence or equally original existence of the effect in its totality or in any of its principles, e.g. matter.<sup>21</sup> The full classical phrase is creation from nothing as regards the effect and any subject thereof (*creatio ex nihilo sui et subiecto*). For this reason it can be termed outer transcendence.

In this total sense, then, the creative source transcends the created in every facet of its being. Conversely and correlatively, limited beings as participating or sharing with corresponding completeness all their being in the divine are constituted fully with all the capacities for being and acting according to the full perfection of their nature. God's power is manifested not in making up for deficiencies in his creatures, but by the ability of all his creatures to seek indissociably their perfection and his glory to the full extent of their nature.

Recent phenomenological thought suggests new, less technical and perhaps more available ways of thinking about how human life must be founded in the Transcendent. Maurice Nedoncelle<sup>22</sup> notes that our identity and our relatedness to others are not something which we construct, but are possessed by us from the beginning of our life. All our actions are ours; they pertain to my identity which I was given and did not make or create.

By reflection, it is possible to trace back the characteristics of my life to gain some sense of the nature of the giver of that life. First, my life must be not from another individual who is contrary to me as, e.g., a horse is to a cow, for this could not give me my identity, but only something distinct and alien to me. Hence, this source of human beings must be not another being of a limited nature and, hence, contrary to each, but a unique and limitless source able to be the origin of all individuals. Similarly, as I examine my relationships to others, I find that the deepest and most humane among them—friendship and marriage, for example—are not limited and measured, but precisely open beyond place or time, health or economic condition. In contrast to legal agreements, I make promises to friends which are not conditioned by time, and the commitment in marriage is specific in its rejections of

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<sup>21</sup> *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, 16; *Summa Theologica*, I, qq. 11 and 14; *On the Power of God* (Westminster Md: Newman Press, 1952), q. 3, a. 1 ad 12; and *Truth*, trans. by R. W. Mulligan et al. (Chicago: Regnery, 1952-1954), q. 2, a. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Maurice Nédoncelle, "Person and/or World as the Source of Religious Insight," in George F. McLean, ed., *Traces of God in a Secular Culture* (New York: Alba House, 1973), pp. 187-209.

all limiting conditions: “for richer or poorer, in sickness or health, till death do us part.” This bespeaks a context for our life which transcends all our measurements of place and time.

Further, as we survey our life we see that it is ever open to new and innovative responses to others in the most concrete and seemingly repetitive circumstances of our daily life. What we eat for breakfast and those with whom we eat it may be identical, but breakfast is never the same. Our life is not lived according to a scientific formula with everlasting sameness, but is endlessly new and unfolding as we explore together the many ways of being concerned and sorrowful, amazed and delighted.

This manifests that human life, rather than being lived in terms of the limitations of individual concrete things or of abstract formulae and laws, is lived in terms of an infinity of being which transcends us in life and enables us truly to be free and creative. Man is not God but, these phenomenologists point out, life in its properly human characteristics manifests that it is lived in an order which derives from, and is directed toward, the living God.

### **THE HARMONY OF GOD WITH ALL CREATION**

How should this outer transcendent and absolutely perfect reality be conceived? Were it to stand in opposition to man, were its action to be an intrusion upon human life, were its prerogatives to be at the expense of human perfection, then it would disrupt the Confucian vision of harmony and subvert its philosophy. But is this the case?

What would be the conditions for such a disruptive relationship? It would need to be not that of absolutely perfecting or realizing the human, but of good as totally opposed to a humanity whose very nature had been corrupted and become evil. This view obtained, however, only in the reformation or antithetic phase of Christian theology which saw man not only as fallen but corrupted in his very nature. The Judeo-Christian view, however, is clearly that of man created in the image of God, sharing and manifesting—if in a limited way—the divine perfection: “And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good.”<sup>23</sup> To speak of man’s nature as being corrupt can only be a theological metaphor reflecting the philosophical nominalism of the time which did not admit universals or natures in any case. But in any proper philosophical sense a nature either contains all of its components or simply ceases to be that nature. A number three which loses one of its units is not a corrupt three, but no three at all—it has become a two. However weakened by the abuse of sinfulness, like all natures, human nature remains good as a distinct limited way of participating in and manifesting the absolute perfection of God.

The disruptive relationship between outer and inner transcendence, divine grace and self perfection, might also arise not in the nature of man, but in the process of his development if this were to be conceived as other than

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<sup>23</sup> *Genesis* I:31.

one process of self-realization. But again, that would appear to be a philosophical impossibility, for how could some alien intrusion be called self-development. In the long Catholic tradition—the Christian thesis and synthesis—just as man’s nature is not corrupted but has its perfection as a manner of participation in divine perfection, so is his development and self-perfection. God acts throughout this process: just as in creation his action does not substitute for man’s substance, but makes it to be, so in acting in the process of man’s perfection he does not substitute for man’s activity but capacitates man’s work of self-perfection and self-realization.

In brief, God does not subvert human reality as free and self-responsible; indeed, it would be a contradiction if human perfection were not one’s own self-perfection. Rather, as the unique and unchanging Absolute Being, he stands definitively against non-being and imperfection, creates man, makes him to be, and enables him to undertake the magnificent process of self-perfection. Life in Him lets man be man indeed.

Our difficulties in seeing this come from our tendency to view God as man and, hence, to introduce two similar operative agents in the one self-realization. It is important that we distinguish the two, that we let God be God. The causality of his infinite nature is the creative action of making me and my activities simply to be, while I, in my limitation, can shape them according to this or that character and relationship. All is from God as first cause or creator; all is also from man as second cause or cause of change. The two are not conflictual, much less are they incompatible; neither substitutes for the other. The late President John F. Kennedy said it well in his inaugural address: “In this world God’s work is man’s own.”

In this way, the Christian vision sees only God as absolutely perfect and, hence, self-sufficient. Man is complete but is not abandoned in his created nature; his nature is to seek his self-realization in a process that echoes the power of the divine. He is made to stand then in his own right by an absolute and self-sufficient power and, thus, must not be manipulated to lesser purposes by any man or group of men. It is the Transcendent Creator who has made man autonomous and equal to all others. His dignity and rights are firmly founded in this divine origin which they, in turn, reflect. Thereby, they are precious beyond question, and it is the duty of men acting in consort as society to protect that dignity and promote those rights individually and socially.

Christianity goes further still. It does not set man as the ultimate goal in relation to which God is merely source and support; rather God is as well man’s ultimate end or goal. Aristotle articulated part of this vision in his treatment of human happiness or fulfillment at the beginning and end of his ethics. Happiness, he said, consists in contemplation as the highest realization of man’s highest power (intellect) with regard to the highest reality of life divine. This is not an abandonment, but fulfillment of human life; it is the point at which man lives most fully.

To this, Christianity adds, beyond death, the goal of life with God seen not, as now indirectly by reasoning from creation, but face to face. This does



not negate the natural fulfillment of which Aristotle spoke, but carries it further by grace to an even more perfect knowledge of the Trinitarian essence of divine life. Though this is made possible by a special divine grace, like life itself it cannot be given exteriorly but must be lived by the person him or herself.

In this context, we see the true character of evil—we let evil be evil. It is not merely an unfortunate flaw in human perfection which man comes to know and bear, but which is nobody else's business. If our life is lived in response to God's love and as a way toward reunion with the Transcendent and personal source and goal of life, to abandon goodness is to reject the divine gift and to refuse the divine rendezvous. It is a personal rejection whose significance goes beyond oneself to our Absolute source and goal. This is the universe of the gentlemen, seen now in terms of what is fitting or ugly in relation not only to man, but to God as well. This does not mean that this is an affair between man and God alone. As all men are made in God's image, to do evil or refuse good to the least of our brothers is to do so to God himself and vice versa; to disrupt the harmony of community is to disrupt harmony with heaven.

Here, we find the source of the ultimate seriousness of human life: the depth of evil when committed; the urgency of response to need where we can help; and the sublime, indeed divine, beauty of the simplest life lived in harmony with man, nature and God. As above, this Catholic vision goes beyond, but is not against, the realm of which Confucius spoke. On the contrary it unpacks, gives contextual principles for, and opens the ultimate import of, the sublime sense of the harmony he so richly articulated.

The Catholic vision can provide as well a rich context for understanding teachings on love and the sublime teaching of Confucius thereupon. It joins the key Confucian principle of respect for one's father with its commandment to love honor and obey father and mother. It holds a graded love with the strongest and most detailed obligations in relation to those to whom we are closest by consanguinity and community. It places upon this a divine seal by adding that one who claims to love God and yet does not love his neighbor is a liar, that one who would bring offerings to the altar but is not reconciled with his brother must first become reconciled with his brother in order to be able to approach the altar of the Lord of Heaven.

In some ways the Catholic message may even extend and intensify the Confucian vision. For it would speak not only of control, of obedience of wife and children to husband and father, but would enjoin husbands to love their wives. It envisages these relations not merely as obligatory because they are imposed, but as imposed because they are freely and lovingly entered into. They are then not only obligations of justice, but implications of love. Finally, it does not leave all solely as the effect of the fallible will of a father, but puts this in the context of God as Father whose love and justice the human father is to imitate and to whom one has ultimate allegiance. This could imply even leaving father and mother in order to carry the love they first showed us into a broader service of mankind. Such broadening of horizons relocates the issue

of filial and unfilial behaviour in a richer and liberating context in which such aberrations as arbitrariness and self-centeredness on the part of parents can be transcended and the essence of a child's love for them more amply fulfilled in family and in society at large.

This work explores the possibility of modernizing the Confucian sense of harmony not by restricting it to merely adhesion of all individuals in a family or society to the will of their one father or governor, but by grounding this relation within a liberating and expanding relation to the Infinite One. Over time, the former more restrictively human perspective would seem to lend itself to being evolved in an autocratic style. Historically this seems indeed to have taken place and could have many particular causes. It seems well established that at times, for reasons of political stability, an autocratic sense of harmony was officially promoted, and, of course, at first blush this seems to be an easier way to run a family or nation. Yet, as most societies do not have so autocratic style, there is reason to ask why this should have happened in the Confucian tradition and how that tradition might be elaborated along less autocratic paths.

Indeed, some would argue that the original sense of Confucius was rather that of a dynamic cohesion of multiple elements into an harmonious whole. If so, this certainly could be revived, but to do so it is important to search for the principles which would found, maintain and protect such an integrative sense of harmony from reductivist tendencies. Here the sense of participation could be particularly helpful. For, to the degree that all were to be conceived simply in terms of human beings without anything transcending the father or governor and without democratic practice, it would fall simply to the will power of father or governor to establish order and all would veer toward autocracy. To avoid this and enable all to tend freely toward what is perfective of them, both individually and as a social whole, it is important that they be able to conceive their life in relation to an open and unlimited Transcendent being which is source and goal of all by which all are united, enlivened and cohesive in the exercise of that freedom. This would provide the key to a transition to democratic modes of life and would enable the Confucian sense of harmony already present to become the dynamic basis for civic responsibility and social cohesion.

Before moving to the impact of this for the very notion of being and, hence, of life and meaning, let us reflect for a moment on the dynamics at play in this impact of the Christian vision upon philosophy. We must first ask whether, when situated within a cultural context grounded in a revealed vision, philosophy, as knowledge gained by the natural light of reason, ceases to exist, being transformed into a theology based upon revelation? Certainly, that which involves formally the mysteries of the Trinity and the plan of Redemption in Christ can be known only by revelation and is therefore, a matter of theology. Today, however, as seen in chapter I, we are more conscious of the significance of the cultural and social context within which thought takes place. One who is raised in a loving and generous family will be more able and more liable to reflect love and generosity in his interpretation and

response to life, just as one who lives in a more calculating, manipulative and exploitive environment is less likely to factor into his thinking these elements of love and generosity. Today, we recognize that, like economics and even mathematics, philosophy is created by persons and peoples living in place and time, is stimulated by their physical and social circumstances, and reflects the deepest personal experiences and free commitments of their people.

The sense of meaning experienced through the ages and articulated in the myths had provided Plato with content for his ideas; by his dialogical method, he sorted out this meaning rather than creating it. Similarly, in philosophizing, the Christian thinkers returned to Platonic and Aristotelian themes with a new heart and mind, sensitized by their new redemptive and Trinitarian experience. The result was an inversion of the Aristotelian perspective, even by those who would be most Aristotelian in the technical implementation of their philosophy. For Aristotle, the point of initiation of knowledge was the senses, and his philosophy arose through his physics. It was built upon the requirements and implications of matter and change in the physical order. Man was seen to transcend the material, but was defined in relation to the physical order especially as care-taker of nature.

In contrast, the Trinitarian Catholic sense of what it meant to be corresponded rather to the *noesis noeseos* or Life Divine to which Aristotle concluded at the very end of his *Metaphysics*. Indeed, he did not hesitate to call his metaphysics a theology, both because it alone treated God among its objects and because it was the type of knowledge of all things which befitted God above all others.<sup>24</sup> In this light, it might be said that the distinctive Christian metaphysical sense, as also the Hindu metaphysics of the *Vedanta Sutras*, reflects the point at which Aristotle concluded, namely, the outer Transcendent or Absolute, Brahman, from which, in which and into which all is or exists.<sup>25</sup>

### TRANSCENDENCE, BEING AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

In this light, being is primarily and in principle not multiple, limited and changing, but One, unlimited and eternal; not material and potential, but spirit and fullness of Life; not obscure and obdurate, but Light and Truth; not inert and subject to external movers, but creative Goodness, Freedom and Love. This was the foundational Christian sense of being; the work of reason carried out by philosophy in its light would be sensitized to look—always by natural reason—for the reflections of this in human experience; its sense of person and community would be correspondingly enlivened.

Nor were these notions entirely strange to philosophy. As was seen above, Parmenides created metaphysics as a science in terms of Being as One. Aristotle's metaphysics not only culminated in divine life, but understood

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<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Vedanta Sutras*, I, 1.

being entirely as a *pros hen* analogy or relation thereto.<sup>26</sup> Hegel would see theology as a symbolic form of philosophical truths.

But religion is a human virtue, a mode of human action which, in its imaginative forms, conceives, unfolds, lives and celebrates the sense of life and meaning. Kant's thought, as described in the third chapter, provides a place for this at the very center of human freedom and, hence, of human life. Christ, like Confucius, laid down concrete patterns in which this has been lived and experienced by peoples through the centuries. They are the classical instances of the traditions in which we are born and from which we receive our trove of self-understanding and sensibility to others, our ability to conceive our world and to communicate with others in love and concern.

If then, philosophy in the Christian context looks not to the material order, but to the divine as its paradigm of reality, to unpack the effect of the Christian sense of transcendence upon philosophy we would do well to examine more closely the distinctive characteristics of its divine paradigm. This suggests the need to examine serially the enrichment that the Christian notion of the Trinity brings to the philosophical sense of being articulated according to its properties of one, true and good, to which the Christian mysteries provide a corresponding absolute and living person as source and goal.

For the Graeco-Christian philosophical tradition the inner properties of being as such are unity, truth and goodness; for Hindu philosophy, the characteristics of the Absolute are expressed in the correspondingly and explicitly living terms of existence (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ananda*). For the Christian, these are not simply characteristics of the divine, but persons related as Father, Son (Word) and Holy Spirit. To gain insight, then, into the impact of the Christian sense of the Transcendent upon the root sense of Being and the metaphysics of freedom, we shall look first to the richness of the unity of being as this appears to human reason in the Christian cultural context of the outer Transcendent as Father, or its Hindu correlative, Existence (*sat*). Next, we shall look for the meaning of truth when considered by natural reason in cultures marked by a sense of the Divine Word or Logos and the Transcendent as consciousness (*cit*). Finally, and especially in the last chapter, we will look to the sense of goodness when seen in the context of the Spirit of love proceeding from the Father and Son and as articulated in Hindu thought simply as bliss (*ananda*).<sup>27</sup>

Our goal here will not be to define these as properties of being, or *a fortiori* to develop a theology of the Trinity. It will be rather to sample some of the ways in which the Christian cultural context has made possible an enrichment and deepening of the properly philosophical insight into the properties of being and, hence, into the meaning of being both as lived by oneself and in itself. Further, because this religious vision of the Transcen-

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics: A Study in the Greek Background of Mediaeval Thought* (Toronto: PINS, 1951).

<sup>27</sup> Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism: Toward an Ecumenical Christophany* (New York: Orbis, 1981).

dent has been at the center of a people's self-understanding as they have faced the problems of living together in society, it relates as well to the meaning of the person in society and of the modes in which persons live together in freedom.

### *Unity*

From the very beginnings of Greek philosophy, unity was recognized by the first metaphysician, Parmenides, as a first characteristic of being. In his poem, he reasoned that in order to stand against the nonbeing or negation implied in the notions of beginning, limitation or multiplicity, that is, in order simply to be rather than not be, being as such—and, hence, Being Itself—had to be one, eternal and unchanging. Practically all religions recognize these characteristics as belonging to the divine. With Parmenides, they recognize that what is problematic is not how God can be. For being does exist and in the final analysis must be self-sufficient, because by definition there is no other reality or being upon which it could depend. What is problematic is rather how it is possible for finite or multiple beings to exist?<sup>28</sup>

Since finite or limited beings do, in fact, exist, their reality must be a participation in the infinite, eternal and unchanging One, the “external” transcendent, which they reflect in every facet of their being. It is as sharing in this absolute nature that limited beings are not mere functions of other realities, but subsist in their own right: the creator, in making them to be as participations in Himself, makes them to stand in—if not by—themselves, to have a proper identity which is unique and irreducible. This is the foundation of Boethius' classical definition of the person as a *subject* of a rational nature. Inasmuch as they reflect the divine, such beings are unique and unable to be assumed by some larger entity—even by the divine. Because they reflect the Absolute and Transcendent, they exist in their own right.

At the same time, because all limited beings are made to be by the same unique Transcendent Being, their foundational existence-in-themselves, rather than alienating them one from another, makes them to be related one to another by the very fact of their participated individual uniqueness. If to be is to exist in myself as a creature of God, it is thereby to be foundationally related both to Him and to all manifestations of His being. Seen in the light of the Transcendent, being, or “to be”, is to be radically myself, irreducible to nonbeing whether in the form of any reduction in my own being, subjection to another or merger into a mere member of a group. But, by the very same participation in the One divine source and goal of all, to be myself is equally and indissociably to be related to others. One is not compromised, but enhanced by the other in such wise that I achieve my highest identity in loving service of others in need.

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<sup>28</sup> See Parmenides; see also Shankara, *Commentary on the Vedanta Sutras*, Introduction.

This, in turn, founds the harmony of nature. It is the reason also, why living in harmony with nature and other persons is living fully. Within this harmony it implies, as Jefferson wrote in the “Declaration of Independence,” that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The task of the social order is not to diminish this or even to grant it, but to recognize, protect and promote it.

### *Truth*

Truth unfolds the unity of being to a still greater degree. Unfortunately, too often unity has been seen in terms that are static, reductionist and even commercial. Property, for example, has been looked upon as the right to withhold possessions. Rights have been seen as license to turn inward along the lines of the all-consuming orientation of freedom-as-choice described above. In that light, my being comes to be looked upon as a possession to be acquired and conserved or, worse still, to be bartered for something of equal quantity or quality.

Were the sense of reality essentially material, the paradigm would be that of blind and senseless atoms colliding randomly and chaotically one with another. Then, the laws of conservation of energy and commercial exchange would dictate that we guard what we have, share it only when we can get equal return and exploit others to the degree possible. In this case, Hobbes’ description of man as wolf to man and as short, brutish and mean would not be far from the mark.

In contrast, in the context of a culture marked by a sense of outer Transcendence, it is quite the opposite. The original and originating instance is being as pure knowledge or, better yet, truth. As imminently one and simple, there is not in us so much division as there is unity between our capabilities and their actuation, between our minds and the ideals they generate. Instead, all is one: the infinite capacity is fully actual, the infinite power to know is one with its ideas or insights, the infinite knower is identically the known, i.e., infinite being: in a word, subject and object, mental capacity and mental output are identically the one act of being. Such “outer” Transcendent is not only all-knowing but wisdom or knowledge itself, and, to the degree that knowledge implies a process of achievement or a grasp of something other, it would be more appropriate to speak not of infinite knowledge but of truth that is all-perfect or Truth Itself. Being is Truth in its prime instance, and, hence, also in each of its participations to the very degree that they participate in the One, which is to say, to the full extent of their being.

Being and life are not, then, dark and hidden, mysterious and foreboding; on the contrary, what light is to our eye, being is to spirit. Being makes sense to the mind, and, where it is sufficiently in act, it inevitably “sees” or knows; it is primarily subsistent knowledge and truth, and by extension the limited participations thereof. Also, as the word is to our tongue, being declares, expresses and proclaims itself; it is Word or Logos and participa-

tions thereof. A Christian culture is especially sensitive to this, for in Christian teaching the Word of God is a person and personal, the Son of the God the Father. Through this Word, all things were created. Having become incarnate in Christ, Jesus would say “He that seeth me seeth the Father also.”<sup>29</sup> How can you have known me and yet say that you do not know the Father who sent me: who spoke me. John, the author of the fourth gospel, said it classically: “That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.”<sup>30</sup>

One cannot overstress the degree which philosophy done in this context is particularly sensitized to the intelligibility or truth of being. Parmenides could say immediately upon initiating metaphysics: “Being is; nonbeing is not” and “It is the same thing to think and to be. All being is open, indeed is openness, to intellect; what is radically closed to mind simply is not and cannot be. In the context of the transcendent Truth itself, this resonates vibrantly in the mind. Philosophy moves confidently—if not always correctly—to overcome obscurity and fear; science races forward, confident that each step of insight constitutes solid progress in mankind’s exploration of this universe; problems are not destructive dilemmas and permanent contradictions, but challenges to be solved. The mind thrives in such a contest; the creativity of the human genius is invigorated and moves forward.

There is something else about being in the light of transcendent Truth itself. Truth speaks itself as word; indeed it proclaims itself. To attempt to hide the truth would image Chronos in the ancient Greek myths who attempted to swallow his children rather than allow them to enter into the light. This is contrary to the nature of being and as violent as attempting to force a river to flow upstream; in the long run, it must eventually be unsuccessful. Being is fundamentally truth and, hence, openness, manifestation and communication. This is reality itself and, hence, the key to the self-realization of both individuals and peoples.

In the image of the Son who as Word expresses all that the Father is, and, like Logos as the first principle through whom all is created, being is open, expressive and creative. Just as a musician or poet unfolds the many potential meanings of a single theme, so being as truth unfolds its meaning and communicates itself to others. Here, the human intellect plays an essential role by conceiving new possibilities, planning new structures, and working out new paths for mankind in the pilgrimage of life with others. Justice, too, is implied as true judgments in the public forum about being. Such judgments must honor and express the sacredness of beings in their self-identities and promote their mutuality. This is the role of leadership in family, business and society.

It was the dark plot of Goebbels to harness the new 20th century technology of communication to a restrictive and, hence, false ideology in order to create the modern means for mind control. The philosopher’s dream is

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<sup>29</sup> John 14:9.

<sup>30</sup> John I:9.

rather that those means can be engaged by the free and enquiring mind in its fascination with the truth, communication and cooperation. This is the key to the implementation of a modern democratic society.

### *Goodness*

Goodness is the third property of being. In the Christian Trinity this corresponds to the Holy Spirit as the love of Father and Son. In being, it expresses the conjunction and fulfillment of unity and truth in celebration of the perfection of being or, where imperfect, in the search for that perfection or fulfillment. Holiness is precisely this devotedly holding by being to its perfection or goodness.

Further, as Being Itself is absolute and eternally self-sufficient, and, hence, has no need for other beings, it creates not out of need, but out of love freely given. This transforms the understanding of human life, which can now be seen not merely as freedom to choose, to gather and accumulate, or statically to maintain, repeat or conserve, nor even as Kant's freedom as the ability to do as we ought. Rather, it is freedom of self-determination, whereby we can "change our own character creatively by deciding for ourselves what we shall do or should become."<sup>31</sup> As seen in Chapter II, this may be closer to Confucius's original sense of harmony as a dynamic interrelation of multiple and changing units; if so, it would be also the role of peacemaker in the image of the "Prince of Peace."

Yves Simon summarizes some implications of this for human freedom. He points out that it is based, not in the indeterminism of freedom as mere choice, for that would face the will with the impossible task of deriving something from nothing. Rather, human freedom is the result of a supra-determinism.<sup>32</sup> Because the human intellect and will are open to the infinite One, the original Truth and Good, man in thought and will can respond to any limited participated good whatsoever, but without being necessitated thereby. In this lies the essence of freedom: as liberated from determining powers, whether internal or external, the will is autonomous; at the same time it is positively oriented toward the good and its realization in all circumstances and in limitless ways. This is the positive attraction of beauty and harmony as a vital source for the human creativity of which Confucius spoke and about which Kant wrote in his "Critique of the Aesthetic Judgement."

Still more dynamically, the originating Transcendent Spirit implies for being a sense of transforming, innovating and creating. As radically, His gift, our life must in turn be passed on by sharing it with others in love (see chapter VI). Even death—whether analogously through suffering in the image of the cross or physically at the end of one's days—does not overcome

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<sup>31</sup> Mortimer J. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectical Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958), I, 606.

<sup>32</sup> Yves R. Simon, *Freedom of Choice*, P. Wolff, ed. (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1969), p. 106.



this Spirit of Life, but becomes a way to new life. In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul expressed well the combination of irreducible confidence and indomitable hope implied by the sense of life lived in the context of the Absolute and Transcendent.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies (*II Cor.* 4:7-10).

A philosophy of the person as image of this transcendent divine principle, carried out in the cultural context sensitized by the dynamic Trinitarian interrelations of persons, transforms the sense of the person in this world. Man remains part of nature, but rather than being subject thereto as a mere producer or consumer, is a creative and transforming center, responsible for the protection and promotion of nature. Similarly, man is by nature social and a part of society; but rather than being subject thereto as an object, he is its creative center and must be an integral part of all decision making.

As the movements of freedom in this half century reflect the emergence of new understanding of the person and its fuller role in social life, human dignity, equality, and participation in the socio-political process have become central concerns. The search for adequate foundations for democracy and its heightened sense of the dignity of the person generates naturally new interest in religion.

In the image of the Trinity, the three characteristics of being stand out in human life. First, self-affirmation is no longer simply a choice of one or another type of object or action as a means to an end, but a radical self-affirmation of existence within Existence Itself. Second, self-consciousness is no longer simply self-directed after the manner of Aristotle's absolute "knowing on knowing"; rather, the Absolute Truth knows all that it creates as a reflection of its own being, truth and goodness, while the participating instances of self-awareness transcend themselves in relation to others. Finally, this new human freedom is an affirmation of existence as sharing in Love Itself, the creative and ultimately attractive divine life—or in Indian terms, "Bliss" (*ananda*).

This new sense of being and freedom reflects the meaning of the Transcendent for man and of man in the Transcendent, in the contest of its radical proclamation in the Christian mysteries. Expressing far more than a transition from one life style to another, the new meaning is based in Christ's death and Resurrection to new life. Hence, Christian baptism is a death to the slavery of selfishness and a rebirth to a new life of service and celebration with others. It is a gift or divine grace, but no less a radically free option for life on our part. In the next chapter we shall see how this freedom unfolds as a pattern not

only of objects but of subjects which constitute a culture. This new life of freedom means, of course, combating evil in whatever form: hatred, injustice and prejudice—all are privations of the good that should be. This will be the topic of the Chapter IV.

The focus of being seen in the light of the Transcendent, however, is not upon negations, but upon giving birth to the goodness of being and bringing this to a level of human life marked by an enriched Confucian harmony of beauty and love.

## **PART II**

### **THE EMERGENCE OF SUBJECTIVITY AS INTERIOR AWARENESS OF THE LIFE OF MAN IN GOD**



## CHAPTER III

# CULTURE AND THE REDISCOVERY OF GOD IMMANENT IN HUMAN FREEDOM: FROM OBJECT TO SUBJECT

### INTRODUCTION

At this turn of the millennia we stand at a decisive point in history: a juncture at which basic human decisions must be made which, for good or ill, promise to shape the history of human kind for long centuries to come.

To the Western mind this appears if one begins from the commonplace that the history of its thought divides between the classical, that is, ancient and medieval, on the one hand, and the modern and the contemporary on the other. The former is seen to have been axised upon the transcendent, the absolute or the divine. This was the One of Parmenides and Plato, the Prime Mover or Knowing on Knowing (*noesis noeseos*) of Aristotle, the "Heavenly City" of Augustine, or the Creator and Redeemer of St. Thomas. The later period, from the time of the Renaissance, has been axised upon humankind: from its early exploration of the world to the recent concerns for the human environment and from Descartes' Archimedean principle, "I am" (*sum*), to the existential and postmodern rejection of principles and foundations so that man might be free.

Present events force us to ask whether our people or any people conceived in this modern manner can long endure; and many signposts, including the new term: 'post modern,' point to a negative answer. The collapse of the totalitarian structures in Eastern Europe appeared to leave those of liberal, i.e., individualistic or even anarchistic, competition of the West. But the most recent signs suggest that these are no longer adequate and that we stand rather at the end of an era. First, the emergence of peoples from Eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean, enabling them to regain their sense of identity as peoples, suddenly has forced upon them the unresolved issues of how they are to live together under the concrete overlapping of historical claims and counter-claims, triumphs and tragedies. Similarly, despite some narrow votes, it is clear that any progress toward unity in Western Europe will have to give more attention to national and group identities. Second, the structures of the West seem now to have begun to crumble as well under the weight of individualistic self-centeredness. The weight of rebuilding may have been the catalyst, but the disintegration seems to be rooted more deeply: military adventure and wild over-consumption has generated astronomic debts within and between nations which in the last decade have mortgaged all foreseeable successive generations; moral corruption and self-seeking have undermined confidence in social structures from family to nation; the emerging sense of rights and

commitments has degenerated into adversarial relations which paralyse economies, set people against their neighbor, and turned ghettos into zones of warfare and terror.

As we move into the new millennium there is reason to think that an entire era is passing; that we stand at a crossroads where we must choose either passively to slide further toward the chaos which opens under our feet or creatively to open some new and deeper synthesis which assumes but transforms both the ancient thesis axised upon God and the modern antithesis axised upon man. If in the past one of these has supplanted the other, it is necessary now to think of ways to relate positively both horizons, enrich each with the strengths of the other, open ways to make actual the sacredness of life, and thereupon build the future.

There are some signs that this is now desired and sought. On the one hand, humanism no longer is taken in the closed and exclusive sense of the “scientific atheism” or reductivist humanisms of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Disillusioned with the naive boasts that man can save himself (now revealed as a thin mask for the perennial boast in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*), people search for foundations for their freedom and dignity which transcend anything that mankind, whether as individual or as party, can create—and therefore take away.

On the other hand, the Churches seem to be shifting also from opposition to a transforming synthesis. The “Oath Against Modernism” has slipped into the past to be replaced by the Vatican II document, “The Church in the World”; the once feared Sacred Inquisition, having become simply the Holy Office, has now become the Congregation of the Faith; in turn, the Propaganda Fide, once charged with simply passing on what had been handed down, has now become the Office for the Evangelization of Peoples, charged with finding the meaning of the Good News for the emerging appreciation of the unique identity of each people. This bespeaks a new sense of the foundational importance of the meeting of God and humankind in the Annunciation, the Incarnation and the Pascal and Pentecostal events which began this era.

In this light the present theme, “Religion and Culture,” reflects the recent sense of the need and possibility for a new, deeper and more fruitful synthesis of the ancient and modern horizons of God and man. In our precarious situation this is a challenge to which, in our precarious situation, we dare not fail to respond. How can this be done?

To begin to discern the emergence of a new synthesis, we might distinguish four planes: In terms of the focus of human sensitivity and interests, the objective (A) and the subjective or existential (B); In terms of levels of reality, humankind (C) and God (D).

A Objectivity                      →      C Humankind

B Subjectivity                      →      D God

This will enable our analysis to proceed in four steps. First, the present crumbling of the modern Western view will be related to its limitation to the human understood in objective terms—A to C (Part I). Second, the resulting problems are seen as pointing beyond objectivity to human subjectivity and thereby to a focus upon the nature of human creativity and upon culture as its realization—A to B (Part II). Thirdly, such phenomenological analysis in turn enables us to look more deeply into the origin of our own subjectivity and thereby to expand the focus of our awareness from mankind to the divine as the objectively transcending source in relation to which our conscious life stands as gift manifesting the intimate divine life of love—C to D (Part III). In this light, religion becomes, not an alien imperial (or colonial) imposition, but the enlivening experience of being the expression of divine love, called in turn to respond creatively to present challenges—B to D (Part IV).

## **THE HUMAN AS OBJECT**

### *Rationalism: The Paradigm of Modern Thought*

In the history of philosophy brilliant new creative openings often degenerate into reductionist efforts to absorb all other meaning. This perverse dynamism is found in no less central a personage than Plato, the Father of Western philosophy, who changed Parmenides' relation of thought to being into a reduction of reality to what was clear to the human mind. Thus he invited the human mind to soar, but where it met its limits—as in taking account of concrete realities and the exercise of human freedom—he generated a classic blueprint for a suppressive communal state.

Such temptations of all-controlling reason are the more characteristic of modern times, beginning from Descartes' requirements of clarity and distinctness for the work of reason. The effect in his own philosophy was to split the human person between extended substance or body and non-extended substance or spirit. Much as he tried to unite these in the human person, this could not be done in the clear and distinct terms he required. As a result philosophers and then whole cultures proceeded according to either body or spirit as modern thought polarized between the atomism of discrete sensations and the ever greater unities perceived by spirit.

What is particularly frightening is the way in which theoretical philosophical experiments in either of these isolates were carried out by a fairly mechanical pattern of reason and then translated into public policy. It is fine for a thinker to give free range to the constructive possibilities of his or her mind by saying, as did Hobbes, e.g.: "Let's suppose that all are isolated singles in search of survival" and then see what compromises and what rules will make survival possible. Over time we have become accustomed to that game and often forget Hobbes' identification of the wolflike basic instincts by which it is played; we should listen to others when they perceive the resulting system as predatory, brutish and mean.

Similarly, it could be helpful for a thinker to hypothesize that all is matter and then see how its laws can shed light on the process of human history. But when this was done by Marx and Lenin, society began to repress the life of the spirit and termed ‘irrational’ everything except scientific historicism. The freedom of individuals and of peoples was suppressed: creativity died.

Both are parallel cases of theoretical axioms becoming metaphysical totalities. It is not surprising that the result for this century was a bipolar world armed to the hilt and subsisting by a reign of mutual terror between the liberal democratic republics of the self-styled “free world” and the people’s democratic republics. What is surprising is that the internal collapse of one of the partners in this deadly game should give popularity to the notion that the parallel road taken by the other partner can be followed now without fear—that the wolf has been transformed into a lamb for lack of a mirror in which to observe the effects of its own root viciousness.

#### *Freedom as Object*

Our task, however, is not merely to identify the generic limitations of rationalism as background for the emergence of broad new sensibilities. It is also to relate this specifically to the new awareness of culture and its implications for the task of evangelization as that of the liberation of mankind in the deepest and fullest sense. Hence, we shall look specifically to the notions of freedom in order to see what the liberal rationalist perspective does and does not make possible, and hence what precisely is the reason for the new attention to culture and the significance of this attention for religious awareness.

We shall draw especially upon the work of Mortimer J. Adler and the team of The Institute for Philosophical Research which was published as *The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectical Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom*.<sup>1</sup> Their corporate examination of main philosophical writings identified three correlated modes in which freedom has been understood, namely, circumstantial, acquired and natural; and the corresponding modes of self (i.e., “the ability or power of the self in virtue of which freedom is possessed”), namely, self-realization, self-perfection and self-determination.<sup>2</sup> This yields the following scheme:

<i>Mode of Possession</i>	<—————>	<i>Mode of Self</i> <sup>3</sup>
1. Circumstantial	<—————>	1. Self-realization
2. Acquired	<—————>	2. Self-perfection
3. Natural	<—————>	3. Self-determination

<sup>1</sup>Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1958, 2 vols.

<sup>2</sup>Adler, I, 586.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 587.



This distinguishes three theories of freedom, namely:<sup>4</sup>

(A) *Circumstantial freedom of self-realization*: “To be free is to be able, under favorable circumstances, to act as one wishes for one’s own individual good as one sees it”;

(B) *Acquired freedom of self-perfection*: “To be free is to be able, through acquired virtue or wisdom, to will or live as one ought in conformity to the moral law or an ideal befitting human nature”; and

(C) *Natural freedom of self-determination*: “To be free is to be able, by a power inherent in human nature, to change one’s own character creatively by deciding for oneself what one shall do or shall become.”

When we look into the philosophical basis from which have arisen these various theories of freedom, what appears striking is that each of the three types of freedom delineated by the Institute of Philosophical Research corresponds to an epistemology and metaphysics. Circumstantial freedom of self-realization is the only type of freedom recognized by many empirically oriented philosophers; acquired freedom of self-perfection is characteristic of more rational, formalist and essentialist philosophers; natural freedom of self-determination is developed by philosophers open as well to the existential dimension of being. This suggests that the metaphysical underpinnings of a philosophy control its epistemology and that especially in modern times this in turn controls its philosophical anthropology, ethics and politics. With this in mind the following review of the types of freedom will begin from their respective metaphysical and epistemological contexts and in that light proceed to its notion of freedom.

In these terms Descartes division of the human person into a spirit or thinking substance, on the one hand, and a body or extended substance, on the other, opened two divergent paths: that of Locke based on the physical senses to which corresponds the circumstantial freedom of self-realization; and that typified by Spinoza and Kant based on the human intellect to which corresponds the acquired freedom of self-perfection. While both are important, their limitations point the way to a new level of meaning (Part II) concerned with the natural freedom of self-determination.

#### *Circumstantial Freedom of Self-realization and Liberalism*

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 white paper void 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

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 606.

by sensation or by reflection upon the mind's work on the materials derived from the senses.<sup>5</sup> From this 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.<sup>6</sup>

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 unconscious or *entelechies*. Hence, the grounds of meaning and all that transcends the immediate content of sense experience are excluded.

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 which objects among the sets of contraries I will choose by brute, changeable and even arbitrary will power, and whether circumstances will allow me to carry out that choice. 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 these compromises.<sup>7</sup> Throughout it all, however, the basic concern remains the ability to do as one pleases.

This includes two factors. The first is execution by which my will is translated into action. Thus, John Locke sees freedom as "being able to act or not act, according as we shall choose or will"<sup>8</sup>; Bertrand Russell sees it as "the absence of external obstacles to the realization of our desires."<sup>9</sup> The second factor is individual self-realization understood simply as the accomplishment of one's good as one sees it. This reflects one's personal idiosyncrasies and temperament, which in turn reflect each person's individual character.

In these terms one's goal can be only that which appeals to one, with no necessary relation to real goods or to duties which one ought to perform.<sup>10</sup> "Liberty consists in doing what one desires,"<sup>11</sup> and the freedom

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<sup>5</sup>John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Dover, 1959), Chap. I, Vol. I, 121-124.

<sup>6</sup>David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Chicago: Regnery, 1960).

<sup>7</sup>*The Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971).

<sup>8</sup>*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, A.C. Fraser, ed. (New York: Dover, 1959), II, ch. 21, sec 27; vol. I, p. 329.

<sup>9</sup>*Skeptical Essays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 169.

<sup>10</sup>Mortimer J. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom: A Dialectical Examination of the Conceptions of Freedom* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 187.

<sup>11</sup>J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, ch. 5, p. 15.

of a society is measured by the latitude it provides for the cultivation of individual patterns of life.<sup>12</sup> If there is any ethical theory in this it can be only utilitarian, hopefully with enough breadth to recognize other people and their good as well as one's own. In practice, 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; it is the essence of consumerism.

This first level of freedom is reflected in the contemporary sense of "choice" in North America. As a theory this is underwritten by a pervasive series of legal precedents following Justices. Holme's and Brandeis' notion of privacy, which now has come to be recognized as a constitutional right. In the American legal system the meaning of freedom has been reduced to this. It should be noted that this derived from Locke's politically motivated decision (itself an exercise of freedom) not merely to focus upon empirical meaning, but to eliminate from public discourse any other knowledge. Its progressively rigorous implementation, which we have but sampled in the references to Hume and Carnap, constitute an ideology in the sense of a selected and restrictive vision which controls minds and reduces freedom to wilfulness. In this perspective liberalism is grossly misnamed, and itself calls for a process of liberation and enrichment.

In sum, in the context of the Enlightenment and in order to make possible universal participation in social life, Locke limited the range of meaning to what was empirically available. This assured one sense of freedom limited to choices between contrary qualities. The effort was well-intentioned, but he would seem to have tried too hard and compromised too much in his single-minded pursuit of freedom of choice. As a result, the very notion of freedom has been undermined.

#### *Acquired Freedom of Self-Perfection*

Kant's sense of freedom emerges in the contrast of his Second to his First Critique. *The Critique of Pure Reason* studies the role of mind in the scientific constitution of the universe. Kant 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 human 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 if the forms and categories with which we work are from our mind, how we construct with them is not arbitrary. 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 with a view to making the necessary and universal judgments of science. The subject's imagination here is active but not free, being ruled by the

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<sup>12</sup>Adler, p. 193.

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.

In his Second Critique, beyond that set of universal, necessary and ultimately material relations, Kant points to the reality of human responsibility in the realm of practical reason. If man is responsible, then there is about him a distinctive level of reality irreducible to the laws of physical nature. This is the reality of freedom and spirit which characterizes and distinguishes the person.

In terms of this he recasts the whole notion of law or moral rule. If freedom is not to be chaotic and randomly destructive, it must be ruled or under 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. I am free because I am the lawmaker. But my exercise of this power cannot be arbitrary. If the moral order must be universal, then my maxim which I dictate must be fit to be also a universal law for all persons. On this basis freedom emerges in a clearer light. It is not merely self-centered whimsy in response to circumstantial stimuli; nor is it a despotic exercise of the power of the will or the clever self-serving eye of Plato's rogue. Rather, it is the highest reality in all creation; it 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 man's glory—and his burden.

Unfortunately, this glorious ideal remained in the formal order. 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, many who are deeply concerned about human rights work at a level of abstraction which keeps them from positive engagement in the real process of constructing the world in which we live.

For example, in the former Yugoslavia diplomacy was long inactive behind an initial insistence that borders remain unchanged, then that there be an assurance of minority rights, then "letting the blood lust run out." Finally, when it became clear that the entire fabric of central and eastern Europe was in danger of coming apart and being substituted by raw power, it began fatuously to say that cases should be prepared for subsequent international tribunals and that humanitarian aid should be protected.)

Thus, the second sense of freedom, namely, acquired freedom of self-perfection, opens a new and much needed dimension of freedom based upon our nature or essence as free beings. This was founded in law precisely as one asserts for oneself (autonomously) a law which is fit for all men (universal). One is "able through acquired virtue or wisdom, to will or live as one ought in conformity to the moral law or an ideal befitting human nature."

But one needs to go beyond issues of nature or essence. Freedom is not only the articulation of a law—however autonomous and universal this might be in the pattern of Kant's Second Critique, or at whatever stage of universalization of the sense of justice in the pattern of Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning. Freedom is not merely a nature reflected in moral judgements; it is human life and action. Liberation means to be *humanly*, to live this *fully*; this is a matter not of essence, but of existence.

Progress in being human corresponds to man's development of the sense of being. Its deepening from forms and structures, essences and laws in Plato, to that of act in Aristotle and especially of existence in Christian philosophy, definitively deepened the sense of human life with its triumphs and tragedies. This is the drama we are living in our days as we are called insistently to humanize the application of our technological abilities; indeed it is life itself. This can be lived not simply in terms of essence, that is, of a moral laws or of ideals befitting human nature; rather it must be in terms of existence, that is, 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.

This takes us far beyond freedom as external choice between objects in our world and also beyond internal selection of universal principles for the direction of our action. It is, rather, self-affirmation in terms of our orientation or teleology to perfection or full realization. It implies seeking when that is absent and enjoying or celebrating it as attained. In this sense, it is that stability in one's orientation to the good which classically has been termed holiness. One might say that it is life as practiced by the saints, but it would be more correct to say that it is because they lived in such a manner that they are called holy.

If the three senses or dimensions of freedom correspond to epistemologies and metaphysics, then in order to be able to achieve liberation fully by freedom of self-determination a new level of awareness is required. When the contemporary mind proceeds beyond objective natures to really become conscious of its human subjectivity or of existence precisely as emerging in and through human self-awareness, then the most profound changes take place. The old order built on objective structures and norms is no longer adequate; structures crumble and a new era dawns. This is indeed the juncture at which we stand; it can be tracked on two levels. It can be read by its external signs, namely, in the social upheavals and realignments of the student revolutions of 1968, the minority movements of the 1970s, and the crumbling of the ideologies in the 1980s and 1990s. Really to understand these in a way that makes it possible to respond creatively, it is important to use the tools of metaphysics and epistemology in order to understand their root dynamics and to be able not simply to react, but to respond creatively.

Today the greatest peril would appear to be our blindness to the forces at work in the world today, and therefore our inability to provide the

creativity needed to keep these from degenerating into the most base and crude forms of barbarism. Neither the liberal balance of the egoistic pursuits of private interests nor the formal, ideal principles of a Kantian order have proven capable of warding off colonial oppression in recent centuries, and even genocide in the present, or of channelling human forces into humane relations.

It is of the greatest urgency that we begin to chart the forces which opened the new consciousness of human existence and thereby enabled radical development at the third and basic level of human freedom at which it becomes authentic liberation. This new emergence of the sense of identity and relation on the part of individuals and peoples will be studied in Part II.

## THE HUMAN AS SUBJECT

### *The Emergence of the Subject*

At the beginning of the 20th century it had appeared that the rationalist project of stating all in clear and distinct terms—whether the empirical terms of the empiricist and positivist tradition of sense knowledge or the formal and essentialist Kantian tradition of intellectual knowledge—was close to completion. Whitehead writes 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 the work of physics was essentially completed except for some details of application. In fact, the very attempt to wrap up scientific rational knowledge with its most evolved tools was to manifest the radical insufficiency of the objectivist approach.

Wittgenstein would begin by writing his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*<sup>13</sup> on the Lockean supposition that significant knowledge consisted in constructing a mental map corresponding point by point to the external world as this was open to sense experience. In such a project the spiritual power to grasp the relations between the points on this mental map, i.e., to “understand,” was relegated to the margin as being simply “unutterable.” Wittgenstein’s experience in teaching children led him to the conclusion that this empirical mental mapping was simply not what was going on in human knowledge. Consequently, in his *Blue and Brown Books*<sup>14</sup> and his subsequent *Philosophical Investigations*,<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein shifted conscious human intentionality which had previously been relegated to the periphery, to the very center of concern. Thus, the focus of his philosophy was no longer the positivist replication of the external world, but the human construction of language and worlds of meaning.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Tr. C.K. Ogden (London: Methuen, 1981).

<sup>14</sup>New York: Harper and Row.

<sup>15</sup>Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958).

<sup>16</sup>Brian Wicker, *Culture and Theology* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), pp. 68-88.

A similar process was underway in the Kantian camp. There, Husserl's attempt to bracket all elements in order to isolate pure essences for scientific knowledge, forced attention to the limitations of a pure essentialism and opened the way for Martin Heidegger, his collaborator and successor, to rediscover the existential and historical dimensions of reality in his *Being and Time*.<sup>17</sup> (This would be echoed in Rahner's *Spirit in the World*,<sup>18</sup> while the most exceptional document of Vatican II, called to draw out the religious implications of this new sensitivity, would be entitled *The Church in the World*).<sup>19</sup>

For Heidegger the meaning of being and of life was to be sought in the unveiling of conscious human life (*Dasein*) lived through time and therefore through history. If that be the case, then human consciousness would become the new focus of attention. The pursuit of this unfolding, patterning and interrelation of consciousness would open a new era of human liberation. Epistemology and metaphysics would develop in the very process of tracking the nature and direction of this process. Thus, for Heidegger's successor, Hans-Georg Gadamer, the task would become that of uncovering how human persons, as emerging in the community of family, neighborhood and people, exercise their freedom in consciously creating culture, not merely as a compilation of whatever humankind does or makes, but as the fabric of human symbols and interrelations within which a human group chooses to live in the process of unveiling being in time.

To engage in the liberation of the person in our day requires examining the grounds upon which a people develops its identity as a community and nation and the process by which, in concert with others, it advances into the future.

This calls for attention to three specific issues:

1. The nature of values, culture and tradition;
2. The moral authority of this cultural tradition and its values for guiding our life;
3. The active role of every generation in creatively shaping and developing tradition in response to the challenges of its times.

All of these are of major import in appreciating the process of evangelization.

#### *Culture and Cultural Traditions as Cumulative Freedom of Self-Determination*

*Values:* Living things survive by seeking the good or that which

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<sup>17</sup>New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

<sup>18</sup>New York: Crossroads, 1979.

<sup>19</sup>*Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. Abbott (New York: New Century, 1974).

perfects and promotes their life. Thus a basic exercise of human freedom is to set an order of preferences among the many things that are possible. These are values in the sense that they “weigh more heavily” in making our decisions than do other possibilities. Cumulatively, they set the pattern of our actions.

*Culture:* Together the values, artifacts and modes of human interaction constitute an integrated pattern of human life in which the creative freedom of a people is expressed and implemented. This is called a culture.

Etymologically, the term “culture” derives from the Latin term 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 even 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. This sense 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*).

Here, the focus is upon the creative capacity of the human spirit: its ability to work as artist, 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. The result is a whole person characterized by unity and truth, goodness and beauty, and encouraged to share fully in the meaning and value of life. The capacity to do so 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 one’s own origination in an attitude of profound appreciation. This may lead us to the one absolute being beyond self and other, beyond identity and diversity, in order to comprehend both; this will be taken up below.

By attending more to its object, culture can be traced to the terms *civis*, or citizen, and civilization. These reflect the need for a person to belong to a social group or community in order for the human spirit to produce its proper results. The community brings to the person the resources of the tradition, the *tradita* or past wisdom and productions of the human spirit, thereby facilitating 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 cultures is composite in character. For the social sciences Tyler defined this classically 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.”

Each particular complex or culture is specific to one 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 babble. 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 indeed 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 cultural alienation between peoples. Today, as communication increases and more widely differentiated peoples enter into ever greater interaction and mutual dependence, we reap an ever more bitter harvest of this connotation. A less exclusivist sense of culture must be a priority task.

*Tradition* is the cumulative process of transmitting, adjusting and applying the values of a culture through time. It is at once both heritage or what is inherited or received, and new creation as we pass this on in new ways. Attending to tradition taken in this active sense allows one to uncover not only the permanent and universal truths sought by Socrates, but: (a) to perceive the importance of values one receives from the tradition, and (b) to mobilize one’s own life project actively toward the future. We shall look more closely at each of these.

#### *The Moral Authority of Cultural Traditions*

As received, tradition is not against freedom but is rather the cumulative freedom of a people. Persons emerge from birth into a family and neighborhood from which they learn and in harmony with which they thrive. Horizontally, one learns from experience what promotes and what destroys life; accordingly one makes pragmatic adjustments. Vertically, and more importantly, one learns values, i.e., what is truly worth striving for and the pattern of social interaction in which this can be richly lived. This, rather than all that happens (history), is what is passed on (*tradita*, tradition). The importance of tradition derives from the cooperative character of both the learning by which wisdom is drawn from experience—even of failure—and of the cumulative free acts of commitment and sacrifice which have defined, defended and passed on through time the corporate life of the community.

This cultural tradition attains its authority not by the arbitrary imposition of the will of our forbears or by abstract laws, but on the basis of what has been learned from horizontal and vertical experience about life, and passed on. Through history there evolves a vision of actual life which transcends time and hence can provide guidance for our life, past, present and future. The content of that vision is a set of values which point the way to mature and perfect human formation and thereby orient the life of a person. Such a vision is historical because it arises in the life of a people in time and presents an appropriate way of preserving that life through time. It is also normative because it provides the harmony and fullness which is at once classical and historical, ideal and personal, uplifting and dynamizing,

in a word, liberating. For this reason it provides a basis upon which past historical ages, present options and future possibilities are judged.

### *Cultural Creativity*

As an active process tradition transforms what is received, lives it in a creative manner and passes it on as a leaven for the future. Taken diachronically the process of tradition as receiving and passing on does not stop with Plato's search for eternal and unchangeable ideals, with the work of *techné* in repeating exactly and exclusively a formal model, or with rationalism's search for clear and distinct knowledge of immutable natures by which all might be controlled. Rather, in the application of a tradition according to the radical distinctiveness of persons and their situations, tradition is continually perfected and enriched. It manifests the sense of what is just and good which we have from our past, by creating in original and distinctive ways more of what justice and goodness mean. J. Pelican said it well: "Tradition is the living faith of the dead: traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."

Is the reading of the tradition a matter of appreciation, repetition and conservation or original, creative and free expression? It is impossible to read an ancient text with the eyes long closed of their author, not least because to the very degree in which that might succeed it would destroy the text which in itself was written as a vital expression of the process of life. In contrast, a hermeneutic approach would not seek to reiterate ancient times in reading ancient texts, but to recognize that we come to them from new times, with new horizons and new questions; that this enables them to speak new meaning to us; and that in so doing the texts and philosophies are living rather than dead—and therefore more true. Gospel texts read in this sense are part of living tradition in which is situated our struggle to face the problems of life and build a future worthy of those who follow.

## **SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THINKING ABOUT THE RELATION OF CULTURE AND RELIGION**

### *Religious vs Reductive Humanism*

It is of fundamental importance to note the difference between a wisdom or overall outlook based upon man and one that is based upon God. The former, focused exclusively on man, is characteristically modern and has epistemological roots in the modern rationalist project of Descartes to gain control over life by reducing all knowledge to only that which can be developed with clarity and distinctness. It is not that knowledge with such characteristics is not desirable, but rather that the exclusion of all other knowledge decimates the dimensions of meaning and obliterates the dimensions of freedom, creativity and love.

As seen in Part I, this begins by analyzing all into their minimum clear component natures and then to relate these externally. On the physical side these components are endowed by inertia; their mode of interrelation is then that of collision and displacement. When this is taken up by those who would achieve the goal of clarity and control in terms of sense knowledge alone as in the Hobbesian and positivist tradition, the mode of interrelation is that of power relations of self-centered atomic individuals in search of survival. The modality of such life is violence tempered only by the compromise of one's own vicious freedom. The key to directing one's life and interpreting all others is Darwin's survival of the fittest or Freud's precarious management by the ego of an aggressive id through a tenuous super-ego. There is in this no goal or ideal toward which one strives, but only a series of steps to curb the degree of human crassness. Human not only evolve from a brutish state; but do so reluctantly, regret that he can no longer be simply such, and return thereto to the degree possible in order to be authentically oneself.

The religious view is radically different. Its sense of reality is primarily that of the All-perfect plenitude of being. In the Greek tradition this is the One, Unchanging, Eternal of Parmenides, Goodness itself of Plato, the All-knowing of Aristotle; in the Hindu tradition it is Brahma as the Existence, Consciousness and Bliss from which, in which and into which all are; for Islam it is the One who is All-powerful, All-wise, All-loving; for Buddhism it is the ideal of Compassion, Harmony and Mercy. This is what it means to be, and to the degree that men are not the absolute, they are limited realizations of that perfection, wisdom and love.

In this context human life does have a goal and orientation. It is not an indifferent power asking only to be able to do whatever it happens to want and to gratify whatever instinct is the most clamorous at the moment. Rather its goal is to realize its being to the fullest and to share thereby to the maximum degree possible, and according to its own nature and context, in the unity and truth, love and bliss that being most truly is.

It is not then alien or compromising for a human person to want to be with others and to be concerned for their welfare—that is natural; rather, it is being self-centered and exploitive that is alien and self-destructive. Thus, the development of a cultural consensus in the good does not do violence to one's nature and identity, but allows it to emerge and to celebrate its deepest striving. If this be the case, then evangelization, the spreading of the good news, is truly needed and most deeply suited to human life, for it has the decisive power of the truth that responds to mankind's most fundamental striving.

Indeed, we should go further and in a way particularly related to the generation of cultures. We saw above that the development of values and virtues of which a culture is above all composed arises from the elemental instability of the human situation. As human, man like every being has all that pertains to it according to the level of his or her nature. The human person is a self-conscious participant in being, which in its primary

realization is One and All-perfect. Hence, the human person is ever open and searching in mind and heart. One can respond to all things because one can see the good in them; one needs to respond positively to things because one can appreciate his or her imperfection in comparison to the divine. Nevertheless no limited reality can compel this assent, because as limited it is always deficient in comparison to the All-perfect.

This free penchant for the good is the key to the dynamism of human life. From it there emerges both the creativity and the selectivity in the life of each human group by which it makes consistent choices and shapes its culture. For this reason, the preaching of the good news is not alien to cultures. As pointing out the divine origin and goal of all it gives sense to their deepest strivings, opening new levels of awareness of the implications of their choices. It opens new pathways as well for healing the human weaknesses and redeeming the human failures which stand in the way of efforts to reflect more fully and in one's own way the fullness of life from which they come and toward which they are oriented. From this follow two corollaries.

*Openness to cultures.* The first relates to the theme of jealousy on the part of the divine. Aristotle<sup>20</sup> hypothesized that if the gods were jealous they would not allow humankind to have the power of wisdom by which to see all in the context of a highest source and goal. He concluded, however, that the gods were not thus, and that such awareness was rather the natural culmination of the universal human desire to know. St. Paul in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* characteristically plunges this theme into the very process of the human struggle for liberation in terms of the exercise of its existential freedom of self realization. He notes that in view of the Fall of mankind the Son was not jealous of his divinity but took upon himself our humanity in order that we might be redeemed by his sacrifice. God shares our nature; He is not alien to our cultures, but is willing to die that we might live. This is the central reality of Christian life.

The second corollary is a better appreciation of the character of the problem which the modern search for clear and distinct scientific knowledge raises for religion at the present time. It is not that it necessarily denies the existence of God. Indeed, Descartes was the first to say that to do so would but weaken our understanding of the power of the intellect<sup>21</sup> and that a recognition of God was needed for the development of confidence in knowledge at all levels.<sup>22</sup> Rather the problem derives from turning the basic sensitivity of mankind from a rich sense of its reality as sharing in the divine life to focus instead upon a too simple and clear construction of all from minimal realities with no purpose other than that imposed upon it by

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<sup>20</sup>*Metaphysics*, I, 2.

<sup>21</sup>*Meditations*, I.

<sup>22</sup>*Meditations* III-VI.

the human will.<sup>23</sup> It is this clear but too simple human self-understanding which alienates humans from their authentic dignity and hence from God as well.

This is intensified by, and may indeed reflect, a dualistic understanding of the Fall by which some Christians see nature as corrupted and hence as absent from the divine. In this perspective, human cultures as creations of a fallen mankind can only be corrupt and opposed to authentic human welfare and to the Gospel. Evangelization conceived in such a context could not but do violence to cultures seen as in need of being swept away in order to be substituted by a new creation. Catholic theology has never accepted this notion of corrupted human nature; its history of evangelization is not without its DeRiccis, DeNobilis and Foucaults. But there is much to do in working out the implications of the new sensitivity to cultures for living and preaching the faith and for integrating into the new sensibilities of our times both the Fall and Redemption. A review of alternate models for religion and culture may help to make this clearer.

*Alternate Models for Religion and Culture*

Identification of the four dimensions in the initial schema makes it possible to identify a number of ways of looking at the relation of religion and culture.

1. If the attention to the relation of humankind (C) to God (D) is based most notably upon objectivity (A), which characterized modern thought but was also a characteristic of earlier scholasticisms (in some distinction from the Augustinian), then the understanding of the religion tends to be that of passing down to all cultures a body of doctrine as an unchanging content, unaffected by human experience. Here the emphasis is on the essence, nature or content of religion and culture. The existential condition is at best indifferent and at worst in danger of corrupting the content of the faith.

A Objectivity      →      C Humankind

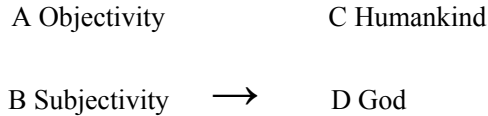
B Subjectivity      D God

2. If the attention to the relation of the human (C) to God (D) is based more notably upon attention to human subjectivity (B), which characterizes recent thought, then the understanding of evangelization shifts rather toward the existential character of human life in community. In that case the impact of religion is importantly a matter of transforming the culture of a people. This is less a matter of addition or substitution of alien

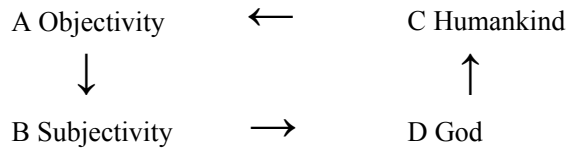
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<sup>23</sup>John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*.

content, than of serving as leaven to the culture, favoring its fundamental realization as a search for the good, enabling it to overcome failings and falls, reinforcing once again its basic orientation to the Divine source and goal of life, and enabling it to respond in kind to the gift which has been received.



3. If the attention to the relation of man (C) and God (D) has both an objective (A) and a subjective (B) character, then it will be careful to keep the heritage of the faith in its fullness while seeing that this is not only expressed in contemporary modes, but enriched<sup>24</sup> by the experience of the life of the Spirit in each people and each time. The emphasis then will be not merely upon the essential integrity of the truths of the faith, but further that these truths are lived existentially so that more of their meaning might be revealed and become part of the Christian heritage for future generations.



*Issues in Need of Study*

*Historicity and the Evangelization of Peoples.* Models 2 and 3 make it possible to take positive account of the historical reality of religion. In view of the attention to the subjectivity of those to whom the gospel is preached and their response in faith, the provenance of one's faith is of great import. This is not merely to speak of the Incarnation as a doctrine in Christianity, or of the need for intermediaries who might well be interchangeable in order that the unchanging essence of the objective content of the faith be transmitted. Instead it bespeaks the importance of Providence in the Incarnation of the Divine Word in the Jewish people at a particular juncture of their history and that of humankind. It bespeaks as well the importance of the pattern of the dissemination of the faith to Greece and Rome, to North and East Africa, and generally only thence to other regions of the world.

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<sup>24</sup>Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, "The Task of Christian Philosophy Today," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 53 (1979), 3-4.

While this relates to the pattern of commercial and political interests, it is not reducible thereto. Thus model 2 is required in order to overcome political and power readings of the relation of evangelization and culture according to model 1, which could reduce evangelization to a merely human and non-religious enterprise. Instead it is important to search out the Providence of God in the history of evangelization in order to protect it from perversion for merely human ends and to cooperate instead in the realization of its plan for the transformation of mankind after the image of God, Creator and Redeemer. Here lies much of the problem of inculturation.

*Evangelization and the Integration of Peoples.* The historical movement of evangelization has, in fact, two directions. There is and has been a process of Christian communities sharing the faith with distant peoples. Conversely, there is the pastoral responsibility for Christians and non-Christians of various cultures who immigrate into the context of a Christian community with its own culture. What mode of relation to these peoples is appropriate: is it one of communicating the content of the faith possessed (A); or is it one of drawing upon their distinctive cultural and possibly even their distinctive religious experience in order to develop the faith of the resident Christian community (B) as well? The latter is a much richer sense of the importance of culture for realizing the Good News.

*Religion and the Progress of Peoples.* If cultures are understood as concrete communal modes of realizing human life, and if this desire for perfection is ultimately a reflection of the life of divine love in enjoyment of its own goodness, then the proclamation of religion should not be alien to the search of communities of peoples for fulfillment, or what can be called liberation. As reminding humankind of its source and hence of the extent of the dignity and rights of all, religion is thus a transforming force in the progress of peoples. But important issues remain and are in a process of deep transformation in this global age, e.g., what is the appropriate mode of this work, are there important distinctions to be made between evangelization and the development of peoples, and in what sense are they indeed dimensions of the same complex salvation history of mankind?





## CHAPTER IV

# THE DIVINE AS GROUND OF BEING AND ULTIMATE CONCERN: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF GOOD AND EVIL

Following the above levels regarding the genesis and the moral authority of cultural traditions in its horizontal and vertical dimensions it is important to explore these more deeply. For this the phenomenological ontology of Paul Tillich, working at the borderline of philosophy and theology, can be of special help. For if the modern project has fallen from the high hopes of its Enlightenment origins into Nietzsche's dark night of the death of God, then it will be important that this negative moment be integrated into the religious meaning of the tradition lest it remain alongside and corrosive.

It has been no small tragedy of the last half of the 20th century that the new sensitivity to the personal character of life has turned inward to self-interest, rather than outward to the concerns of a global humanity. The appreciation of one's freedom and dignity should be the basis for new and richer relations to others. As based in the Absolute, freedom and respect between persons and peoples should be intensified and take on an even sacred and inviolable character. It is truly tragic then if freedom is misinterpreted in terms of one's self alone in contrast to others. This results in a renewed and more terrible egoism with its derivatives, social oppression and conflicts. Indeed it may be what is happening as reflected in the increasing chauvinism, intolerance and even genocide connected with the rising tide of immigrants and refugees.

In this, humankind, and indeed Providence itself, today confronts its greatest challenge. The issue starkly put is whether good or evil shall prevail, whether God's love is to be frustrated in our times by human evil, whether human life is to be lived in terms of the Fall or the Resurrection. The thought of Paul Tillich can help us to find our way here, for he lived through the period of the two world wars, confronted the depths of evil opened by Hitler's Naziism in his own country, and was central to articulating the vision of resurrection and renewal in the period of reconstruction that followed World War II.

While preparing for his doctorate in philosophy (1911) and his licentiate in theology (1912), he drew less upon traditional Protestant thought in the Calvinistic and Lutheran tradition, than upon a philosophical combination of ethical humanism and dialectical idealism.

The ethical humanism was that of Ritschl and Troeltsch who had accepted Kant's location of the religious question in the realm of the will and practical reason, rather than in that of the intellect and pure reason. On

this basis, religious issues were to be understood according to a religious and ethical personality considered ideal according to the culture of the time.

The dialectical idealism was especially that of F.W. Schelling, whose collected works Tillich early read in their entirety and wrote upon for his degrees in philosophy and theology. In their light, he deepened his appreciation of the divine presence in all things in history, which in terms of the structures of the dialectic can be seen as the dynamic expression of the divine. This appreciation of the progressive and developing manifestation of the divine in and through culture stood at the center of Tillich's teaching in the philosophy of religion and culture and in theology at the Universities of Berlin, Marburg, and Frankfurt during the 1920's.

This was, as well, the root of his adherence to religious socialism, according to which the defeat of Germany at the conclusion of the First World War had cleared away all that was opposed to, or substituted for, God. This prepared the *Kairos* or moment of time when the divine would be manifested once again, now not in the Church, but in the people. The weakness of this view lay in its repetition of a well known phenomenon extending back to the Fall of the Angels, namely, the creature's refusal to recognize any source of life beyond its own. Its implicit premise was that man, not God, must save man; a little beyond this lay the definitive temptation, namely, to think that man must become God.

With such a god, human life sinks progressively to an ever more inhuman condition. Thus, the high hopes were shattered in the early 1930's as the socialist ideal took the concrete form of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party. Where the nation, race and people were put in the place of God, what had been looked to as a new manifestation of the divine became its ultimate denial. This echoed the experience repeated through history, namely, that man cannot save himself. Inevitably, reductive humanisms, man-made utopias, projects to control human history in terms however scientific, all enclose and then repress the dynamic openness of human freedom: life turns into death.

It is of the greatest interest to compare the response to defeat as described here, namely, the attempt to create a man-made utopia or super race, with that described at length in the work, *Polish Values*, edited by Leon Dyczewski (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999). In post world War I Germany the effect was a short lived burst of lightening violence—truly a "bilitz krieg"—which in 10 years created untold catastrophe and died. The effect of defeat and the partitions in 19th centuries Poland, in contrast, was poetic sublimation. Thereby the cause of justice for Poland became the cause of justice for all humankind: "for our freedom and yours;" the suffering of Poland became a reliving of the Cross of Christ in time. Despite the partitions the Polish nation did not die; through the Nazi invasion it survived; against the Communist oppression it rose nonviolently and in solidarity it put an end to the Soviet Empire. Indeed, this prefigures the content of the present chapter, stated long ago by Boethius in his *Consolations of Philosophy*, to wit, that evil is

made to bear witness to the power of the good. In the Christian traditions, through death comes resurrection and new life: the Fall was a happy fault for it opened the way to God.

As Nazism manifested its true nature, Paul Tillich could not but strongly reject it in his public speeches in Germany, with the result that he was dismissed from the University of Frankfurt when Hitler came to power. Looking back to that time, Tillich sees the developments which bound together the two World Wars as more than merely personal or even national. They spelled the end of ethical humanism. "Neo-Protestantism is dead in Europe. All groups, whether Lutheran, Reformed, or Barthian, 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."<sup>1</sup>

In personal terms, this disillusionment led him to consider becoming a Catholic as the only alternative to "national heathenism." Instead, he came under the influence of Karl Barth's neo-orthodoxy because of its affirmation of God as transcendent. For Tillich, however, this did not mean that culture and history were not significant. The devastating history of the first half of this century confirmed for Tillich the acid existential criticism of meaning developed by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Marx. But whereas the historical dialectic had seen God as manifested positively through history, now, when history comes to appear as meaningless, the contemporary religious problem becomes how God is manifested through, and in, the very meaninglessness of history itself.

It is a measure of the penetrating character of this reading by Tillich of the religious problem of this century that it proved relevant not only to the harsh totalitarianisms of Europe, but to the liberal context of North America as well. There, upon his arrival in 1933, he found an analogous crisis. During the deceptive prosperity of the 1920's, there had been a certain religious parallel to the German situation. The search for God was substituted gradually by the impression that the natural progress of the era itself was God or his definitive manifestation. This was especially marked in the Social Gospel Movement which, under the influence of the pragmatism of John Dewey, had become a relativistic ethical humanism. It reduced the task of theology to generating convictions which need not be Christian or even concerned with God, as long as they were pragmatically efficient and apologetically defensible.<sup>2</sup> The economic depression in 1929 gave the lie to this direction of religious thought. Human progress then halted and the issue became that of adversity and how it was to be faced.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Present Theological Situation in the Light of the Continental European Development," *Theology Today*, VI (1949), 299.

<sup>2</sup> H. S. Smith, "Christian Education" in *Protestant Thought in the Twentieth Century, Whence and Whither?* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), pp. 110-11.

In America as well as in Europe it was no longer possible to identify God as the next stage of progress. Rather, God had to be found in the negation of values emanating in ever widening circles from the initial economic collapse. To this, the religious perspective which Tillich had begun to elaborate proved particularly relevant. The Neo-Naturalists had already begun to recall men from mere humanism to a theocentric philosophy of religion. But, unsatisfied with a God understood as a process wholly immanent in the universe, the evolution which Tillich's thought underwent in the early 1930s allowed him to stress the transcendent character of the divine and the essential implications of this for the reformation and redemption of culture.

### **THE PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION**

Paul Tillich laid the groundwork for such an analysis of socio-cultural life by recognizing some basic dualities. If we are not trapped in a complete solipsism, then, on the level of thought, we must distinguish subject and object, the one who thinks and what is thought about, and, on the level of being, we must distinguish self and world. Neither idealism nor materialism have been successful in reducing one to the other; both subject and object must be recognized, and the success of a philosophy of life lies in its ability to reconcile the two. The self is indivisible in itself and distinct from all else; it is unique, unrepeatable, irreplaceable and unexchangeable. But if, on the one hand, the self is considered without its polar element of world with which to situate the individual and orient one's life, then all becomes isolated and arbitrary; there can be no meaningful participation of knower and known; actions become random and willful. If, on the other hand, the social unity is taken as an end in itself without regard for the individual, its goals are eviscerated and it itself becomes vicious. Reconciling both self and world is the key to human success or failure.

The life of philosophy, as of man himself, is the work of identifying these polar elements (thesis), seeing how, by their falling apart, life becomes destructive (antithesis), and how they can be reconciled (synthesis). In religious terms, the thesis is the Paradise of basic nature, the antithesis is the Fall into sin and death, and the synthesis is the Resurrection and new life. In terms of metaphysics, the three are successively the stage of essence or nature, of existence, and of their reconciliation in a dynamic harmony of being.

Concretely this was exemplified in the experience of Martin Luther King who wrote his Ph.D. on the dialectic of Tillich. For King the thesis was the reality of his people in the broader community; the antithesis was the breakdown of this structure veering into the polarities of racism; the synthesis would be overcoming these polarities and the resurrection of his people. It was not incidental that "We shall overcome" was his by-word.

In terms of the dialectic, Paul Tillich was able to analyze the crises through which he had passed in Germany and into which he entered in

America, and to draw out the characteristics which must pertain to any body of contemporary religious thought. As religious, it would have to understand the presence of God in all things and their relation to Him. In contrast to the naturalists and humanists, his strong appreciation of the need for a transcendent dimension which inspires and empowers man excludes philosophy from being an adequate statement of religious thought. If, however, the transcendent be considered an answer, it is the answer to a question constituted by the crisis which is the present existential situation. The analysis of this crisis and the identification of this question of the ultimate is the proper task of philosophy. Theology cannot become imperial, for it exists in a situation of co-relation with philosophy precisely as the answer to philosophy's most profound questions of being and meaning.<sup>3</sup>

This reflects Tillich's own experience, which is archetypical for that of the 20th century. West and East, North and South, people have experienced significant disillusionment in their efforts to create a human paradise. Previous hopes and commitments have been shattered by the course of events; the critiques of Solzhenitsyn strike home both in societies where abundance has generated a hedonism which atrophies the spirit and in societies where inability to produce bespeaks long distortion and suppression of this same spirit. As with Tillich's experience of National Socialism, we face a situation in which the previous contexts of meaning have crumbled. This is especially true since the collapse in 1989 of Marxism, the ideology in which half of the people of the world interpreted life and meaning. Since that time this experience of the collapse of meaning has been articulated generally by postmodernism.

Certainly, this is not the time to attempt to construct a new ideology. Instead, the example of Tillich suggests that we can learn from disillusionment itself as the major experience of the present. By asking what is thereby made manifest to human awareness, we may be able to open to deeper and more solid foundations upon which social life can be reconstructed.

This can be seen also as a matter of transcending the previous human horizons of subject and object. As noted by Kant in his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, such objective patterns of cause and effect allow for scientific precision and technical manipulation, but once established as a total horizon they become reductionist and repressive of the human spirit. More recent theory shows that, unless this horizon is transcended, any critique merely rearranges the dilemma in a cognitive loop which has no exit. Liberation inevitably becomes oppression once again and people have neither hope nor salvation. What is required is a way of transcending this horizon to a meta-critique which opens a new, deeper and more true way to view life. Tillich's reworking of the dialectic suggests

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 18-28 and 59-66.

how this can occur and opens a new and liberating insight concerning the ground of being which is present to our consciousness as our ultimate concern. His dialectic shows how this relates to the experience of meaninglessness and thereby plays a truly redemptive role, enabling humankind once again to be creative in facing the problems of its actual historical circumstances.

Paul Tillich was much concerned with the relation between subject and object both in its contemporary modality and in its fundamental nature. There has been a general consensus that the great tragedy of recent times has been the subjection of the person to the objects one produces, reducing oneself to the state of an impersonal object.<sup>4</sup> Below, we will be able to follow more closely the analysis of this contemporary situation. Tillich sees this self-object relation as the basic ontological structure of the self-world relation because it is the presupposition of ontological investigation, without itself being able to be deduced from any prior unity. Idealism has been no more successful in deriving the object from the subject than earlier naturalisms had been in reducing the subject to the state of a physical object. The polarity of the self-world or subject-object structure, then, "cannot be derived. It must be accepted."<sup>5</sup>

The polar relation of these elements assumes varied nuances according to the nature of the reality under consideration. This provides a very sensitive norm for evaluating any system of thought, for the strength and weaknesses of a philosophy will appear clearly from the degree of its success in reconciling the twin poles of subject and object in its own area. Tillich applies this norm in the form of the polar notions of individualization and participation to various types of religious thought.<sup>6</sup> Following his evaluation will provide us with insight into the requirements for authentic religion and will reveal the way in which he transforms the elements of classical Christian thought in the constructions of his own contemporary religious philosophy.

While neither polar notion can be fully realized without the other, individualization will be analyzed first. This element is implied in the constitution of every being as a self and points to the fact that it is particular and indivisible. As particular, the self maintains an identity separate from

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 91-94.

<sup>5</sup> *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, p. 174. Cf. "Participation and Knowledge, Problems of an Ontology of Cognition," *Sociologica*, Vol. I of *Frankfurter Beiträge zur Soziologie*, ed. Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Dirks (Stuttgart: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1955), p. 201. "Being, insofar as it is an object of asking presupposes the subject-object structure of reality."

<sup>6</sup> This is developed at length in Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, Terry Lectures (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1952).

all else and opposite to anything to which it might be related. As indivisible it maintains its identity by retaining the integrity of its own self center, much as a mathematical point resists partition.<sup>7</sup> One can hear the traditional definition of the person in these notions which Tillich does not fail to extend to the temporal order, making self-affirmation something unique, unrepeatable and irreplaceable. The infinite value of every human person is a consequence of this “ontological self-affirmation as an indivisible, unexchangeable self.”<sup>8</sup>

While this individuality is an indispensable element in reality, it is a grave error to consider it without its polar element, namely, participation. An exclusive insistence on the particular and the unrepeatable brings with it a nominalistic breakdown in the philosophy of essence.<sup>9</sup> This breakdown, in turn, becomes the source of a number of philosophical positions which have greatly influenced religious ideas. Some of the more important nominalist consequences are that “only the individual has ontological reality,”<sup>10</sup> that the divine will is random, and that finite beings are radically contingent.

For lack of any natural order, the epistemological expression of this nominalistic ontology is referred to by Max Scheler as controlling knowledge, by which the object must be transformed into a completely conditioned and calculable “thing” to be studied with detached analysis by empirical methods. The determination of ethical ends is outside the competency of this knowledge which restricts itself to the consideration of means and receives its ends from such nonrational sources as positive tradition or arbitrary decision. Such nominalistic results derive from the development of individuation without its polar element of participation.

The insufficiency of this thought is realized by Tillich. He considers pure nominalism to be untenable because its radical individualism renders impossible the mutual participation of the knower and the known.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the various forms of liberalism which have emphasized individuality almost exclusively have tended by that very fact to cut themselves off from all meaningful contact with the divine. A mitigated, but none the less dangerous, form of this is to make of God an object for us as subjects. Though logical predication cannot avoid doing this, it is necessary to reject its implied ontological negation of God’s holiness and his reduction to being simply an object beside oneself as subject, merely one being among others.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 170, 174-75. Cf. “Participation and Knowledge,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 201.

<sup>8</sup> *The Courage to Be*, p. 87.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> *Systemic Theology*, I, pp. 73, 97, 177.

<sup>11</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 177.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172-73 & 272.

At no time, however, has the exaggerated stress on individualization appeared to be as problematic as in the context of modern meaninglessness after neo-Protestantism. Built upon biblical criticism and the Ritschlian theological synthesis of modern naturalism and historicism, neo-Protestantism was shattered in its social foundations by Marx, in its moral grounds by Nietzsche and in its religious basis by Kierkegaard.<sup>13</sup> The social crises of this century shattered even the structures with which man had attempted to reconstruct these foundations.

The question became no longer which values are true, but “the whole system of values and meanings in which one lived.”<sup>14</sup> The traditional issues of individual sin and forgiveness lost their meaning because what had come into question was the very possibility of meaning itself. The challenge facing humankind then became that of finding the divine through nonbeing in its most radical form, namely, the anxiety of doubt and meaninglessness.

Despite this history of its exaggerations, however, individualization remains indispensable in providing the terms of the relation of man to God. But, in order for this relationship to be positive, the corresponding element of participation must also be present. Participation points to “an element of identity in that which is different or of a togetherness of that which is separated, whether it is the identity of the same enterprise, or the identity of the same universal or of the same whole of which one is a part, in each case participation implies identity.”<sup>15</sup>

The task of participation is twofold. First, it gives meaning and content to the individual, keeping it from being an empty form. Further, it is an essential perfection, and, hence, proportionate to the being and its act. Thus, when the individual has the character of a person, participation achieves the perfect form of communion. Second, participation provides the real basis for unity with God by expressing the presence of the divine. No religion can be without this without ceasing to be a religion and being reduced to a secular movement of political, educational or scientific activism,<sup>16</sup> for it is the very relationship to the divine which is the essence of religion that is expressed by the notion of participation.

Tragically, however, this factor of participation turns into oppression—and this is the burden of the second phase or antithesis in his dialectic—when it is understood entirely in terms of relations between self-centered and limited persons as things. Then the unity between persons can

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<sup>13</sup> “The Present Theological Situation in the Light of the Continental European Development,” *Theology Today*, VI (1949), 299-302.

<sup>14</sup> *The Courage to Be*, pp. 142, 152-53.

<sup>15</sup> “Participation and Knowledge,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 201-202. He terms the system which stresses participation a ‘mystical realism’.

<sup>16</sup> “The Permanent Significance of the Catholic Church for Protestantism,” *Protestant Digest*, III (1941), 25-29.



be the product only of the imposition by one person upon another or of some even less personal group or structure upon others. In the personal experience of Tillich, it was precisely National Socialism which had to be transcended, but other forms of forced and unilateral emphasis upon social participation have also marked the 20th century.

The grounds for this tragic polarization of individualization and participation is laid in Tillich's *thesis*; its tragic mode appears as the *antithesis*; his *synthesis* of the two points the way to reconstruction as true resurrection.

### THE THESIS

The original and varied elements which Paul Tillich intends to integrate in his philosophy enter his thought after the manner of the state of paradise in the biblical creation story. This is taken, however, in a new sense, for "the doctrine of creation is not the story of an event which took place 'once upon a time,' but the basic description of the relation between God and the world."<sup>17</sup> This includes what can be known of God, the production of His finite effects *ex nihilo*, and the response of man from his present situation of meaninglessness. Tillich expresses the dynamic interrelationship of these in terms of an existential dialectic which considers the problems and contradictions of present day existence at a depth at which the ontological principles of essence and existence and the epistemological principles of subject and object can be correlated.

A complete discussion of the relation of essence to existence is identical with the entire theological system. The distinction between essence and existence, which, religiously speaking, is the distinction between the created and the actual world, is the backbone of the whole body of theological thought. It must be elaborated in every part of the theological system.<sup>18</sup>

#### *The Polarity of Subject and Object*

It was observed at the beginning that Tillich insists on the polarity of subject and object as the point of departure for his analysis of reality because both are presupposed for the ontological question. But, if they provide his point of departure in a first approach to the reality of essence or essence of reality, he leaves no doubt that he shares the modern concern to proceed to a point of identity where the alienation of subject and object is overcome. This is the result of the observation that persons have been reduced to the status of things by allowing themselves to be subjected to the objects they produce.<sup>19</sup> The strongest statement of this situation was made

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<sup>17</sup> Systematic Theology, I, p. 252.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>19</sup> *Theology of Culture*, pp. 91-94.

by Nietzsche, but the best may be Marx's description of the reduction of the worker to a commodity. Reality must not be simply identified with objective being; one must participate in some deeper principle or lose one's value and individuality. To identify reality with subjective being or consciousness, however, would be equally insufficient, for the subject is determined by its contrast with object. Consequently, what is sought is a level of reality which is beyond this dichotomy of subject and object, grounding and unifying the value of both.

The need for a point of identity and its function is better appreciated as one proceeds beyond the subject-object relationship to the investigation of either knowledge or being. "This point of procedure in every analysis of experience and every concept of a system of reality must be the point where subject and object are at one and the same place."<sup>20</sup> Thus, the analysis of experience directs one's attention to the logos which is the element of form, of meaning and of structure. In the knowing subject or self, the logos is called subjective reason and makes self a centered structure. Correspondingly, in the known object or world, it is called objective reason and makes world a structured whole.

Though there is nothing beyond the logos structure of being,<sup>21</sup> it is possible to conceive the relation between the rational structures of mind and reality in a number of ways. Four of these possibilities are represented by realism, idealism, pluralism and monism, but what is most striking is that all philosophers have held an identity or at least an analogy between the logos of the mind and that of the world.<sup>22</sup> Successful scientific planning and prediction provide continual pragmatic proof of this identity.

The philosophical mind, however, is not satisfied with the mere affirmation, or even the confirmation of the fact. There arises the problem of why there should be this correspondence of the logos in the subject with that of reality as a whole. This can be solved only if the logos is primarily the structure of the one principle of all, that is, of divine life, as well as the principle of its self-manifestation. Then it is the medium of creation, bridging "between the silent abyss of being and the fullness of concrete individualized, self-related beings."<sup>23</sup> The identity or analogy of the rational structures of mind and of reality will follow from the fact that both have been mediated through the same identical divine logos.

In this way, "reason in both its objective and subjective structures points to something which appears in these structures but which transcends them in power and meaning."<sup>24</sup> Logos becomes the point of identity

<sup>20</sup> *The Interpretation of History*, trans. Part I N.A. Rasetzki, Parts II, III & IV Elsa L. Talmey (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 60.

<sup>21</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 156, 171-72, 279.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 75-76.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

between God, self and world. Of these three, the logos of God is central and is participated in by self and world as they acquire their being. Thus, the logos of reason gives us a first introduction to the concept Tillich has of God overcoming the separation of subject and object to provide a deeper synthesis of the reality of both.

*The Divine*

This conclusion of the analysis of experience has definite implications for an analysis of being, because the identity is not merely an external similarity of two things to a third with no basis in the things themselves. The point of identification of subject and object is the divine, which is found within beings. The term "Being itself"<sup>25</sup> is the only nonsymbolic expression of the divine (though in relation to our consciousness this is termed the "ultimate concern"). God is within beings as their power of being—as an analytic dimension in the structure of reality.<sup>26</sup> As such, he is:

- the "substance", appearing in every rational structure;
- the creative "ground" in every rational creation;
- the "abyss", unable to be exhausted by any creation or totality of creations; and
- the "infinite potentiality of being and meaning", pouring himself into the rational structures of mind and reality to actualize and transform them.<sup>27</sup>

God is, then, the ground not only of truth, but of being as well; indeed, the divine is able to be the ground of truth precisely inasmuch as it is the ground of being.

These ideas have a long history in the human mind. In the distant past the *Upanishads* viewed the Brahman-atman both cosmically as the all-inclusive, unconditioned ground of the universe from which conditioned beings emanate, and acosmically as the reality of which the universe is but an appearance. The absolute is the "not this, not this" (*neti neti*), "the Real of the real" (*styasya satyam*).<sup>28</sup> A similar line of thought can be traced

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 238-39. Cf. "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, Vol. I of *The Library of Living Theology*, ed. Charles W. Kegley, and Robert W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan Co., 1956), p. 335.) To this single nonsymbolic expression of the divine he has added severe limitations.

<sup>26</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 207.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>28</sup> *Brhadaranyaka-Upanishad*, II. i. 20, and IV. ii. 4, cited by T.N.P. Mahadevan, "The Upanishads," in *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*,

through Plato and Augustine to the medieval Franciscans and Nicholas of Cusa. Tillich is fond of relating his thought to these classical sources.

The proximate referent of his thought in positing this ontological principle of identity beyond subject and object is Schelling. At the very first, Schelling agreed with Fichte in making the “Absolute Ego” of consciousness the ultimate principle and reality. It is this consciousness which dialectically “becomes” the world of nature. But, on further consideration, Schelling failed to see the particular connection between the infinite Ego and the finite object. For this reason, he moved the “Absolute Ego” from the conscious side of the dichotomy to a central, neutral position between and prior to both objectivity and subjectivity. Thus, the Absolute is called not “Ego,” but “the Unconditional” and “Identity”,<sup>29</sup> and the idealism is no longer subjective, but ontological. Tillich readily accepted this insight of the early Schelling and, therefore, traced his own line of thought in between, but distinct from both the subjective idealism of Fichte and the objective realism of Hobbes. What is important is that neither side of the polarity be eliminated, both must be maintained. For this, there is required an Unconditional as the ground equally of subject and object.<sup>30</sup>

Two important specifications must be added to this notion of a divine depth dimension beyond subject and object. One regards the incapacity of limited beings to exhaust or even adequately to represent the divine: this implies the radical uniqueness of the divine. The other concerns the way God is manifested in the essence of finite beings: this points to the way they participate in the divine.

### *Transcendence*

The first of these specifications, which Tillich is careful to make concerning this point of identity of subject and object, is that it cannot be grasped exhaustively by mind nor replicated completely by things, that is, that it is gnostically incomprehensible and ontologically inexhaustible, with the former reflecting the latter. “This power of being is the *prius* which precedes all special contents logically and ontologically.”<sup>31</sup> It is not even identified with the totality of things. For this reason, the divine is termed the “abyss”, because it cannot be exhausted in any creation or totality of creations.<sup>32</sup>

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ed. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1952), I, pp. 623-63.

<sup>29</sup> *Theology of Culture*, p. 92.

<sup>30</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 171.

<sup>31</sup> *Theology of Culture*, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> “Symbol and Knowledge: a Response,” *Journal of Liberal Religion*, II (1941), 203. Cf. *Systematic Theology*, II, p. 6.

Human intuition of the divine always has distinguished between the abyss of the divine (the element of power) and the fullness of its content (the element of meaning), between the divine depth and the divine *logos*. The first principle is the basis of Godhead, that which makes God to be God. It is the root of his majesty, the unapproachable intensity of his being, the inexhaustible ground of being in which everything has its origin. It is the power of being infinitely resisting nonbeing, giving the power of being to everything that is.<sup>33</sup>

This position of the divine as the inexhaustible depth dimension of reality is the basis of the distinction and individualization of God in relation to creatures. As infinite being and truth, the divine is beyond the separation of subject and object, self and world, and makes possible, in principle, a deeper realization of both. In the realm of being, it implies what Tillich calls the Protestant principle, namely, the protest against any thing being raised to the position of the divine. In his own experience, it extended particularly to the state, for he had to extricate himself from the terrible power of National Socialism's claim to a totalism which by definition left no room for human freedom. This protest extends as well to any creation of the church, including the biblical writings which must not be identified with the divine ground in any way.<sup>34</sup> No bearer of the holy may be permitted to claim absolute status for itself.

In the order of knowledge, the inexhaustible character of the divine implies that, if man is to proceed beyond finite realities to an awareness of what is truly divine, he must leave behind the rational categories of technical reason, for such categories limit the infinite. They make God an object, "a" being among others, rather than Being Itself. For this reason, God cannot be conceptualized.<sup>35</sup> To say that God is the depth of reason is to refuse to make him another field of reason. In fact, he precedes the structures of reason and gives them their inexhaustible quality precisely because he never can be adequately contained in them. Schelling has termed the divine the *Unvordenkliche*, because it is "that before which thinking cannot penetrate."<sup>36</sup> It was the error of idealism to think that this could ever be completely reduced to rational forms.

Tillich is protected from this error by his basic ontological image of the various levels of reality. "There are levels of reality of great difference, and . . . these different levels demand different approaches and

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 250-51.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 227.

<sup>35</sup> *The Courage to Be*, pp. 184-85.

<sup>36</sup> *The Protestant Era*, trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 76.

different languages.”<sup>37</sup> The divine is the deepest of these levels and consequently must be known and expressed in a manner quite different from that of ordinary knowledge and discourse. It is to this same fact that Tillich is referring when he introduces the dialectical relationship between these levels and speaks of the divine as the *prius*. This suggests that it will be necessary to proceed beyond conceptualization to an intuitive, personal awareness of the divine.

This will be described below, but one thing is already clear. Since the categories are the basis for the objective element in knowledge and the means by which it is made equally available to the many minds, intuitive awareness will have to be subjective and individual.

### *Participation*

The other specification made by Tillich concerning the depth dimension regards its manifestation in the essences of finite beings. The notion of essence is found in some form in practically all philosophers, but classically in Plato and Aristotle. Plato attempted to solve the problem of unity and separation in knowledge by the myth of the original union of the soul with the essences or ideas. Recollection and reunion take place later and in varying degrees. Tillich stresses that, in Plato, the unity of soul and ideas is never completely destroyed. Although the particular object is strange as such, it contains essential structures “with which the cognitive subject is essentially united and which it can remember.”<sup>38</sup>

Aristotle retains the notion of essence as providing the power of being: essence is the quality and structure in which being participates. But this is still potential, whereas the real is actual. Tillich accepts the Aristotelian position in these general terms and then uses it in order to develop his conception of creation. The divine was described above as the inexhaustible; in order for this to be creative an element of meaning and structure must be added. This is the second divine principle, the *logos*, which makes the divine distinguishable, definite and finite. The third principle is the Spirit “in whom God ‘goes out from’ himself; the Spirit proceeds from the divine ground. He gives actuality to that which is potential in the divine ground. . . . The finite is posited as finite within the process of the divine life, but it is reunited with the infinite within the same process.”<sup>39</sup>

A second approach to the thesis of Tillich’s dialectic is phenomenological. This approach notes that we are never indifferent to things, simply recording the situation as does a light or sound meter. Rather, we judge the situation and react according as it reflects or falls away from

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<sup>37</sup> “Religious Symbols and our Knowledge of God,” *The Christian Scholar*, XXXVIII (1955), 192.

<sup>38</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, 94-99.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

what it should be. This fact makes manifest essence or logos in its normative sense. It is the way things should be, the norm of their perfection. Our response to essence is the heart of our efforts to protect and promote life; it is in this that we are basically and passionately engaged. Hence, by looking into our heart and identifying basic interests and concerns—our ultimate concern—we discover the most basic reality at this stage of the dialectic.

In these terms, Tillich expresses the positive side of the dialectical relationship of the essences of finite beings to the divine. He shows how these essences can contain, without exhausting, the power of being, for God remains this power. As exclusively positive, these might be said to express only the first elements of creation, that they remain, as it were, in a state of dreaming innocence within the divine life from which they must awaken to actualize and realize themselves.<sup>40</sup> Creation is fulfilled in the self-realization by which the limited beings leave the ground of being to “stand upon” it. Whatever we shall say in the negative or antithetic section below about this moment of separation, the element of essence is never completely lost, for “if it were lost, mind as well as reality would have been destroyed in the very moment of their coming into existence.”<sup>41</sup> It is the retention of this positive element of essence that provides the radical foundation for participation by limited beings in the divine and their capacity for pointing to the infinite power of being and depth of reason. As mentioned in the first section, such participation in the divine being and some awareness thereof is an absolute prerequisite for any religion.

In this first or positive stage of Tillich’s dialectic, by placing the divine as the point of identity beyond both subject and object, he has introduced both elements according to which he evaluated previous religious philosophies. The element of participation so necessary for any religion has appeared and, along with it, the element of individuation. We must now look at Tillich’s attempt in the second or negative stage of his dialectic to see both of these in existential dissolution through a unilateral process of individualization. It will remain for the third phase of the dialectic, the synthesis, to develop a contemporary understanding of the restoration of person and society as free participations in the divine. This would open a way to God which integrates the hopes of creation as well as the weakness of creatures. It would do so in terms not merely of personal, but of social life as well.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 238, 255.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83; Cf. “A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of Incarnation,” *Church Quarterly Review*, CXLVII (1949), 141.

**THE ANTITHESIS***Non Being*

Tillich turns to the second phase of his dialectic in order to analyze the basic infinite-finite structure as a form not only of individualization, but, as we shall see, of estrangement. Its contemporary nature lies in its particular relation to nonbeing. Nonbeing is had in God, where it dialectically drives being out of its seclusion to make God living. But in God it is dialectically overcome, thus placing being itself beyond the polarity of the finite and the infinite negation of the finite.<sup>42</sup> In beings less than God this nonbeing is not overcome. The classical statement, *creatio ex nihilo*, means that the creature, which along with its participation in being has its "heritage of Being", also "must take over what might be called 'the heritage of nonbeing'," <sup>43</sup> "Every finite being which" participates in the power of being is 'mixed' with nonbeing; it is being in the process of coming from and going toward nonbeing."<sup>44</sup>

The radical realism of this view contrasts starkly with all social utopias. Not only are utopias man-made and hence subject to objectifying the subject, but they fail adequately to recognize the essential character of the nonbeing in human life. This cannot be encountered and overcome unless it is first recognized, and it is characteristic of the dialectic of Tillich, in contrast to that of Hegel and the utopic goal of Marx, that nonbeing pertains to the human condition, indeed even to the divine. To deny it is to be subject to it; whereas to recognize it first and then reconcile it is the path of liberation. The second stage of Tillich's dialectic, the antithesis, is this recognition.

It is to be noted that when Descartes wished to drive home his highly intellectual analysis of the self he followed up with the imaginative example of the ball of wax. Tillich draws on the biblical myth of the Fall to do the same for his notion of nonbeing, thereby enabling one to see its concrete meaning in the struggle to realize human freedom. The example of Martin Luther King above serves the same purpose and moreover illustrates the existential import of the dialectic being delineated here.

Tillich shuns the Hegelian understanding of the antithesis as nonbeing dialectically expressing being, for then existence would be simply a step in the expression of essence. In contrast, profound observation of the modern world, especially of the cataclysm of the First World War, forced home the point that reality is also the contradiction of essence. Some such distinction of essence and existence is presupposed by any philosophy

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<sup>42</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 179-80 & 188-91. Böhme's *Urgrund* and Schelling's "first potency" are examples of dialectical nonbeing in God.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.



which considers the ideal as against the real, truth against error or good against evil.<sup>45</sup>

This has been expressed by the concept of estrangement taken from Hegel's earlier philosophy and applied to the individual by Kierkegaard, to society by Marx, and to life, as such, by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. In fact, since the later period of Schelling, it has been commonplace for a whole series of philosophers and artists to describe the world as one of fragments, a disrupted unity. This implies that individualization has become excessive and has led to the loneliness of man before his fellow men and before God. This, in turn, drives one into inner experience where one is still further isolated from one's world.<sup>46</sup> The presupposition of this tragic nature of man is his transcendent Fall.<sup>47</sup>

### *The Fall*

How is this Fall, with its existential estrangement, to be understood? First, its possibility is traced to finite human freedom. In this state in which finite man is excluded from the infinity to which he belongs, freedom gives him the capacity to contradict himself and his essential nature. Furthermore, the fact that he is aware of this finitude, of the threat from nonbeing, adds the note of anxiety to freedom, producing a drive toward the transition into existence. Rooted in his finitude and expressed in his anxiety, once this freedom is aroused, one experiences the threat either of not actualizing one's potencies and thus not fulfilling oneself, or of actualizing them, knowing that one will not choose according to the norms and values in which one's essential nature expresses itself.<sup>48</sup> In either case one is bound to lose oneself and one's freedom.

The finite nature of one's freedom implies an opposite pole, called destiny, which applies even to the freedom of self-contradiction. Freedom "is possible only within the context of the universal transition from essence to existence" and every isolated act is embedded in the universal destiny of existence.<sup>49</sup> This means that the estrangement of man from his essential nature has two characteristics, the one tragic coming from destiny, the other moral (guilt) coming from freedom. Of itself, destiny connotes universality for the Fall is the presupposition of existence, and there is no existence before or without it.<sup>50</sup> Hence, everything that exists participates in the Fall

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

<sup>46</sup> *Theology of Culture*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>47</sup> *Systematic Theology*, II, 24-25, 45. Cf. *The Interpretation of History*, pp. 60-65.

<sup>48</sup> "The Conception of Man in Existential Philosophy," *Journal of Religion*, XIX (July, 1939), p. 208. Cf. *Systematic Theology*, II, pp. 31-35.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32 and 38.

<sup>50</sup> "A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of Incarnation," *loc. cit.*, p. 142.

with its twin character of tragedy and guilt. This applies to every person, every human act, and every part of nature as well.

The conciliation of the absolute universality of the Fall with the freedom it presupposes is one of those problems which are never really solved, because it is part of the human condition which it enlightens. The extension of guilt to nature is reinforced by evolutionary theories and depth psychology, but how the inevitability and the freedom of estrangement are to be reconciled remains an enigma. In one statement, Tillich affirms the necessity of something in finite freedom for which we are responsible and which makes the Fall unavoidable. In another work, he considers estrangement to be an original fact with “the character of a leap and not of structural necessity.”<sup>51</sup> Despite these difficulties, in explaining how human estrangement is free, Tillich clearly presents it as the ontological realization of the Fall of mankind.

### *Anxiety*

This negative phase in the dialectic is mediated to the level of consciousness by the general, and presently acute, phenomenon of anxiety which arises from the nonbeing in finite reality. “The first statement about the nature of anxiety is this: anxiety is the state in which a being is aware of its possible nonbeing.”<sup>52</sup> It is, in fact, the expression of finitude from the inside. As such, it is not a mere psychological quality but an ontological one, present wherever finitude and its threat of nonbeing are found. Anxiety is then simply inescapable for finite beings. Were it a particular object, it might be feared directly, attacked and overcome. But as

nothingness is not an ‘object’ there is no way for the finite to overcome nonbeing. Thus anxiety lies within man at all times. This omnipresent ontological anxiety can be aroused at any time even without a situation of fear, for the emotional element is but an indication of the perverse manner in which finite being is penetrated by the threat of absolute separation from its positive element of infinity, that is, with the threat of annihilating nothingness.<sup>53</sup>

The nonbeing of finitude and estrangement is present on each level of being and in three ways: ontic, spiritual and moral. This produces three corresponding types of anxiety. Ontic anxiety is the awareness that our basic self-affirmation as beings is threatened proximately by fate, the decided contingency of our position, and ultimately by death. Spiritual

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<sup>51</sup> *Systematic Theology*, II, pp. 44.

<sup>52</sup> *The Courage to Be*, p. 35. Cf. *Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 191-92.

<sup>53</sup> “The Conception of Man in Existential Philosophy,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 211-

anxiety is the awareness of the emptiness of the concrete content of our particular beliefs and, even more, of the loss of a spiritual center of meaning resulting in ultimate meaninglessness in which “not even the meaningfulness of a serious question of meaning is left for him.”<sup>54</sup> Moral anxiety is the awareness that in virtue of that very freedom by which one is human one continually chooses against the fulfillment of one’s destiny and the actualization of one’s essential nature, thus adding the element of guilt.<sup>55</sup>

All three elements of anxiety—death, meaninglessness and guilt—combine to produce despair, the ultimate or “boundary” situation. One element or another may stand out more clearly for various people or in various situations, but all three are inescapably present. It is guilt that seals Sartre’s *No Exit*, for if there were but the nonbeing of death and meaninglessness, man could affirm both his ontic and his spiritual meaning by his own act of voluntary death. But guilt makes all this impossible. “Guilt and condemnation are qualitatively, not quantitatively, infinite.”<sup>56</sup> They point to the dimension of the ultimate and the unconditional from which we have become estranged through our own responsible actions. In this way, Tillich’s contemporary understanding of the situation of loneliness and despair is ultimately pervaded by a sense of guilt.

Nonbeing extends beyond being to knowledge. After recognizing that existence is both the appearance and the contradiction of essence, he adds that “our thinking is a part of our existence and shares the fate that human existence contradicts its true nature.”<sup>57</sup> Reason is effected by the nonbeing of finitude and estrangement. Under the conditions of existence, it is torn by internal conflicts and estranged from its depth and ground.

Another note of the existential situation of knowledge is its inclusion of actualized freedom. This not only separates thought and being, but holds them apart. There results a special kind of truth, one which is attained, not in an absolute standpoint at the end of history, but in the situation of the knower: subjectivity becomes the hallmark of truth. Its contemporary tragic character is due to the fact that it results from separation and despair. “Truth is just that subjectivity which does not disregard its despair, its exclusion from the objective world of essence, but which holds to it passionately.”<sup>58</sup>

Throughout this negative stage of the dialectic, there remains the original positive element, the bond to the divine. “Man is never cut off from

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<sup>54</sup> *The Courage to Be*, p. 48. Cf. *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 189; II, p. 74.

<sup>55</sup> “Freedom in the Period of Transformation,” in *Freedom: Its Meaning*, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940), pp. 123-24, 131-32.

<sup>56</sup> *The Courage to Be*, p. 54.

<sup>57</sup> *The Interpretation of History*, p. 61.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

the ground of being, not even in the state of condemnation,"<sup>59</sup> for really to lose the foundation of one's being would be utter annihilation. This essential insight of Hegel regarding sublation<sup>60</sup> would appear to have been tragically omitted by Marx who, in his concern for social transformation, understood all in terms of technical reason focused upon negation. But, if what is negated is the power of being upon which a human life and a people's culture have been based, then the possibilities of reconstruction are radically undermined and left without foundation. With no source of meaning, life not only loses meaning, but is condemned to remain thus. Neither negation nor negation of negation will suffice. The tragedy which Tillich brings to light is that, despite the presence of the power of being, in this state of existence man does not actualize, but contradicts the essential manifestation of his divine ground.

This is more than individualization; it is the tragically guilty estrangement of being and knowing from the divine, and from ourselves as images of the divine. Thus, Tillich's systematic analysis of the predicament of modern man manifests the true dimensions of the exaggeration of individualization experienced as a sense of loneliness and expressed theologically as the Fall of man. It does this in the contemporary context of meaninglessness by questioning not only the supports of the previous generations, but the very meaning of support. If this questioning be sufficiently radical, it may open the way to a rediscovery of the basis not only for a reordering, but for radical reconstruction.

### THE SYNTHESIS

The first stage of Tillich's existential dialectic had presented the essential or potential state of finite reality in union with the divine. The second or negative moment of this dialectic placed individualization in its present context of meaninglessness. This is a powerful and profound expression of the difficulty in actualizing human dignity, which is identically the element of union or participation in the divine that is the essence of religion. Let us see how the third stage attempts to provide this element in a contemporary fashion.

#### *Revelation*

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<sup>59</sup> Systematic Theology, II, p. 78.

<sup>60</sup> "To sublimate, and the sublated (that which exists ideally as a moment), constitute one of the most important notions in philosophy. It is a fundamental determination which repeatedly occurs throughout the whole of philosophy, the meaning of which is to be clearly grasped and especially distinguished from nothing. Nothing is immediate; what is sublated, on the other hand, is the result of mediation; it is a non-being but as a result which has its origin in a being. It still has, therefore, in itself the determinateness from which it originates." G.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1969), pp. 106-107.

Since existential separation and disruption leave one opaque to the divine, Tillich will not allow the divine to be derived from an analysis of human experience: man cannot save himself.<sup>61</sup> If God is to be the answer to the existential question of man, he must come “to human existence from beyond it”;<sup>62</sup> the divine depth must break through in particular things and particular circumstances. This is the phenomenon of revelation in which the essential power of natural objects is delivered from the bondage of its existential contradiction, so that the finite thing or situation participates in the power of the ultimate.

In this way, revelation provides more than a mere representation of the divine; it opens levels of mind and of reality hidden till now and produces the experience of the divine which is the most profound of these levels. The appearance of the divine varies according to the particular situation. Experienced in correlation with the threat of nonbeing, God has the form of the “infinite power of being resisting nonbeing,” that is, he is Being Itself. As the answer to the question in the form of anxiety, God is “the ground of courage.”<sup>63</sup> Each is a form of the particular participation in the divine which takes place in this situation. As this same participation is the basis for symbols of the divine, these differ in mode and duration depending upon the situation.

For a better understanding of the contemporary nature of Tillich’s religious philosophy it is necessary to investigate further his development of the situation of revelation in the context of meaninglessness. As cognitive, this encounter includes two elements: one is objective and termed a miracle or sign-event; the other is subjective and named ecstasy and inspiration. The objective and the subjective are so strictly correlated that one cannot be had without the other: revelation is the truth only for the one who is grasped by the divine presence.<sup>64</sup>

Miracle does not mean a supernatural interference with the natural structure of events. To make this clear Tillich prefers the term ‘sign-event’, as signifying that which produces numinous astonishment in Rudolph Otto’s sense of that which is connected with the presence of the divine. Such a sign-event can be realized in the context of meaninglessness because it presupposes the stigma of nonbeing, the disruptive tensions driving toward one’s complete annihilation. In particular situations, this stigma becomes evident and manifests the negative side of the mystery of God, the abyss. However, such situations also imply the positive side of the mystery

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<sup>61</sup> This, he says, would be the humanistic-naturalistic or the dualistic approach to God.

<sup>62</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 64-65.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111. Cf. “What is Divine Revelation,” *The Witness*, XXVI (1943), 8-9.

of God, for their very reality manifests the divine ground and power of being over which nonbeing is not completely victorious.

This explains the characteristics which Tillich attributes to a miracle. He speaks of a miracle as “an event which is astonishing, unusual, shaking, without contradicting the rational structure of reality; . . . an event which points to the mystery of being, expressing its relation to us in a definite way; . . . an occurrence which is received as a sign-event in an ecstatic experience.”<sup>65</sup> The subjective element pertains to the very nature of a miracle. Thus, even a person who later learns about the sign-event must share in the ecstasy if he is to have more than a report about the belief of another. An objective miracle would be a contradiction in terms.

This subjective element of “standing outside one’s self” is the etymology of the term “ecstasy”. It indicates a state in which the mind transcends its ordinary situation, its subject-object structure. Miracle was seen to be negatively dependent on the stigma of nonbeing. In the mind, what corresponded to this stigma was the shock of nonbeing, the anxiety of death, meaninglessness and guilt. These tend to disrupt the normal balance of the mind, to shake it in its structure and to force it to its boundaries where it openly faces nonbeing. There it is thrown back upon itself.

This might be useful in the interpretation of the history of the last century. For in facing the structural contradictions of his time, Marx took just this route. Seeing them as a call to man to save himself, he turned against all else as an opiate, and thereby opened the way for a new radicalization of the conflict of subject and object. Once objectified in one’s work, now one would be totally objectified by society; family bonds would be intentionally subverted; and the sense of personal dignity would be annihilated before the state which would be all.

Tillich’s dialectic points to the fact that, when forced to its extreme situation, to the very limit of human possibilities, the mind experiences an all pervading “no.” There, face to face with the meaninglessness and despair which one must recognize if one is serious about anything at all, one is grasped by mystery. To acknowledge meaninglessness even in an act of despair is itself a meaningful act, for it could be done only on the power of the being it negates.<sup>66</sup> In this way, the reality of a transcending power is manifested within one.

In a radically contemporary mode, this is the expression within human consciousness of the classical theme of the non-ultimacy of that which is limited and contingent. Anything perceived as object opposed to subject must be limited and not all-sufficient; but this very perception bespeaks as its basis that which is self-sufficient and absolute.

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<sup>65</sup> Systematic Theology, I, p. 117.

<sup>66</sup> *The Courage to Be*, p. 176. Despair supposes something positive. “The negative ‘lives’ by the positive which it negates.” *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analysis and Ethical Applications* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 38-39.

This is not natural revelation whereby reason grasps God whenever it wills. Tillich takes an extra step, noting that the object-subject dichotomy which characterized the human mind enables it to recognize its contradictions, but not to resolve them. Natural knowledge of self and world can lead to the question of the ground of being and reason, but, as estranged in the state of existence, it cannot answer the question. For this God must grasp the human person;<sup>67</sup> this is revelation. The power of being is present in the affirmation of meaninglessness and in the affirmation of ourselves as facing meaninglessness; it affirms itself in a person in spite of nonbeing.<sup>68</sup>

#### *Ecstasy and Ultimate Concern*

In true ecstasy, one receives ultimate power by the presence of the ultimate which breaks through the contradictions of existence where and when it will. It is God who determines the circumstances and the degree in which he will be participated. The effect of this work and its sign is love, for, when the contradictions of the state of existence are overcome so that they are no longer the ultimate horizon, reunion and social healing, cooperation and creativity become possible.

Dr. Tillich calls the cognitive aspect of ecstasy inspiration. In what concerns the divine, he replaces the word knowledge by awareness. This is not concerned with new objects, which would invade reason with a strange body of knowledge that could not be assimilated, and, hence, would destroy its rational structure. Rather, that which is opened to man is a new dimension of being participated in by all while still retaining its transcendence.

It matters little that the contemporary situation of skepticism and meaninglessness has removed all possibility of content for this act. What is important is that we have been grasped by that which answers the ultimate question of our very being, our unconditional and ultimate concern. This indeed, is Tillich's phenomenological description of God. "Only certain is the ultimacy as ultimacy."<sup>69</sup> The ultimate concern provides the place at which the faith by which there is belief (*fides qua creditur*) and the faith that is believed (*fides quae creditur*) are identified.

It is here that the difference between subject and object disappears. The source of our faith is present as both subject and object in a way that is beyond both of them. The absence of this dichotomy is the reason why, as noted, Tillich refuses to speak of knowledge here and uses instead the term

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<sup>67</sup> *The Protestant Era*, pp. 79-80. Cf. *Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 114-20.

<sup>68</sup> *Christianity and the Problem of Existence* (Washington: Henderson Services, 1951), pp. 30-31.

<sup>69</sup> *Dynamics of Faith*, Vol. X of *World Perspectives*, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 17.

'awareness'. He compares it to the mystic's notion of the knowledge God has of Himself, the truth itself of St. Augustine.<sup>70</sup> It is absolutely certain, but the identity of subject and object means that it is also absolutely personal. Consequently, this experience of the ultimate cannot be directly received from others:<sup>71</sup> revelation is something which we ourselves must live.

### *Ultimate Concern*

In this experience, it is necessary to distinguish the point of immediate awareness from its breadth of content. The point of awareness is expressed in what Tillich refers to as the ontological principle: "Man is immediately aware of something unconditional which is the *prius* of the interaction and separation of both subject and object, both theoretically and practically."<sup>72</sup> He has no doubt about the certainty of this point, although nonsymbolically he can say only that this is being itself. However, in revelation he has experienced not only its reality but its relation to him.<sup>73</sup> He expresses the combination of these in the metaphorical terms of ground and abyss of being, of the power of being, and of ultimate and unconditional concern.

Generally, this point is experienced in a special situation and in a special form; the ultimate concern is made concrete in some one thing. It may, for instance, be the nation, a god or the God of the Bible. This concrete content of our act of belief differs from ultimacy as ultimacy which is not immediately evident. Since it remains within the subject-object dichotomy, its acceptance as ultimate requires an act of courage and venturing faith. The certainty we have about the breadth of concrete content is then only conditional.<sup>74</sup> Should time reveal this content to be finite, our faith will still have been an authentic contact with the unconditional itself, only the concrete expression will have been deficient.<sup>75</sup> Here it is important to keep in mind Buber's caution in the previous chapter with regard to the thought of Max Scheler. Is it enough to change the object; is indeed the act of concern the same if the object is different? Or is a concern that is essentially relational in an I-thou rather than an I-it manner not differentiated in quality by its object?

Tillich sees two correlated elements in one's act of faith. One is that of certainty concerning one's own being as related to something

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-11.

<sup>71</sup> "The Problem of Theological Method," *Journal of Religion*, XXVII (1947), 22-23.

<sup>72</sup> "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, I (1946), 10.

<sup>73</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, p. 109.

<sup>74</sup> "The Problem of the Theological Method," *loc. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>75</sup> *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 18.



ultimate and unconditional. The other is that of risk, of surrendering to a concern which is not really ultimate and may be destructive if taken as if it were. The risk arises necessarily in the state of existence where both reason and objects are not only finite, but separated from their ground. This places an element of doubt in faith which is neither of the methodological variety found in the scientist, nor of the transitory type often had by the skeptic. Rather, the doubt of faith is existential, an awareness of the lasting element of insecurity. Nevertheless, this doubt can be accepted and overcome in spite of itself by an act of courage which affirms the reality of God. Faith remains the one state of ultimate concern, but, as such, it subsumes certainty concerning both the unconditional and existential doubt.<sup>76</sup>

Can a system with such uncertainty concerning concrete realities still be called a realism? Tillich believes that it can, but only if it is specified as a belief-full or self-transcending realism. In this, the really real—the ground and power of everything real—is grasped in and through a concrete historical situation. Hence, the value of the present moment which has become transparent for its ground is, paradoxically, both all and nothing. In itself, it is not infinite and “the more it is seen in the light of the ultimate power, the more it appears as questionable and void of lasting significance.”<sup>77</sup> The appearance of self-subsistence gradually melts away. But, by this very fact, the ground and power of the present reality becomes evident. The concrete situation becomes *theonomous* and the infinite depth and eternal significance of the present is revealed in an *ecstatic* experience.

It would be a mistake, however, to think of this as something other-worldly, strange or uncomfortable. It is *ec-static* in the sense of going beyond the usual surface observations and calculations of our initial impressions and scientific calculations, but what it reveals is the profundity of our unity with colleagues, neighbors and, indeed, with all humankind. Rather, then, than generating a sense of estrangement, its sign is the way in which it enables one to see others as friends and to live comfortably with them. As ethnic and cultural differences emerge, along with the freedom of each people to be themselves, this work of the Spirit which is characteristic of Tillich’s dialectic comes to be seen in its radical importance for social life.

## THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In Tillich’s method it is philosophy that asks the questions, but for the reasons given above the answer must come from beyond humankind, and hence must be theological. Up to this point, the positive exposition of Tillich’s thought could have been developed without special relation to Christianity. However, he sees in his system the need for a central manifestation of God both to serve as a point of over-all unity and to

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *The Protestant Era*, p. 18.

conquer definitively the contradictions of existence. It is here that Tillich introduces Christ as the final revelation. We shall review briefly this major part of his system (volumes two and three of his three volume *Systematic Theology*) in order philosophically to indicate the direction taken by his thought as it enters the properly theological realm.

#### *Definitive Revelation*

Since reason remains finite and retains its state of existence even after receiving revelation, new difficulties continue to arise. The human tendency to oppose subject and object and to reduce subjects to objects with all its corrosive, repressive and dehumanizing effects was broken in its final power and the conflicts of reason were replaced by reconciliation once the human person's total structure was grasped by its ultimate concern and opened to the ground of being. Still, as old habits die hard their corruptive effects, though conquered, are not removed.<sup>78</sup> Hence, they are able to rise again and attack even the elements of revelation. The bearers of revelation can be mistaken for the ultimate itself, thereby making even faith idolatrous. Furthermore, the emergence of the subject-object horizon to dominance can lead to a loss of the ecstatic, transcending power of reason. In this case, reason forgets that it is but an instrument for awareness of the ultimate and tends itself to become an ultimate.

Fortunately, these distortions of faith and reason can be definitively conquered; the means of this victory is called final revelation. It has various criteria, but all are bound up with the qualities which a revelation must have if it is to be the ultimate solution to the conflicts of our finitude in the state of estrangement.

The criterion on the part of the miracle is the power of final revelation for "negating itself without losing itself."<sup>79</sup> Definitive revelation must overcome the danger of substituting itself for the ultimate by sacrificing itself. This is Christ on the cross, perfectly united with God, who, in the surrender of all the finite perfection by which he could be a bearer of revelation, becomes completely transparent to the mystery he reveals. Thus, he becomes a bearer which merely points and can never be raised to ultimacy. This is the perfect fulfillment of the very essence of the sign-event concept.

In turn, Tillich sees Christianity receiving an unconditional and universal claim from that to which it witnesses, without Christianity as such being either final or universal. On the part of reason, another criterion of this special revelation is its capacity to overcome the conflicts in reason between autonomy and heteronomy, absolutism and relativism, emotionalism and formalism. The success of Christ in solving these

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<sup>78</sup> *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 79.

<sup>79</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 133-35.

conflicts provides a continuous pragmatic manifestation of Christ as the final revelation.<sup>80</sup>

The need for a definitive and incorruptible manifestation of the ground of being is responded to by final revelation which, as such, is not only the criterion, but the fulfillment of other revelations.<sup>81</sup> This becomes the “center, aim and origin of the revelatory events” which preceded and surrounded it. The preparatory revelations mediated through nature, men and events are called universal revelation, though they occur only in special, concrete circumstances. They have the function of preparing both the question and the symbols without which the answer provided by final revelation could neither be received nor understood.<sup>82</sup> But, with the advent of final revelation, preparatory revelation ceases, and the period of receiving revelation begins. The people (*ecclesia* or Church) become the bearer of the original fact of Christ; they continue the process of reception, interpretation and actualization. This combines the certainty of its basis in the ultimate with the risk of faith, for its belief that it cannot be surpassed by a new original revelation is the other side of its belief that revelation has the power of reformation within itself.<sup>83</sup>

Taking this risk with courage, final revelation is the definitive point where the estrangement of essential and existential being is overcome, where finitude is reunited with infinity, man with God, anxiety with courage and mortality with eternity. This is the eschatological reunion of essence and existence, foreshadowed and momentarily grasped in universal preparatory relations. It is definitively established by this final revelation in which Christ becomes the “new being” and God becomes incarnate.<sup>84</sup> This is “realized eschatology,” but it has happened only in principle, that is, in power and as a beginning. “Those who participate in him participate in the ‘new being,’ though under the condition of man’s existential predicament and, therefore, only fragmentarily and by anticipation.”<sup>85</sup>

### *Social Implications*

In this context, morality cannot remain the empty or arbitrary self-affirmation of a spiritual being. Its ultimate impulse and final aim is the expression of the transcendent ground of being, but its particular contents, being received from the culture, remain preliminary and relative. In this way, one’s actions, like one’s being, should be provisional manifestations of the divine depth dimension.

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147-54; *Dynamics of Faith*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>81</sup> *Systematic Theology*, I, pp. 132-33.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138-39.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>84</sup> “A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of Incarnation,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 144-45.

<sup>85</sup> *Systematic Theology*, II, p. 118.

In its expression of the fragmentary nature of reality, this view includes the objectivity of positivism without its refusal to penetrate into the nature of existence. In expanding one's horizons beyond the physical, it integrates also the subjectivity of idealism without remaining trapped in a realm of essences.<sup>86</sup> Both insights are synthesized and transcended in a new ontological mysticism. This is not the classical mysticism which disregarded the cosmos for a direct union with a transcendent absolute. Instead, it points by faith to the unfathomable character of the ground of being and to the depth of life as prior to, and condition of, both subject and object. By restoring the element of participation in the divine, this goes to the heart of religion.

Tillich sees two reasons for considering this mysticism to be post-Reformation. One is the refusal of such a mysticism to elevate anything finite to the position of the divine. The other is its search for the essence of objectivity in the depth of subjectivity, approaching God through the soul.<sup>87</sup> Since this approach is made in the context of total meaninglessness which has characterized this end of the modern period, it is not only contemporary but opens to new hope for the new millennium.

In this study, we have examined the historical context of the thought of Paul Tillich, the philosophical problem this generated, the resulting elaboration of the dialectic, and its theological implications. The great popularity of his work during the period of reconstruction following World War II suggests that his experience and philosophical development might be helpful for many today in analogous circumstances of nation building and rebuilding.

One instance might be illustrative. As noted above, Martin Luther King wrote his doctoral dissertation on the dialectic of Tillich. When doing so, he saw love as the foundational transforming power at work in the heart, but considered it only a personal pilgrimage of the individual soul. Later, he wrote that he did not consider this to be a matter of social import. This changed upon visiting India when he came to see with the eyes of Gandhi that the Christian doctrine of love was indeed "one of the most potent weapons available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom." Nevertheless, until he faced the struggle for racial dignity in Montgomery this insight remained only at the intellectual level of understanding. It was in the actual borderline circumstances of the struggle for freedom, when he was forced to the limits of meaning by the threat of nonbeing, that his intellectual insight was transformed into a commitment to a way of life.<sup>88</sup>

This is suggestive for philosophers in our times. Aristotle spoke of philosophy as being undertaken in leisure, after one has taken care of the necessities of life. The examples of Tillich and King suggest that Marx was

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 236; *The Protestant Era*, pp. 66-68, 76-77, 217.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69-73; *Theology and Culture*, p. 107.

<sup>88</sup> Martin Luther King, *Strength to Love* (London: Holder and Stoughton, 1964), pp. 149-50.

correct in saying that in our times philosophy can, and, indeed, often must be done on another more realistic and historical basis. It was in facing the destructive power of the modern totalitarian state that Tillich found the need to transcend technical reason and to go beneath structures to the very ground of being. Through experiencing directly the negativity of an exploitive system in the form of bombings, fire hoses and vicious dogs, Martin Luther King was able to uncover and give voice to the power to overcome, and thereby lead his people to new dignity and freedom.

It is an ancient Indian proverb that when the pupil is ready the teacher will arrive. The examples of Tillich and King suggest that the condition for receiving the power to be may be the very quandaries and dilemmas of change when old structures by their inadequacies contradict life. If so, Tillich's dialectic points out how the more disastrous those structures are manifested to be—that is, through their very negativity—the more a new level of being can be received, life can be transformed and the human spirit can experience resurrection and new life.



## **PART III**

### **RELIGION AS THE LIFE OF CULTURE**





## CHAPTER V

### RELIGION AND THE MEANING OF CULTURE

The constant and universal thrust of modern human striving appears to be centered in self-determination, in participation with other persons and peoples, regarding the disposition of social affairs.<sup>1</sup> This places us at the vortex of a number of mankind's deepest issues: it is self-determination, yet essentially with others; it must create the future, yet not dissolve the identity a people has developed in the past; it must manage the multiple crises of ongoing life, yet, through them, unpack the deep and perduring meaning of life.

Hence, to look into human development in our day it should prove helpful to enhance the character of heritage as the deep learning regarding human life which has developed over the millennia and now available. This is the grounds upon which we have developed our identity as a people. Further, we should study the process by which, in concert with others, we advance into the future. This suggests three issues: first, the nature of values, culture and tradition and their moral authority for guiding our life; second, our role in creatively shaping and developing this tradition in response to contemporary issues, and third, its implication for the relation of democratic attitudes to progress in our times.

#### THE STRUCTURE OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS

##### *Values*

For the drama of self-determination and the development of persons and peoples one must look to their 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, is that which is completed or realized through and through; 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

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<sup>1</sup> The outstanding work of Giovanni Sartori in codifying the various dimensions and understandings of democracy is reflected in his *Democratic Theory* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1962) on the modern challenges in the realization of democracy and in his *The Theory of Democracy Revisited* (Chatham, N.J.: Chatham House, 1987). The work of David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford: U. Cal. Press, 1987) is also a rich catalogue of classical models and their contemporary variants. For the implications of culture for democracy see Alexis de Tocqueville's classic *Democracy in America* (New York: Schocken, 1961), 2 vols. with its introduction by John Stuart Mill.

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 animal's realization or 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 wellbeing 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. Goods, then, 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.

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 our 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 values and disvalues.

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 persons, actions, and 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 for - the good must really "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.<sup>2</sup> Thus, different individuals or

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<sup>2</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), pp. 48-50;

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 their corporate free choices.

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 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 a lens 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 it does not create the object; but it focuses attention upon certain goods involved rather than upon others. This becomes the basic orienting factor for one's affective and emotional life. In time, it encourages and reinforces certain patterns of action which, in turn, reinforce the pattern of values. Through this process, we constitute our universe of moral concern in terms of which we struggle to advance or at least endure, mourn our failures, and celebrate our successes. This is our world of hopes and fears, in terms of which, as Plato wrote in the *Laches*, our lives have moral meaning.<sup>3</sup>

### *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.<sup>4</sup> Freedom then becomes more than mere spontaneity, more than choice, and more even than self-determination in the sense of causing oneself to act as described above. It shapes—the phenomenologist would say even that it constitutes—one's world as the ambit of human decisions and dynamic action. This is the making of a person or people in a community of persons or of nations.

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“The Person: Subject and Community,” *Review of Metaphysics*, 33 (1979-80), 273-308; and “The Task of Christian Philosophy Today,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 53 (1979), 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Laches*, 198-201.

<sup>4</sup> J.L. Mehta, *Martin Heidegger: The Way and the Vision* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), pp. 90-91.

This process of deliberate choice and decision transcends somatic and psychic dynamisms. Whereas the somatic dimension is extensively reactive, the psychic dynamisms of affection or appetite are fundamentally oriented to the good and positively attracted by a set of values which 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 dimension of life. For, in order to live oneself and 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, the person 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 good in the sense of bringing authentic individual and social fulfillment, or the contrary.

In this one retains that deliberation and voluntary choice whereby one exercises one's proper self-awareness, self-possession, 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 to shape oneself, as well as one's physical surroundings and community. This can be for good or for ill, depending on the character of one's actions. By definition, only morally good actions contribute to the fulfillment of the person, that is, to one's development and perfection as a person with others in community. It is the function of conscience, as man's moral judgment, to identify this character of moral good in action.<sup>5</sup> Hence, moral freedom consists in the ability to follow one's conscience.

This work of conscience is, then, not a merely theoretical judgment, but the exercise of self-possession 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 we are familiar; in their exercise, along with the coordinate natural dynamisms they require, we are practiced and, with practice, comes facility and spontaneity. Such patterns constitute the basic, continuing and pervasive shaping influence of our life. For this reason, they have been considered classically to be the basic indicators of what our life as a whole will add up to, or, as is often said, "amount to". Since Socrates, the technical term used for these especially developed capabilities is 'virtues'.

But, if the ability to follow one's conscience 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

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

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 set the pattern of our life through which our freedom is developed and exercised. This is called our "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 even 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.<sup>6</sup> 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*).<sup>7</sup>

Here, the focus is upon the creative capacity of the spirit of a person or people and the ability to work as artist, 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. 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.<sup>8</sup> This leads us beyond self and other, beyond identity and diversity, in ways that comprehend both.

On the other hand, "culture" can be traced to the terms *civis*, citizen and civilization.<sup>9</sup> These reflect the need for 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 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. As noted, for G.F. Klemm, this more objective sense of culture is composite in character.<sup>10</sup> Tyler defined this classically for the social sciences as "that

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<sup>6</sup> 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).

<sup>7</sup> Tonnelat, "Kultur" in *Civilisation, le mot et l'idée* (Paris: Centre International de Synthèse), II.

<sup>8</sup> V. Mathieu, *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> V. Mathieu, "Civiltà," *ibid.*, I, 1437-1439.

<sup>10</sup> G.F. Klemm, *Allgemein Culturgeschichte de Menschheit* (Leipzig, 1843-52), x.

complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits required by man as a member of society.”<sup>11</sup>

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; indeed, this 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 cultural alienation between peoples. Today, as communication increases and more widely differentiated peoples enter into ever greater interaction and mutual dependence, we reap a bitter harvest of this connotation. The development of a less exclusivist sense of culture must be a priority task.

### *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 very vivid in premodern and village communities. It would appear to be much less so in modern urban centers, undoubtedly in part due to the difficulty in forming active community life in large urban habitats. 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 we pass this on in new ways. 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 values we receive from the tradition and to mobilize our own life project actively toward the future.

The recognition of the value of tradition would appear to constitute a special problem for heirs of the Enlightenment and it may be helpful to reflect briefly on why this is so. Enlightenment rationalism idealizes clarity and distinctness of ideas both in themselves and in their interconnection; as such, it divorces them—often intentionally—from their existential and temporal significance. Such an ideal of human knowledge could be achieved either, as with Descartes, through an intellect working by itself from an intellectually

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<sup>11</sup> E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London, 1871), VII, p. 7.

perceived Archimedean principle or, as with Locke and Carnap, through the senses drawing their ideas exclusively from experience and combining them in myriad tautological transformations.<sup>12</sup> In either case, the result is a-temporal and consequently non-historical knowledge.

Two attempts to break out of this have proven ultimately unsuccessful. The one, in order to recognize historical sequence while retaining the ideal of clarity and distinctness, attempted to attain detailed knowledge of each period, relativizing everything to its point in time and placing historicity ultimately at the service of the rationalist ideal. The other, the Romantics, ultimately adhered to the same revolutionary enlightenment ideal even in appearing to oppose it, for, in turning to the past and to myths, they too sought clear and distinct knowledge of a static human nature. Tradition thus became traditionalism, for all was included in the original state of nature and our only way of obtaining a firm grounding for human life was simply to return thereto.

In the rationalist view, any meaning not clearly and distinctly perceived was an idol to be smashed (Bacon), an idea to be bracketed by doubt (Descartes), or something to be wiped clean from the slate of the mind as irrational and coercive (Locke and Hume). Any judgment—even if provisional—made before all had been examined and its clarity and distinctness established would be a dangerous imposition by the will.

This raises a number of problems. First, absolute knowledge of oneself or of others, simply and without condition, is not possible, for the knower is always conditioned according to his or her position in time and space and in relation to others. But neither would such knowledge be of ultimate interest, for human knowledge, like human beings, develops in time and with others.<sup>13</sup> This does not exclude projects of scientific knowledge, but it does identify these precisely as limited and specialized views: they make important but specific, rather than all-controlling, contributions.

Secondly, according to Descartes,<sup>14</sup> reason is had by all and completely; authority, therefore, could be only an entitlement of some to decide issues by an application of their will rather than according to an authentic understanding of the truth or justice of an issue. This would be the over-hastiness of Descartes' fourth *Meditation*. Further, the limited number of people in authority means that the vision of which they dispose would be limited by restricted or even individual interests. Finally, as one decision constitutes a precedent for those to follow, authority must become fundamentally bankrupt and hence corruptive.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1975), 305-310.

<sup>14</sup> R. Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, I.

<sup>15</sup> Gadamer, pp. 240, 246-247.

In this manner, the choice of clarity as an ideal, first by Plato and then Descartes, has generated an exclusivist mind-set ruled by a reductivist mechanism. It is not only that what is not clear is put aside as irrelevant but that the dynamism whereby we reflect the love by which we have been made and respond to it with openness and generosity comes to be seen in a negative cognitive light as blind, while freedom appears in a negative affective light as arbitrary. The only way these could achieve a redeeming clarity for the human mind is to be reduced to the unambiguous and simple visceral violence of Hobbes' struggle for survival.

If, on the contrary, the cumulative experience of mankind in living together in peace is to make a contribution to the development of modern life, then it will be necessary to return human knowledge to the ongoing lived process of humane discovery and choice. This takes place within a broad project of human interaction and an active process of reception by one generation of the learning of its predecessors. The emerging consciousness of the importance of this effort has led to broadening the task of hermeneutics from the study of ancient, often biblical, texts to a more inclusive attention to the integral meaning of cultures. There it has found not a mere animal search for survival, but a sense of human dignity which, by transcending survival needs enables human creativity and encourages a search for ever higher levels of human life.

The reference to the god, Hermes, in the term "hermeneutics" suggests something of this depth of the meaning which is sought throughout human life and its implication for the world of values. For the messages borne by Hermes was not merely an abstract mathematical formula or a methodological prescription devoid of human meaning and value; rather, it was the limitless wisdom regarding the source and, hence the reality, and regarding the priorities and hence the value, of all. Hesiod had appealed for this in the introduction to his *Theogony*: "Hail, children of Zeus! Grant lovely song and celebrate the holy race of the deathless gods who are forever. . . . Tell how at the first gods and earth came to be."<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, Aristotle indicated this concern for values and virtues in describing his science of wisdom as "knowing to what end each thing must be done; . . . this end is the good of that thing, and, in general, the supreme good in the whole of nature." Such a science will be most divine, for: "(1) God is thought to be among the causes of all things and to be a first principle, and (2) such a science either God alone can have, or God above all others. All the sciences, indeed, are more necessary than this, but none is better."<sup>17</sup> Hence, rather than evaluating all in terms of reductivist clarity and considering things in a horizontal perspective that is only temporal or totally changing,—with an implied relativization of all—hermeneutics or interpretation opens also to a vertical vision of what is most real in itself and most

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<sup>16</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony* trans. H.G. Everland-White (Loeb Classical Lib.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), p. 85.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 2.



lasting through time, that is, to the perennial in the realm of being and values; this it does with a view to mobilizing life accordingly.

At the same time, while still echoing Socrates by searching for the permanent structures of complex entities and the stable laws of change, in redirecting attention to being in time, contemporary attention is open to the essentially temporal character of mankind and, hence, to the uniqueness of each decision, individual and corporate. Thus, hermeneutics attends to the task of translation or interpretation, stressing the presentation to the one who receives the message, their historical situation, and, hence, the historical character of human life. It directs attention not merely to the pursuit of general truths, but to those to whom truth is expressed, namely, to persons in the concrete circumstances of their cultures as these have developed through the history of human interaction with nature, with other human beings and with God. It is this human history as heritage and tradition which sets the circumstances in which one perceives the values presented in the tradition and mobilizes his or her own project toward the future.

### THE GENESIS AND MORAL AUTHORITY OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS

In "The Idea of Confucian Tradition",<sup>18</sup> A. S. Cua traces the attention in Anglo-Saxon ethics and theory regarding moral traditions in Ludwig Wittgenstein's development of the notion of "forms of life" in his *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>19</sup> He notes its implicit presence in J. Rawls' relation of the sense of justice to one's history and traditions.<sup>20</sup> However, formal attention to the role of tradition in ethics is due to A. MacIntyre's *After Virtue*,<sup>21</sup> though its sociological role in providing regularities in social life had been observed earlier by Karl Popper.<sup>22</sup>

In the German tradition, the notion has much longer roots in the transcendental move of Kant and its development by such neo-Kantians as Ernst Cassirer into a whole theory of symbolic forms. As a development of phenomenology Martin Heidegger provided this with a metaphysical base. In *Truth and Method*, his successor, Hans Georg Gadamer, undertook, on this basis, to reconstruct the notion of a cultural heritage or tradition as: (a) based in community, (b) consisting of knowledge developed from experience and lived through time and (c) possessed of authority. In order to analyze the genesis of a cultural tradition we shall look at each of these in turn. Further, because tradition sometimes is interpreted as a threat to the personal and

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<sup>18</sup> *The Review of Metaphysics*, XLV (June, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

<sup>20</sup> *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971)

<sup>21</sup> (Notre Dame University Press, 1981)

<sup>22</sup> "Toward a Rational Theory of Tradition," in K. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1963), p. 123.

social freedom essential to a democracy, attention will be given here to the way a cultural heritage is generated by the free and responsible life of the members of a concerned community and enables succeeding generations to realize their life with freedom and creativity.

### *Community*

Autogenesis is no more characteristic of the birth of knowledge than it is of persons. One's consciousness emerges, not with self, but with its 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. Just as a person is born into a family on which he or she depends absolutely for life, sustenance, protection and promotion, so the development of one's understanding depends upon a community. 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 learns 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.<sup>23</sup>

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 community 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 into which one enters. In sum, as persons we emerge from birth in a family and neighborhood from which we learn and in harmony with which we thrive.

### *Horizontal Experience and the Development of Tradition*

If it were merely a matter of community, however, all might be limited to the present, with no place for tradition as that which is "passed on" from one generation to the next. 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

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<sup>23</sup> John Caputo, "A Phenomenology of Moral Sensibility: Moral Emotion," in George F. McLean, Frederick Ellrod *et al.*, eds., *Philosophical Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development: Act and Agent* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), pp. 199-222.

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 of which history is constituted.

This points us beyond the horizontal plane of the various ages of history and directs our attention vertically to its ground and, hence, to the bases of the values which humankind in its varied circumstances seeks to realize.<sup>24</sup> The historical and prophetic books of the Bible are an extended, concrete account of one people's process of discovering wisdom in interaction with the divine.

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 *Mahabharata* or in dance. 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 in 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 passed on that content, generation after generation progressively over time. The content of a tradition, expressed in works of literature and all the many facets of a culture, progressively emerges as something upon which character and community 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 forebears that our culture provides a model and exemplar. On the contrary, the importance of tradition derives horizontally from both the cooperative character of the learning by which wisdom is drawn

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<sup>24</sup> Gadamer, pp. 245-53.

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.<sup>25</sup>

*Vertical Experience and the Religious Roots of Tradition*

Perhaps the greatest point of tension between a sense of one's heritage and the enlightenment spirit relates to the vertical dimension or authority of tradition. Is it possible to recognize authority on the part of a tradition which perdures, while still asserting human freedom through time? Could it be that a cultural tradition, rather than being the negation of freedom and, hence, antithetic to democracy, is its cumulative expression, the reflection of our corporate access to the bases of all meaning, and even the positive condition for the discovery and realization of needed new developments?

One of the most important characteristics of the human person is one's capability for development and growth. One is born with open and unlimited powers for knowledge and for 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, one's social group one depends upon other persons according as they possess abilities which, as individuals and communities, are needed 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. 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.

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 ineffective as muscular action without a skeletal substructure. Life

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* Gadamer emphasizes 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.

would be 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 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 our life in 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 the life of a person.<sup>26</sup> 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 and presents an appropriate way of preserving that life through time. What begins to emerge is Heidegger's insight regarding Being and its characteristics of unity, truth and justice, goodness and love, not simply as empty ideals but as the ground of being, hidden or veiled, as it were, and erupting into time through conscious and 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 our times.

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 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 or personal consciousness<sup>27</sup>—but by our situatedness in a tradition. By fusing both past and present, this enables us to determine the specific direction of our lives and to mobilize the consensus and mutual commitments of which true community is built.<sup>28</sup>

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

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<sup>26.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>27.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

<sup>28.</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

constitutes its cultural heritage, which enables one in turn to assess and 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. Eliminating all expressions of democratic freedoms, this 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 a Confucius or Gandhi, a Bolivar or Lincoln, a Martin Luther King or a Mother Theresa. Various terms "charismatic personalities" (Shils<sup>29</sup>), "paradigmatic individuals" (Cua<sup>30</sup>) or characters who meld role and personality in providing a cultural or moral ideal (<sup>31</sup>), they supersede mere historical facts. As concrete universals, they express that harmony and fullness of perfection which is at once classical and historical, ideal and personal, uplifting and dynamizing in a word, liberating.

Antonio T. Cua<sup>32</sup> traces to Vico<sup>33</sup> attention to the unreflective cognitive consensus on common needs and to Shaftesbury<sup>34</sup> the affective sense of common partnership with others that all this entails. The result is the constitution of a community of memory whose members revere and commemorate the same saints and personages who have sacrificed to build or exemplify the community's self image. This results in a community of vision or self-understanding, as well as of hope and expectation. A cultural tradition, in this sense, is the context of one's conscious life and striving; it is life in its fullest meaning, as past and future, ground and aspiration.

In this light, Cua notes that, in the *Great Learning*, Chu Hsi stresses the importance of investigating the principles at great length, until one achieves "a wide and far-reaching penetration (*kuan-t'ung*)." Read as *Kuan-chuan*, this suggests an aesthetic grasp of the unique interconnection of the various components of the *tao* as the unique unifying perspective of the culture. This is not only a contemplative understanding, however; it implies

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<sup>29</sup> Edward Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> *Dimensions of Moral Creativity: Paradigms, Principles and Ideals* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978).

<sup>31</sup> *After Virtue*, 29-30.

<sup>32</sup> "The Idea of Confucian Tradition," *The Review of Metaphysics*, XLV (1992), 803-840.

<sup>33</sup> Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, trans. T. Bergin and M. Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988).

<sup>34</sup> *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), Vol. I, p. 72.

active engagement in the conduct of life and an accumulation of good deeds done according to *li* or ritual propriety and *i* or sense of righteousness. “For the adherents of the Confucian tradition, the tradition is an object of affection and reverence, largely because the tradition is perceived as an embodiment of wisdom (*chih*), which for Chu Hsi is a repository of insights available for personal and interpersonal appropriation, for coping with present problems and changing circumstances.”<sup>35</sup>

The truly important battle at the present time is, then, not between, on the one hand, a chaotic liberalism in which the abstract laws of the market-place dictate and tear at the lives of persons, peoples and nations or, on the other hand, a depersonalizing sense of community in which the dignity of the person is suppressed for an equally abstract utopia. A victory of either would spell disaster. The central battle is, rather, to enable peoples to draw on their heritage, constituted of personal assessments and free decisions, and elaborated through the ages by the various communities as the working out of their response to their concrete circumstances. That these circumstances are often shifting and difficult in the extreme is important, but it is of definite importance that this people’s response be truly theirs. That is, that it be part of their history, of their free and democratic response to the good, and not simply the imposed effect of another’s history, or—worst of all—of abstract, impersonal and depersonalizing structures, slogans, utopias or ideologies.

## APPLICATION OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

### *Application*

As an active process tradition transforms what is received, lives it in a creative manner and passes it on as a leaven for the future. Let us turn then from the cumulative meaning and value in tradition, its synchronic aspect, to its diachronic or particular meaning. For in each new time it receives from the past, orders the present and constructs the future. This is a matter, first of all, of taking time seriously, that is, of recognizing that reality includes authentic novelty. This contrasts to the perspective of Plato for whom what is real is the ideal and unchangeable forms or ideas transcending matter and time, and of which physical things and temporal events are but shadows. It also goes beyond rationalism’s search for clear and distinct knowledge of eternal and simple natures and their relations in terms of which all might be controlled, and beyond romanticism’s attention to a primordial unchanging nature hidden in the dimly sensed past. *A fortiori*, it goes beyond method alone without content.

In contrast to all these, the notion of application<sup>36</sup> is based upon an awareness that “reality is temporal and unfolding”. This means that tradition,

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<sup>35</sup>. “Confucian Tradition” and “Hsun Tsu and the Unity of Virtues,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 14 (1978), 92-94.

<sup>36</sup>Gadamer., pp. 281-286.

with its inherent authority or normative force, achieves its perfection in the temporal unfolding of reality. Secondly, it shows human persons and peoples, not as detached intellects, but as incarnate and hence as enabled by, and formative of, their changing physical and social universe. Thirdly, in the area of socio-political values and action, it expresses directly the striving of persons to realize their lives and the development of this striving into attitudes (*hexis*) and institutions. Hence, as distinct from the physical order, human action is a situation neither of law nor of lawlessness, but of human and, therefore, developing institutions and attitudes which do not determine and, hence, destroy human freedom, but regulate and promote its exercise.<sup>37</sup>

Certain broad guidelines for the area of ethics and politics serve in the application of tradition as a guide for historical practice and vice-versa. The concrete exercise of human freedom as unique decisions lived with others through time constitutes a distinctive and on-going process. Historicity means that responses to the good are made always in concrete and ever-changing circumstances. Hence, the general principles of ethics and politics as a philosophic science of action cannot be purely theoretical knowledge or a simple accounting from the past. Instead, they must help people consciously exercise their freedom in concrete historical circumstances which are ever-changing and new.

Here, an important distinction must be made from *techné* where action is governed by an idea as an exemplary cause that is fully determined and known by objective theoretical knowledge (*epistéme*). As in the case of an architect's blueprints, skill, such as that of the engineer, consists in knowing how to act according to that idea or plan. When this cannot be carried out perfectly, some parts of it are simply omitted in the execution. In contrast, ethics and politics, though similar in the possession of a practical guide and its application to a particular task, differ in important ways. First, in moral action subjects—whether a person or a people—constitute themselves, as much as they produce an object: agents are differentiated by their action. Hence, moral knowledge, as an understanding of the appropriateness of human action, cannot be fully determined independently of the subjects in their situation and in action.

Secondly, adaptation by moral agents in their application of the law does not diminish, but rather corrects and perfects the law. In relation to a world which is less ordered, the law is imperfect, for it cannot contain in any explicit manner the response to the concrete possibilities which arise in history. It is precisely here that freedom and creativity are located. They do not consist in arbitrariness, for Kant is right in saying that without law freedom has no meaning; nor do they consist in an automatic response determined by the historical situation, for then determinism and relativism would compete for the crown in undermining human freedom. Freedom consists, rather, in shaping the present according to the sense of what is just and good which we

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 278-279.



have from our cultural tradition, and in a way which manifests and indeed creates for the first time more of what justice and goodness mean.

The law is not diminished by its application in the circumstances but corrected and enriched. *Epoché* and equity do not diminish, but perfect the law; without them the law would be simply a mechanical replication doing the work not of justice, but of injustice. Ethics or politics is not only knowledge of what is right in general but the search for what is right in the situation and the choice of the right means for this situation. Knowledge about the means is not then a matter of mere expediency; it is the essence of the search for a more perfect application of the law in the given situation. This is the fulfillment of moral knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Tradition and Contemporary Concerns*

It is important to note that this rule of the concrete (of what the situation is asking of us) is not known by sense knowledge, which simply registers a set of concrete facts on the horizontal level. In order to know what is morally required, the situation must be understood in the light of what is right, that is, in the light of what has been discovered vertically through tradition with its normative character about appropriate human action. Only in this light can moral consciousness as the work of intellect (*nous*), rather than of sensation, go about its job of choosing the right means.

Therefore, to proceed simply in reaction to concrete injustices, rather than in the light of one's tradition, is ultimately destructive. It inverts the order just mentioned and results in manipulation of our hopes for the good. Destructive or repressive structures would lead us to the use of correspondingly evil means, suited only to producing evil results. The true response to evil can be worked out only in terms of the good as the highest discovery by our people, passed on in tradition and applied by us in our times.

The importance of application implies a central role for the virtue of prudence (*phronesis*) or thoughtful reflection which enables one to discover the appropriate means for the circumstances. This must include, also, the virtue of sagacity (*sunesis*), that is, of understanding or concern for the other. For what is required as a guide for the agent is not only technical knowledge of an abstract ideal, but knowledge that takes account of the agent in relation to other persons. One can assess the situation adequately only inasmuch as one, in a sense, undergoes the situation with the affected parties, living and suffering with them. Aristotle rightly describes as "terrible" the one who is capable of manipulating the situation, but is without orientation towards moral ends and without concern for the good of others in their concrete situations.

In sum, application is not a subsequent or accidental part of understanding, added on after perfect understanding has been achieved; rather it co-determines this understanding from the beginning. Moral consciousness must

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 281-286.

seek to understand the good, not as an ideal to be known and then applied, but rather through discerning the good for concrete peoples in their relations with others.

Cua finds similar notions in the distinctions of Chu Hsi in the neo-Confucian tradition regarding the diachronic sense of *tao* as residing between the substantial (*t'i*) and the operational (*yung*), the stable basic or latent schemata and its operational sense in changing circumstances (*fei*). Hsün Tzu distinguishes the constant (*ch'ang*) and the changing (*pien*), and Mencius the constant rule (*ching*) and the sliding scale (*ch'üuan*). Use of the latter as an exercise of moral discretion based on *li* is essential for moral life due to the imperfections of our knowledge and the urgent complexity of life. In these circumstances, to hold to a static mean would undermine the realization of the holistic goal of the *tao*.

Creativity in the application of the tradition in the concrete circumstances of life thus becomes essential. In this context Cua deftly cites J. Pelican's aphorism: "Tradition is the living faith of the dead, traditionalism is the dead faith of the living."<sup>39</sup>

#### *The Religious Roots of Cultural Creativity*

The notion of application can help in sorting out the human dilemma between an absolutism insensitive to persons in their concrete circumstances and a relativism which leaves the person subject to expediency in public and private life. Indeed, the very statement of the dilemma reflects the deleterious aspect of the Platonic view of ideas. He was right to ground changing and historical being in the unchanging and eternal. This had been Parmenides' first insight in metaphysics and has been richly developed in relation to human action through the medievals' notion of an eternal law in the divine mind.

But it seems inappropriate to speak directly in these terms regarding human life, for in all things individual human persons and humankind as a whole are subject to time, growth and development. As we become increasingly conscious of this, the personal character even of our abstract ideals becomes manifest and their adapted application in time can be seen, not as their rejection, but as their perfection. In this, justice loses none of its force as an absolute requirement of human action. Rather, the concrete modes of its application in particular circumstances add to what could have been articulated in merely abstract and universal terms. A hermeneutic approach directs attention precisely to these unfoldings of the meaning of abstract principles through time. This is not an abandonment of absolutes, but a recognition of the human condition and of the way in which this continually and, in endless marvelous manners, unfolds the ultimate richness of the source and principle of social life.

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<sup>39</sup> Jaroslav Pelican, *Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 65.

For Confucius, the aesthetic vision is integrated in drama, of which dance is one moment. In the actual performance of *li* (ritual or liturgy), there is a combination of poetry, liturgical action and music. Confucius saw that in the poem our spirit can rise and stand in reality to achieve complete transcendence in the ecstasy of the spirit. This gives access in aesthetic terms to a source, not only of inspiration, but of vision that both draws one to aspire to greater perfection and opens the way for creative thought regarding ways in which this can be achieved.

Some suggest, however, that Confucius may have looked upon aesthetics more as a matter of appreciation and conservation, rather than as original, creative and free expression. This suggests that, in the works of Confucius, there are resources important for developing a modern vision which were unmined by Confucius himself and his schools.

If so what should be the attitude of a philosopher in our day to this mode of aesthetics? If it be itself appreciative and conservative, is one who interprets it subject to the same approach and limited to the same content, or can interpretation legitimately open up new meaning in old texts? In other words, must ancient texts be read only with an ancient outlook? Indeed, is it even possible today to have an authentically ancient outlook—to see with eyes long closed—or does the attempt to do so require so much make-believe as to be in effect impossible? Even if one were to succeed in reconstituting the past, would one be faithful to the text which was written as a vital expression of the process of life, or would one instead be rendering lifeless a living text (not unlike the biologist who makes a slide of once living tissue)?

It would seem, therefore, that our goal should be not simply to reiterate ancient times in reading ancient texts, but to recognize that we come to them from new times, with new horizons and new questions. We should allow them to speak anew to us; in so doing, the texts and philosophies are living rather than dead—and, therefore, more true. Texts read in this sense are part of living tradition in which is situated our struggle to face the problems of life and build a future worthy of those who follow.

Some would fear that to give such importance to the horizon of the reader of a text might constitute a relativism and lose the permanent significance of the insights of the author. But this would seem to reflect a material and mechanical model ruled by successive discrete moments of time in which universality is a function only of abstraction. This leaves what is universally applicable as relatively vacuous and reduces one to pragmatism as one's only response to concrete and changing circumstances.

Here, the real issue regards one's metaphysics: what is the nature of being, what does it mean to be? If the answer, as the Confucian sense of community would be the first to suggest, is not that reality is reductively matter trapped in time but the human spirit living through time, then to look for meaning in terms of the reaches of the spirit across time is not to lose but to find meaning. This is the sense of being emerging through the consciousness of Heidegger's person as *dasein*. Being is not merely what was, but what blossoms ever fresh in the human heart. In the same way, philosophy in read-

ing ancient texts is not archeology but, like every human act, a creative unfolding of being in time. This creative freedom is the essential characteristic of the person.

Ontologically the many must come from the one and time from the eternal. But phenomenologically in the process of human consciousness we rise from our experience in time to the eternal source and goal. Shankara takes us beyond a causal sequence to see the self as illusory or ephemeral unless it be understood in the Absolute Self.

What, then, should we conclude regarding the root of the actuality, the good or the perfection of reality which humankind has discovered, in which we have been raised, which gives us dominion over our actions, and which enables us to be free and creative? Does it come from God or from man, from eternity or from history? Chakravarti Rajagopalachari of Madras answered:

Whether the epics and songs of a nation spring from the faith and ideas of the common folk, or whether a nation's faith and ideas are produced by its literature is a question which one is free to answer as one likes. . . . Did clouds rise from the sea or was the sea filled by waters from the sky? All such inquiries take us to the feet of God transcending speech and thought<sup>40</sup>

#### **DEMOCRACY AS DIALOGUE IN THE TRADITION OF A CULTURE**

Thus far, we have treated the character and importance of cultural traditions as bearing the long experience of persons interacting with their world, with other persons and with God. It is made up not only of chronological facts, but of insights regarding human perfection and its religious foundations which have been forged by human efforts in concrete circumstances, e.g., the Greek notion of democracy and the enlightenment notions of equality and freedom. By their internal value, these stand as normative of the aspirations of a people.

Secondly, we have seen how ontologically God is the ultimate cause and ultimate ground of being and that from a phenomenological perspective he is also the human person's ultimate concern and hence the basis of human values and virtues, cultures and civilizations.

Thirdly, we have seen the implications of historicity for novelty within the context of tradition, namely, that the continually unfolding circumstances of historical development not merely extend or repeat what went before, but constitute an emerging manifestation of the dynamic character of being that is articulated by the art, religion, literature and political structures of a cultural tradition.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ramayana* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1976), p. 312.

It remains for us now to treat the fourth element in this study of tradition, namely, the hermeneutic method. How can earlier sources replete in the religious heritage of human cultures be understood or unfolded in a way that is relevant, indicative and directive of our life in present circumstances? In a word, how can we interpret or draw out the significance of religious tradition for present action?

*Interpretation of a Cultural Tradition*

If we take time and culture seriously, then we must recognize that we are situated in a particular culture and at a particular time; hence, all that can be seen from this vantage point constitutes one's horizon. This would be lifeless and dead, determined rather than free, if our vantage point were to be fixed by its circumstances and closed. This points to the necessity of meeting other minds and hearts not simply to add information incrementally, but to be challenged in our basic assumptions and enabled thereby to delve more deeply into our tradition and draw forth deeper and more pervasive truth. How can this be done?

First of all, it is necessary to note that only a unity of meaning, that is, an identity, is intelligible.<sup>41</sup> Just as it is not possible to understand a number three if we include only two units rather than three, no act of understanding is possible unless it is directed to an identity or whole of meaning. This brings us to the classic issue of the hermeneutic circle in which knowledge of the whole depends upon knowledge of the parts, and vice versa. How can this work for, rather than against the development of social life?

The experience of reading a text might be suggestive. 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, from 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 parts of the sentence, the paragraph, etc., continually reassessing the whole in terms of the parts and the parts in terms of the whole. This basically circular movement continues until all appears to fit and to be clear.

Similarly, in regard to our cultural tradition and values, we develop a prior conception of its content. This anticipation of meaning is not simply of the tradition as an objective past or fixed content to which we come; it is rather what we produce as we participate in the evolution of the tradition and, thereby, further determine ourselves. This is a creative stance reflecting the content, not only of the past, but of the time in which I stand and of the life project in which I am engaged. It is a creative unveiling of the content of the tradition as this comes progressively and historically into the present and through the present, passes into the future.

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<sup>41</sup> Gadamer, p. 262.

In this light, time is not a barrier, separation or abyss, but rather a bridge and opportunity for the process of understanding, 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 complete meaning of the tradition, less by removing falsifying factors than by opening new sources of self-understanding which reveal in the tradition unsuspected implications and even new dimensions of meaning.<sup>42</sup>

*Tradition and Discovery: Openness to Being Questioned*

Of course, not all our acts of understanding about the meaning of a text from another culture, a dimension of a shared tradition, a set of goals or a plan for future action are sufficient. Hence, it becomes particularly important that they not be adhered to fixedly, but be put at risk in dialogue with others.

In this, the basic elements remain the substances or persons which Aristotle described in terms of autonomy and, by implication, of identity. Hermeneutics would expand this to reflect as well the historical and hermeneutic situation of each person in the dialogue, that is, their horizon or particular possibility for understanding. As an horizon is all that can be seen from one's vantage point, in dialogue with others it is necessary to be aware of one's horizon, as well as that of others. For it is precisely when our initial projection of their meaning will not bear up under the progressive dialogue that we are required to make needed adjustments in our projection of their meaning.

This enables one to adjust one's prior understanding not only of the horizon of the other with whom one is in dialogue, but especially of one's own horizon. Hence, one need not fear being trapped; horizons are vantage points of a mind which is in principle open and mobile, capable of being aware of its own limits and of transcending them through acknowledging the horizons of others. The flow of history implies that we are not bound by our horizons, but move in and out of them. It is in making us aware of our horizons that hermeneutic consciousness accomplishes our liberation.<sup>43</sup>

For this, we must maintain a questioning attitude. Rather than simply following through with our previous ideas until a change is forced upon us, we must remain sensitive to new meanings in true openness. This is neither neutrality as regards the meaning of the tradition, nor an extinction of passionate concerns 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 others or of traditions. Our attitude in approaching dialogue must be one of willingness continually to revise our initial projection or expectation of meaning.

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 235-242, 267-271.

The way out of the hermeneutic circle is then not by ignoring or denying our horizons and initial judgments or prejudices, but by recognizing them as inevitable and making them work for us in drawing out, not the meaning of the text for its author, but its application for the present. Through this process of application we serve as midwife for culture as historical or tradition with its deep religious roots, enabling it to give birth to a human future in which religion is able to play its essential role.<sup>44</sup>

The logical structure of this process is the exchange of question and answer. A question is required in order to determine just what issue we are engaging—whether it is this issue or that—so that we might direct 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.

If discovery depends upon the question, then the art of discovery is the art of questioning. Consequently, in working in conjunction with others, the heart of the democratic process is not to suppress, but to reinforce and unfold the questions of others. To the degree that these 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 other's positions. Instead, in democracy, understood as conversation and dialogue, one enters upon a mutual search to maximize the possibilities of the question, even by speaking at cross purposes, for it is by mutually eliminating errors and working out a common meaning that we discover truth.<sup>45</sup>

#### *Pluralism and Progress*

Further, it should not be presupposed that a text, such as a tradition, law or constitution, will hold the answer to but one question or can have but one horizon which must be identified by the reader. On the contrary, the full horizon of the authors is never available to the reader, nor can it be expected that there is but one question to which a tradition or document holds an answer. The sense of a text reaches beyond what the authors intended because the dynamic character of being as it emerges in time means that the horizon is never fixed but is continually opening. This constitutes the effective historical element in understanding a text or a tradition. At each step new dimensions of its potentialities open to understanding, so that the meaning of a text or tradition lives with the consciousness and hence the horizons—not of its author—but of people in dialogue with others through time and history. This is the essence of democracy as a process. It is the process of broadening horizons, through fusion with the horizons of others in dialogue, that makes it possible

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 235-332.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225-332.

to receive from one's cultural tradition and its values answers which are ever new.<sup>46</sup>

In this, one's personal attitudes and interests remain important. If one's interest in developing new horizons is simply the promotion of one's own understanding then one could be interested solely in achieving knowledge, and thereby domination over others. This would lock one into an absoluteness of his or her prejudices; being fixed or closed in the past, they would disallow new life in the present. In this manner, powerful new insights can become with time deadening pre-judgments which suppress freedom.

In contrast, an attitude of authentic religious openness appreciates the nature of one's own finiteness. On this basis, it both respects the past and is open to discerning the future. Such openness is a matter, not merely of new information, but of recognizing the historical or temporal nature of the human person and its basis in an absolute that transcends and grounds time. This enables us to escape what had deceived us and held us captive, and to learn deeply from new experiences.<sup>47</sup>

This suggests that democratic openness does not consist in surveying others objectively, obeying them in a slavish and unquestioning manner or simply juxtaposing their ideas and traditions to our own. Rather, it is directed primarily to ourselves, for our ability to listen to others is correlatively our ability to assimilate the implications of their answers. This enables delving more deeply into the meaning of our own traditions and drawing out new and even more rich insights. In other words, it is an acknowledgement that our cultural heritage has something new to say to us.

The true hermeneutic attitude of effective historical consciousness regarding religion and culture is, then, not methodological sureness, readiness for new compromises or new techniques of social organization, for these are subject to social critique and manipulation on the horizontal level. Instead, it is readiness to draw out in dialogue new meaning from the religious roots of cultural traditions.<sup>48</sup> Seen in these terms the religious heritage of our cultures and values is not closed or dead, but, through democratic dialogue should be continually renewed by becoming ever more inclusive and more rich.

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<sup>46.</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 336-340.

<sup>47.</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327-324.

<sup>48.</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 324-325.



## CHAPTER VI

# RELIGION AND A WHOLISTIC PARADIGM FOR GLOBAL TIMES

### THE GLOBAL REALITY

Today there is reason to question the adequacy of the individualist paradigm characteristic of modern times. This can be traced from the nominalism of William of Ockham<sup>1</sup> and Siger of Brabant in the late Middle Ages for whom all was simply single and hence self-interested. Hence, universal and unifying terms were merely names: thus the term “nominalism”. With this as the ruling paradigm, Hobbes and Locke generated philosophical individualism, Adam Smith elaborated the corresponding capitalist economic theory of equal competition, and international political life was organized in terms of a set of nations exercising their considerable power in terms of national self-interest—or, as was classically said, “war by another name”.

The results ranged from the spectacular to the abominable. On the one hand, industry flourished, the quality of life soared, and man literally reached to the moon. On the other hand, the wretched conditions of urban factory life were chronicled by Karl Marx; capitalist exploitation reached the level of colonialism, whence it descended into enslavement; and the world took the path of mass death and mutual threats of extermination in world wars both hot and cold.

Now such forces are magnified exponentially and we find our lives increasingly shaped in terms not of isolated single nations, but of their increasingly global multiplier. This has been building gradually in recent decades as manufacturing has been partialized out between countries and trade has intensified. Where before different regions of each country carried out specific tasks, such as mining, agriculture, textiles, manufacturing and finance, now each task is concentrated in a specific region of the world and the global network of transportation and trade distribute the products universally. Typically cars are from Japan, clothes from China, and both are made with materials from Africa. Services are provided increasingly by India, while television makes information and images from every part of the globe instantly and constantly available in every living room.

Understandably the modern paradigm of self-interested individualism and its structures for orienting these forces are no longer insufficient; tragically the center no longer holds. In the economy greedy

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<sup>1</sup> Patrick Aspell, *Medieval Western Philosophy: The European Emergence* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1999), VII.

mortgage practices in the U.S. have caused a financial disaster which like a tsunami sweeps across the world. In the politico-military arena practices of suppression and manipulation are no longer acceptable and indeed generate violent counteraction. The battle for minds and hearts is becoming increasingly violent and is fought even through the ubiquitous TV screens in every one's home.

We have then a new set of facts: that the human race and its physical world now constitute a global reality, that this is self destructive if lived in terms of the modern individualist paradigm, and that together of these impose the need to develop a new paradigm for global times. This must be based not on single self-interested entities related only as bricks in a wall, but by recognition and respect for persons, societies and civilizations and for the newly organic interrelatedness of the global whole which we now constitute. Here our question is: what could be a new paradigm adequate for our newly global unity and what is the evolving role of religion in the foundation and implementation of such a wholistic paradigm.

Here, Heidegger had a suggestion. Looking at philosophy as an ongoing encounter with human challenges, he pointed out that at each major juncture one response or path has been chosen and pursued while its alternate(s) are left fallow. Consequently, when the chosen path later comes to an impasse the way forward is not to try to continue in the same terms, but to a step back to a path that had been left undeveloped and which now offers the promise of continued and even greater progress.

In this light if the path of modernity reflected the choice to build upon the single individual, the step back would turn to its alternate paradigm in terms of the whole proposed by Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464). This may indeed suggest essential elements needed for our global times, though after modern individualism it may not come easily. Let us then first look at the paradigm built in terms of the whole as proposed by Nicholas of Cusa. We shall then consider the modern difficulties in its reconceptualization for our day. Together these can, in turn, serve as pointers to the work now needed in order to elaborate a newly wholistic paradigm for our global times.

## **GLOBAL, WHOLISTIC THINKING**

### *History*

Any understanding of 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 fundamentally 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 archetypal idea which they image and all converge progressively toward a

supreme One. Conversely the image of light was used extensively in the neo-Platonic and Augustinian traditions. It originated from one source and radiated outward and downward where for Plotinus it ultimately turned into darkness and matter. Augustine would follow this with an upward return to the source, now as supreme end. For Cusa, as with Plato, this appreciation of the One as that “from which, in which and into which all exist,”<sup>2</sup> in the combined words of the Hindu *Vedanta* Sutras remains foundational for the knowledge of any particular.

To this Aristotle, whose thought began from the active processes of physical change, added a more active role for 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 a passive 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.”<sup>3</sup>

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, which is even part of its process of assimilation to the divine mind. But as E. Cassirer notes,<sup>4</sup> 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.”<sup>5</sup>

But in saying this Miller seems not to have reached the key point for our concern for global awareness—or that of Cusa, 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 moves: First, the One of Plato is not an ideal form, but the universe of reality (and this in the image of 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 with all its knowledge is carried out.

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<sup>2</sup> *Vedanta Sutras I, 1, 2. Bhahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Srī-Sankaracarya-Raīkarācāya*, Trans., Ganbhirananda (Calcutta: Advartashrana, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> *De Veritate*, q.1, 8., “Truth in the intellect is measured by things themselves,” *Ibid.*, q.1,5. .

<sup>4</sup> *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963). Trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (New York: Humanities, 1961).

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *Idiota de Mente / The Layman” about Mind*, trans. and ed. Clyde Lee Miller (New York: Abaris, 1979), Intro., p. 24.

*Discursive Reasoning*

In his study on mind,<sup>6</sup> 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 we begin to construct a map of the region, to use a simile of L. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.<sup>7</sup>

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. This must be treated in terms of the concepts of reason and intellect<sup>8</sup> for the forms in things are not the true forms as they are clouded by the changeableness of matter.<sup>9</sup> The exact nature of anything is unattainable by us except in analogies and figures grounded essentially in the global sense grasped by our higher powers.<sup>10</sup>

But while sense knowledge is inadequate for a global vision, Cusa considers innate knowledge or a separate 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 concept by concept, one 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 uniqueness which for humans are their personal and cultural identities.

The paradox of attempting to think globally in terms of concepts is that as we try to form overall unities we abstract more and more from what distinguishes or characterizes free and unique persons so that the process becomes essentially depersonalizing: hence the dilemma of the present process of globalization as the central contemporary phenomenon.

In the 20th century the technological implementation of depersonalization reached such a crises that millions were crushed or exterminated—hundreds of thousands in pogroms, six million in the holocaust, 50 million in the Second World War, entire continents impoverished and exploited. In effect the limitations Cusa identifies in

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 55.

<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. Pears & B. McGinness (New York: Humanities Press, 1961).

<sup>8</sup> *De Mente*, 7, p. 63.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

discursive reasoning now are simply no longer tolerable; new modes of thinking are now required in order to enable life to continue in our times.

Cusa recognizes 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 and to make judgments which are exact because they are concerned with what is not changing or material.<sup>11</sup> This is Hume's world of relations between ideas.<sup>12</sup> But as it deals only with the formal, rather than the existential, it cannot resolve the above-mentioned human problems but 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 like being on a hill whence one surveys the entire valley all at once.<sup>13</sup> 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 by multiple participations in a unity. (Indeed, as we shall see in the next section, the multiple things in the physical order also are limited images of the whole.)

Were we to express this in terms of modern thought, the distinction of analytic and synthetic modes of thought would help, but not at all suffice. With Descartes the 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 distinguish one type of thing from all others.<sup>14</sup> 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 as only what was clear and distinct to the human mind could qualify for

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, (Chicago: Regnery, 1960), pp.14-21.

<sup>13</sup> Eugene Rice, "Nicholas of Cusa's Idea of Wisdom," *Traditio* 13 (1957), 358.

<sup>14</sup> Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 2.

inclusion, due to the limitations of the human mind, it was inevitable that in these terms the uniqueness of each entity would be omitted as not clear to the mind and that the organic and integrating character of the whole also would be omitted because 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. Thus, it "depends not upon the number of things which are known, but upon the imaginative thrust of the mind" to know "all the multifarious possibilities which are open to being."<sup>15</sup> 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 images. Where these were but forms for Plato, for Cusa they are existents, sharing in the active power of being.

The Enlightenment was so intent on 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 specifications was lopped off and discarded as hypothetical, superstitious or over-hasty. Cusa's attitude is notably different for it includes humility before reality. Thus it recognizes and even reveres, especially 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 such that even a minimal being cannot be exhaustively known. Like attempting to make a polygon into a circular shape, 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 it always can be improved upon. One can only project the circle by the thrust of the imagination.

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.<sup>16</sup> 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*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> D. De Leonardis, *Ethical Implications of Unity and the Divine in Nicholas of Cusa* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1998) p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Trans. G. Heron (London: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1954).

We have seen the limitations of knowledge constructed on the basis of multiple limited beings understood as opposed one to another. Unity 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 reality remain external and antithetical so that, to the degree that it succeeds, discursive reasoning tends to suppress 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 and political imperialism and oppression.

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 and 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? And conversely, can the unity of the whole contribute to the diversity, even to the freedom, of each person.

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, as Plato noted, in being itself 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.

### **A GLOBAL STRUCTURE OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY**

To summarize then, 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 to the thought of Nicholas of Cusa, we saw 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 without taking account of the overall unity.

As pointed out by Dr. 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 today the means for conflict have become 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, in order 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 other peoples and cultures in ways that promote a collaborative realization of a global community in our times?

### *Unity*

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 itself in contrast to others.

2. The unity of diverse beings as members of the whole of being. This is important in grappling with contemporary issues.

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. This may be the central contribution of Cusa's thought for these global times.

4. Absolute unity—the One which, being without distinction, plurality or potentiality, is the fullness of being, and hence not subject to greater or lesser degree.<sup>18</sup>

The fourth is the metaphysical and religious foundation for the issue of globalization. At present we shall focus first 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 also corresponds, namely, to the whole or total universe in which we have our being, live and intersect with nature and with other persons and societies, cultures and civilizations.

This has been appreciated in various ways in the past: 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, to cite but a few.<sup>19</sup> 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.

### *Contraction*

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<sup>18</sup> De Leonardis, pp. 47-51.

<sup>19</sup> G. McLean, *Plenitude and Participation: The Unity of Man in God* (Madras: University of Madras, 1978).



The situation is delicate however, for in so doing it is imperative to avoid the kind of abstractive thinking described above in which personal uniqueness is dismissed and only the universal remains as formed in ideological structures.<sup>20</sup>

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 each 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 one measured quantitatively in contrast to the broad expanse of the globe. Rather, one has the importance of the whole—and the same is true of other persons and parts of nature.

The import of this can be seen through comparison with other attempts to state the participation of the part in the whole. For Plato this was a repetition or imaging 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 the Christian cultures developed a positive sense of existence as act<sup>21</sup> whereby each participant in being was made to be in itself. This is found also in the Islamic thinker, Mulla Sadra, and in Nicholas of Cusa.

But he would emphasize that the being in which this person or thing participates is the whole of being.<sup>22</sup> 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. Beings retain 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: Contraction of being makes each thing to be everything in a contracted sense. This creates a community of beings relating all entities on an ontological level.<sup>23</sup>

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

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<sup>20</sup> G. McLean, *Persons, Peoples and Cultures: Living Together in a Global Age* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2004), Ch. I.

<sup>21</sup> G. McLean, *Tradition, Harmony and Transcendence* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), pp. 95-102.

<sup>22</sup> *Of Learned Ignorance*, pp. 84-88.

<sup>23</sup> De Leonardis, p. 228.

is not many and vice versa; to have many beings is to imply contrast and even possible conflict. When, however, each individual is appreciated as a unique contraction of the whole, others, though 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 is not true the fourth instance of unity cited above or some interpretations of the Parmenidean absolute and unlimited One as the complete and full perfection of being. But it is true of the third of the above unities which is precisely the reality of global unity, and the second type of unity which is that of its components seen precisely as members of the global whole and as we shall see below the fourth unity is foundational for these other two.

#### *Hierarchy or External Relations*

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 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*<sup>24</sup> 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 and thus 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 overall reality as a mosaic. But Cusa's sense of each of those pieces 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.

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<sup>24</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (New York: Harper, 1960).

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. What Cusa sees for the realm of being is relationships which are not external juxtapositions, but internal to the very make-up of the individuals.

As the hierarchy of being is a rich theme in both classical and contemporary thought and adds substantively to the understanding of the global unity upon which we now enter we should note some avenues of investigation which are now reopened. The metaphysical and religious insights enable one to appreciate the unity of the many realities in its origin and goal, but what of the disposition of their diversity in their temporal existence. The modern affirmation of personal freedom: *liberté, égalité, fraternité* turned the concerns, not only of the mind but of the heart as well, away from the obvious differences of levels of being and produced in the end what has been described as a “flat world” of the multiple but indifferent things. Hierarchy, in contrast, adds a unity of order.

This has been approached from two directions. Classically this has been understood from the highest, the unlimited one of Parmenides and Plato, to the lower by some process of ordered emanation or participation.<sup>25</sup> In Aristotelian terms this is a progressive expansion of potency and hence a corresponding limitation of act, from spirits (angels) each of which constitute an entire species, to humans who retained the spiritual powers of knowledge and appetite, to animals who lacked these capacities of understanding and freedom, thence to organic life without consciousness, and finally to the inorganic order without life at all.

More recently Pierre Teilhard de Chardin<sup>26</sup> suggested a reverse order. Here the unity of a hierarchy remains central but it is approached in the opposite direction, i.e., beginning from the least of realities. From this lower end of the hierarchy unity increases in proportion to the introduction of difference. Progressively life moves upward by ever more complex organisms till one reaches the human, the highest of the material order who also disposes of non material or spiritual powers of intellection and free will. This is unification by ‘complexification’. Above the animal level unity continues to intensify, but it does so rather in terms of simplification in the order of spirit till it arrives at the absolute One—which was the only obvious reality for Parmenides, the very first metaphysician.

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<sup>25</sup> Fabro, Cornelio, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d’Aquino* (Torino, Società editrice internazionale [1950]); *Participation et causalité selon S. Thomas d’Aquin*. Préface de L. De Raeymaeker (Louvain, Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1961).

<sup>26</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, with an introduction by Sir Julian Huxley (New York : Harper & Row, 1965).

Today life in global times directs our attention not only to this vertical hierarchy, but to integration horizontally. For this the work of Jean Piaget<sup>27</sup> regarding personal development in terms of the psychological ability to integrate differences. Writ large this is the issue of relations between cultures and civilizations in our global times. Together, these processes of vertical and horizontal integration suggest the paths along which great human progress is now possible.

*Internal Relatedness in the Whole*

Internal relatedness is made possible precisely by this sense of the whole.<sup>28</sup> For this Cusa may have drawn more directly from the Christian teaching of the one God as a Trinity of divine persons. But this in turn is conceived through analogy to the family of which individuals are contractions, especially as this is lived as the interpersonal relations of a culture grounded in such a theology. The philosopher looks into that social life as a point of manifestation of being. Indeed, hermeneutics<sup>29</sup> would suggest that this constitutes not only a *locus philosophicus* whence insight can be drawn but also the prejudgments of philosophers basic to the constitution of philosophical theory as 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.

Further, generation is not a negative relation of exclusion or opposition; just 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.<sup>30</sup> This is able to develop and grow only

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<sup>27</sup> Jean Piaget, "The Mental Development of the Child," *Six Psychological Studies*, trans. A. Tenzer (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), ch. I.

<sup>28</sup> Of Learned Ignorance, I, 9-10.

<sup>29</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1975).

<sup>30</sup> *Dato Patris Luminum* in Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Metaphors of Contraction* (Minneapolis: Banning, 1983), p. 25.

by the heat of the sun, water from the clouds and nourishment from the earth. Hence each of these elements of the whole are interrelated in mutual dependence. Thereby the seed brings new being into existence—which in turn will itself be creative, etc. Finally, by this action of the sun and clouds, of the seed and the earth, as contractions of the whole, the universe itself is made fruitful and unfolds. 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.

*Complicatio (Folding Back Together)*

Corresponding to the *explicatio* or unfolding of the perfection of being is its converse, namely, a folding together (*complicatio*) of the various levels of being by which the perfection of the whole is constituted. Hence Cusa's hierarchy of being has 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 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. Inorganic material beings do not contain the perfection of animate or conscious being, but plants include the perfections of the material as well as of life. Animals are not self-conscious, but they do integrate material, animate and conscious perfection. Humans include all four: inorganic, animate, conscious and spiritual life.

Thus, the relation to all others through the contraction of being is varied as beings include more levels of being in their nature. On this scale humans, as material and living 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 simple individuality by negative and exclusive contrast to others (the first level of unity), but uniqueness by positive and inclusive relations, then human persons and the human community are truly the nucleus of a unity that is global.

**A DYNAMIC GLOBAL ORDER: THE ETHICAL CONTEXT**

Thus far we have been speaking especially in terms of existence and formal causality by which the various beings within the global reality are specific degrees of contraction 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: directedness and dynamism, as well as cohesion,

complementarity and harmony.<sup>31</sup> Cusa's global vision of a uniquely active universe of being is marked by the following.

*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, but rather 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 and developing, living and moving they are integral to the universe in which they find their perfection or realization and to the perfection to 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) or to the absolute One (the fourth type of unity). Rather, as with the Platonic insight, all unfolds from the One and returns thereto.

To this Cusa makes an important addition. In his sense of the whole this is not merely a matter of individual forms; beings are directed to the One as a whole, that is, by interacting with others (the third type of unity). 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 diverse, 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 takes a step further; for if each part is a contraction of the whole, then, as with 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."<sup>32</sup> The other is not alien, but part of the definition of each.

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

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<sup>31</sup> De Leonardis, pp. 233-236.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

success of the whole. But here 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, but it tends to be over looked 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."<sup>33</sup>

### THE RELIGIOUS BASES AND IMPLICATIONS OF DIALOGICAL UNITY IN GLOBAL TIMES

Here a deeper sense of retrieve is required. For as modernity was marked by the search for knowledge that was not only clear, but clear enough to be able to distinguish each from the other, its focus has been on the essences of things as clearly differing in kind. However, to appreciate their unity one with another, from the individual to the global level, it is necessary now to redevelop attention to the existence by which each is and its very exercise as a process of close cooperative interaction with all others. It is here that attention must proceed to the fourth sense of unity as absolute Being and to conscious relation of all thereto, termed religion.

#### *Philosophy of Existence*

The first step is to uncover the unique existential reality of each being. In Greek philosophy all were individual instances of a form by predicamental participation. In the context of the religious proclamation of human dignity and freedom a millennium of work by the Christian Church Fathers and the Islamic philosophers uncovered *esse*. This finally was integrated with essence as act is to potency by Thomas Aquinas.

Cornelio Fabro traces this transformation as taking place in the specifically Judeo-Christian context. Because the Greeks had considered matter (*hyle*—the stuff of which things were made) to be eternal, no direct questions arose concerning the existence or non-existence of things. As there always had been matter, the only real questions for the Greeks concerned the shapes or forms under which it existed. But the Hebrew account of creation meant that all was under the dominion of God. Hence, at the conclusion of the Greek and the beginning of the medieval period Plotinus (205-270 A.D.), rather than simply presupposing matter, attempted its first philosophical explanation. The issue had moved from the forms which matter possessed to the far more radical issue of existence: to quote Hamlet, it was quite simply "to be or not to be".

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

This is to ask not only how things are of this or that kind, or the compossibility of two forms, which Aristotle had taken as a sufficient response to the first scientific question: “whether it existed”. It is rather the question of how they exist at all rather than not exist. This constituted a dramatic evolution in the human awareness of being, of what it means to be real, namely, to exist, or to stand in some relation thereto.

Moreover, Fabro suggests another factor in the development of this awareness of being as existence which was yet more specifically Christian, namely, reflection upon one’s free response to the divine redemptive invitation. This response goes beyond any limited facet of one’s reality, any particular consideration of time, occupation, or the like, to the self-affirmation of one’s total actuality. Its sacramental symbol, baptism, is not merely that of transformation or improvement, but of passage through death to rise to radically new life. This directs the mind beyond my specific nature or individual role. It focuses rather upon one’s unique reality as a self for whom living freely is to dispose of one’s act of existence, and living socially is to do this in cooperation with others.

This deepened metaphysical sense of being in the early Christian ages was catalyzed by the new sense of freedom proclaimed in the religious message. I say “catalyzed”, not “deduced from,” which would be the way of science rather than of culture. Where science looks for principles from which conclusions are deduced of necessity, a culture is a creative work of freedom. Thus, a religious message inspires and invites; it provides a new vantage point from which all can be reinspected and rethought; its effects are pervasive and enduring. This was the case with the Christian *kerygma*.

But this was more than light to the mind. Christ’s resurrection was also a freeing of the soul from sin and death. It opened a new ability to be or exist—and this not merely to some minimum extent, but to the full extent of one’s actuality, which Fabro calls an ‘intensive’ notion of being.

This power of existence being bursting into time has a number of characteristics:

- it directs the mind beyond the ideological poles of species and individual interests, and beyond issues of place or time as limited series or categories;
- it centers, instead, upon the unique *esse* of the person as a participation in the creative power of God and which is and cannot be denied;
- it rejects being considered in any sense as nonbeing, or being treated as anything less than one’s full reality;
- it is a self affirmation of one’s own unique actuality irreducible to any specific group identity; and
- is an image of God for whom life is sacred and sanctifying, a child of God for whom to be is freely to dispose of the power of new life in brotherhood with all humankind.



It took a long time for the implications of this new appreciation of existence and its meaning to germinate and find its proper philosophic articulation. Over a period of many centuries the term 'form' was used to express both kind or nature and this new sense of being as existence. As the distinction between the two became gradually clearer, 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 of existence by which a being simply is was expressed by 'existence' (*esse*).<sup>34</sup> The relation between the two was under intensive, genial discussion by the Islamic philosophers when their focus on the Greek tradition in philosophy took a more mystical turn at the time of al-Ghazali.

The issue was resolved a century later in the work of Thomas Aquinas through a "real distinction" between existence and essence, not as two beings, but as two principles of being, each totally dependent upon the other in its own way. Relating the two principles as act and potency respectively, it opened a new and uniquely active sense of being and hence of person.

#### *The Conscious Existent*

The work on participation which had been begun by Cornelio Fabro prior to World War II renewed the study of Aquinas. It identified not only the much noted Aristotelian elements of form and essence which had been especially relevant to rationalism, but also the key Platonic elements of participation (*mimesis* and *methesis*). What this 'brought to light' (the etymology of 'phenomenology') was not only the systematizing elements of the structures of form as key to the species of material substances, but even more their sharing in being or *esse* in imitation of the creator. Fabro carefully traced the gradual evolution of this notion through the Church Fathers and early Scholastics<sup>35</sup> to *esse* in relation to essence. He found in this an intensive notion of *esse*,<sup>36</sup> graded according to the various levels of being. The orders of inorganic, vegetative, organic and animal life are graded intensively, each at a higher level than its predecessors. And if, as Thomas states, *esse* for a living being is to live, the *esse* of human being is to live consciously, reflectively, freely and responsibly according to its properly human nature or essence.

Perhaps most importantly, this conscious life is not an accident adjoined to the substance, but is the very *esse* of that substance. Thus, if the subject or *supposit* is the substance as exercising its proper act of existence, then the very being of the person is most properly its self-conscious, and

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<sup>34</sup> Cornelio Fabro, *La nozione metafisica di partecipazione secondo S. Tommaso d'Aquino* (Torino: Societa Ed. Internazionale, 1950), pp. 75-122.

<sup>35</sup> *La nozione*, pp. 39-122; *Participation et causalité*, Selon S. Thonas d'Aquin (Louvain: Pub Univ. de Louvain, 1961), 179-244.

<sup>36</sup> *La nozione*, 135-139.

hence free and responsible, life. Action then has the importance not only of human activity and engagement, but provides a penetrating insight into the very being of the person as properly free, unable to be assumed by state or class, yet bound in solidarity with nature and all humankind as participants in the divine Unity, Truth and Justice, Goodness and Love.

Hence, the notion of the human person—rather than being only formal, specific and abstracted from its uniqueness—is precisely that of a unique, irreplaceable and hence consciously free and responsible being. Moreover, this is true not only of a spirit which is somehow added to a body; rather it is the one person which is or exists in a bodily manner. Conversely, all the physical characteristics of the body—whether DNA, sexual differentiation, or physical action—are personal and carry the dignity of a unique, free and responsible being. Together the physical and spiritual dimensions point to the unique character of a human person.

Here the exploration of interior conscious life takes on its full significance as the way in which the person (a) lives, (b) reflects the creative act from which he or she comes, and (c) is oriented teleologically toward the goodness of God as subsistent love. Every human has this dignity, and not only for human acts done consciously, but even as regards ‘acts of man’ where, though one’s freedom is not engaged, yet this human dignity must be taken into account, whether in infancy, prison or senility.

The person manifests the uniqueness and ineffability it participates from the divine creator. Mystery, uniqueness and incommunicability, as inability to be simply assumed by class or category, are characteristics of the existing substance or “*supposit*” as existing not of itself, but in itself.

Paradoxically, with this comes the basis for communication with all existents with whom we deeply share. Friends are not only abstractions or “gifts we give ourselves,” but relationships in which we are immersed by the very fact of being created and creative participations in God as *alpha* and *omega*—the One at the summit of Plato’s levels.

This philosophy is not a static work with fixed pieces to be deciphered or assembled by external juxtaposition. Rather, it is an organic and creative process not merely of choosing but of forging a new path. In this respect philosophy recalls more the plastic artist, creating by shaping and reshaping materials to aesthetically constitute a new and unique sense of being and of life.

This is confirmed as well by the recent efforts to unfold the existential sense of being which provides the ground for the proper dignity and rights of the person as self-conscious, free and responsible being. It is not that consciousness alone is now central; rather, it is the founding of consciousness in being precisely as participation in the absolute *Esse* that gives consciousness the uniqueness, freedom and transcendence which characterizes the person.

In this light beings appear as analogous or somewhat similar and related one to another. But this can reveal more about global unity in diversity if one asks for the creative source of these existences and traces

this back to Being which, as Parmenides pointed out, must ultimately be one and unchanging, infinite and eternal.<sup>37</sup> The monotheist would recognize this as the one God, source and goal of all.

### *Religion in Global Times*

There is much to be learned here for religion in a global age. The Hindu would point out that this one, named Brahma, must be of the character of *sat* or existence or actuality, of *cit* or consciousness which is the living self-awareness of truth, and of *ananda* or bliss which is the actual enjoyment of goodness or love.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, as perfect in itself, its act of sharing its being in the form of creating the universe can be only an act of generous love. In this the great civilizations concur.

On the part of humankind this provides a matrix for how to exercise one's being, namely, in a unity with others constituted by living in truth which is justice, and in goodness which is love. This "ties us back" to our divine origin—the etymology of the term "religion".

It points also to another basis for human rights which had been eroded by "Enlightenment" rationalism. By reducing knowledge to issues of space and time the empiricists and Kant removed access of the intellect to the meaning of human life; by removing teleology as anthropomorphic the Enlightenment lost touch also with the purpose of life. But life with neither meaning nor purpose is a poor support for human dignity. The response to this must lie in the basis of the meaning and purpose of human beings as free and responsible, that is in the One, the relation to which is religion.

Yet in all this we have still understated the meaning of religion for life in a global age. For religion is more than an intellectual and ontological understanding of reality. Mohammad Iqbal states this well.

The aspiration of religion soars higher than that of philosophy. Philosophy is an intellectual view of things; and as such, does not care to go beyond a concept which can reduce all the rich variety of experience to a system. It sees reality from a distance as it were. Religion seeks a closer contact with Reality. The one is theory; the other is living experience, association, intimacy. In order to achieve this intimacy thought must rise higher than itself, and find its fulfillment in

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<sup>37</sup> Parmenides, *Poem*, Fragments 1-8, K. Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 41-44; see also G. McLean and P. Aspell, *Reading in Western Philosophy* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), pp. 40-43.

<sup>38</sup> *The Bhagavad Gita*, trans. by Juan Mascaro (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972), II, 16-19, 24, 30 (*sat*); 31-36, 39 (*cit*); 37, 55 (*ananda*).

an attitude of mind which religion describes as prayer—one of the last words on the lips of the Prophet of Islam.<sup>39</sup>

Metaphysics is displaced by psychology, and religious life develops the ambition to come into direct contact with the ultimate reality. It is here that religion becomes a matter of personal assimilation of life and power; and the individual achieves a free personality, not by releasing himself from the fetters of the law, but by discovering the ultimate source of the law within the depths of his own consciousness.<sup>40</sup>

This has dramatic implications for mutual human recognition, respect and cooperation. A right that is merely acknowledged, but not acted upon, remains a hollow entitlement. For actuation it is necessary to move the heart as well as the mind, and not only to recognize but to act upon that recognition. By moving one to action in terms of the new global paradigm of unity with all persons—and with physical nature as well—religion provides the basis for truly human comity.

It is not incidental then that in these global times we find a renewal of deep religious vision in the appreciation of how all are interrelated as fellow creatures in the one divine source. This entails that at the existential center of our reality we are most deeply interrelated not only with our own countrymen or ethnicity, but with peoples of all civilizations. Cooperation with one another is not only possible, but is indeed the only way forward. Thus the great civilizations and their religious foundations provide the needed basis, not only formally to declare, but truly to live peace in global times.

This sense of unity and diversity of the whole has important implications for life in our global times.

1. 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 would be, not at the cost of the multiple cultures, but through their deployment and interaction. Strategy could move beyond the dichotomy of business and begging to the true mega project for the new millennium, namely, the development of a global community in which all are looked upon with appreciation, and progress is evoked by mutual respect.

2. For this Cusa's global view has pervasive implications. 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 irreducible individuals within the whole. Yet he would also recognize the unique position of humankind in a hierarchy

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<sup>39</sup> M. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religions*, ed. M. Saeed Sheikh (Lahore, Pakistan: Iqbal Academy and Institute of Islamic Culture, 1984), p. 143.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

that integrates all possible levels of 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".

3. This, however, is not a license to plunder and exploit; it is rather a commission and destiny to assist in bringing out of others and of the whole the realizations not otherwise possible. It is the view of Teilhard de Chardin<sup>41</sup> that it is precisely to man that we must look for further global evolution. The relation of person to person also is shaped notably by the insight that order rather than conflict is the condition for the exercise of freedom. It is the appreciation of all as a global whole, rather than merely as a set of contrasting individuals, that truly enables and promotes the exercise of human freedom.

4. To see each as a contraction of the whole provides them not only with equality, but with definitive status as endowed by the significance of the whole. As a result one must not be instrumentalized, much less reduced either abstractively or concretely to a least common denominator: equality is 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.<sup>42</sup>

This appears in the process of liberal democratic theory over the last three decades. Beginning from John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* it attempted to constitute a realm of public discourse in a pluralistic society by simply putting aside—or behind a "veil of ignorance," as he termed it—all religious or cosmic integrating vision. He supposed that persons whose deeper self understandings and commitments were rendered sedulously private and kept out of public deliberation would then be free to work out a set of formal political compromises required for life together.

The work had great impact as it promised to systematize liberal political theory and provide a universal structures for all human communities—both a modern goal for pre-modern societies and a promise of self understanding for post totalitarian times. But such formal abstraction with its supposed univocity can be dangerous for the pluralism entailed by human freedom cannot be abstracted from, relegated to a Wittgensteinian margin or separated from human interplay by a veil of ignorance. For then the coercive power of the political order begins to employed to realize this

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<sup>41</sup> *Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper, 1959).

<sup>42</sup> De Leonardis, p. 241.

removal with disastrous Quixotic military campaigns such as that aimed at democratizing the Middle East.

In fact Rawls himself soon began to see that the set of formal compromises he elaborated in his *Theory of Justice* was not inevitable and universal, but that different peoples could come to different sets and would change them through times for humans live in time and exercise their freedom creatively and progressively. This explains the changes in Rawls subsequent *Political Liberalism* which moved from his earlier purely formal order to recognize that rules for existential public political discourse result from progressive political negotiation and change over time.

The importance of this shift from the purely formal and essential to the existential order of human freedom as lived in time and hence historical is difficult to underestimate. As seen above the existential order is the proper effect of divine creativity in the order of both efficient and final causality and is normed by the subsistent unity, truth and goodness of God. It is in this light that Iqbal could say that the whole world is a mosque. Life in a global paradigm as grounded in the divine is quintessentially religious.

Thus a new process has been gradually opening to re-cognize the religious dimension that Rawls removed from the public square. Rawls himself began by recognizing that religious insights could have a place in political theory and process if translated into secular terminology. Jürgen Habermas agreed but raised a number of reservations. First, if it is a major liberal tenant that all burdens must be equitably shared by all citizens then it is not proper to require that only religious citizens need to translate their language (into secular terms); rather the burden of translation must be shared by all. Second, it seems not religiously acceptable or even humanly possible for a religious person to divide his or her thinking such that it is in one part secular and in another part religious. Thirdly, the religious traditions bear such essential resources for democracy as the principles of human dignity and solidarity as well as the semantic value generating conviction and commitment. Hence the religious communities must have the last word in evaluation whether their insights are being adequately presented in public dialogue.

For all of these reasons far from resolving the issue by removing religious discourse from the public sphere, the task is rather one of recognizing the rich uniqueness of the insights and convictions of the many citizens and building the political community upon these, rather than without or despite them. This is a task proper to hermeneutics to which the work of H.G. Gadamer, e.g., on the inevitable and essential role of prejudgements arising from cultural tradition, the importance of history and the fusion of horizon is particularly relevant.

To this must be added as well the critical hermeneutics of Habermas to assure that the hermeneutics enables one to gain responsible control over even elements of tradition in order to evaluate, adapt and effectively integrate them into the interchange between peoples in our global times.

While the central concern of H.G. Gadamer is the metaphysical basis of hermeneutics and that of J. Habermas is political theory, Paul Ricoeur attempted to complement and work of the two in a positive manner. He did this by exploring the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger for whom the world is “a structure of meanings constituted by the acts of a subject” or conscious existent.<sup>43</sup> These self-aware and free acts constitute a world or *lebenswelt* which is not a set of brute things, but the network of meaning in which all is encountered. This does not so much point back to a history of what has happened, as open up possible modes for one’s own being. Thus the symbolic dimension of the *dasein*’s consciousness constitutes “a proposed world that I could inhabit and wherein I could project some of my ownmost possibilities.”<sup>44</sup> This transforms Kant’s empty time into “human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative”<sup>45</sup> such as that of the Judeo Christian tradition, which in turn serves as a matrix for the interpretation of experience. The whole or world, rather than being an abstract totality, is “a set of existential possibilities that are disclosed through the application of a narrative to a highly specific situation.”<sup>46</sup> For Ricoeur this remains highly individual, being constituted through a projection performed by an individual, while collective entities are derivative of individuals and their acts. This protects the creative freedom of the person to recast history in new ways such that persons are never puppets of the cunning of reason.<sup>47</sup>

However, does defense of the freedom and individuality of persons and peoples do full justice to our experience of the global whole? Is it enough to understand this as a composition of entities even with Ricoeur’s convergent intentions (or Rawls’ “overlapping consensus”)? By nature, essence and form, things do differ one from the other and thus allow for Descartes search to render all in terms of clear and distinct. Yet if, as Kant and Hegel, Cusanus and Ricoeur perceive, nothing makes sense except in some unity or whole, and if this global reality now moves from serving as context to becoming the main existential source and goal of human life in our times, then more is needed to understand this “whole” and its meaning for man and nature. For this we need to move not only beyond essence to the *esse* of each and beyond their convergent intentions to their proper cause. This is *Ipsum Esse* or Being Itself, the subsistent existent, which is absolute in unity and truth, goodness and beauty.

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Piercey, “How Paul Ricoeur Changed the World”, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly (ACPO)* 82 (2008), p. 472.

<sup>44</sup> Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation,” in *From Text to Action*, trans. K. Barney & J. Thompson (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1962) p. 86.

<sup>45</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), vol. I, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Piercey, p. 476.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 477.

Here the full power of Ricoeur's sense of narrative becomes manifest. It is not a simple statement, a univocal or unchanging proposition. Rather it is the narrative of a people's whole tradition through history in which God has ever the initiative, but to which human life is the ongoing response. This tradition, as now marked by engagement in the global whole, is no longer only a set of existential possibilities opening before one; it is rather the broad existential reality of all persons and peoples.

The Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition is one of the great religious narratives which recounts the ways of God with man. Yet even this cumulative tradition of a single people with all its content can never exhaust the infinite divine source and goal. Hence, it must ever be open to being complemented. "Naming of God is not simple but multiple. It is not a simple tone, but polyphonic."<sup>48</sup>

In this light the role of religion receives from a global culture some specification. Confronting the task of generating a new paradigm for our now global times it should not attempt to bring us back to the age of faith with its paradigm of unity. This has already been succeeded by a secular age with its paradigm of the individual or, more properly, of multiple persons. We need now to supercede both in a paradigm for the emerging human consciousness in the global whole.

To this, a religious philosophy has much to contribute. As we have noted, (a) it reaches back to the Age of the Church Fathers who gradually brought into view the sense of existence, beyond that of form which had characterized the philosophy of the Greeks. (b) With this it elaborates a sense of the self-sufficiency and autonomy, of the unique diversity and freedom of the person. (c) Finally, as participations in the divine to all of this the sense of *esse* provides an absolute foundation.

Yet as religion is a human virtue it is focused upon the relation of the whole of creation to God rather than upon the creator itself, and it recognizes that as a human product no sense of the whole can ever hope to exhaust the fullness of being. As detailed by John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*<sup>49</sup> this challenges reason to escape the bonds of the modern philosophical search for clarity and control and to reach out to the whole experience of human life. This has two dimensions: the one horizontal as we integrate ever more civilizations in this global age, the other vertical to both a deeper and a higher sense of Being as divine source and goal. The proper task of philosophy today is to unite these in a global vision for life that now becomes ever more inclusive and spiritually profound.

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<sup>48</sup> Ricoeur, "Naming God," in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination*, trans. D. Pellauer, ed. M. Wallace (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995), p. 224.

<sup>49</sup> "Fides et Ratio", in G. F. McLean, *Faith, Reason, and Philosophy* (Washington: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2000), Appendix (vi-vii).



## CHAPTER VII

# PERSON AS GIFT OF GOD: FROM LOVE TO GLOBAL PEACE

### SELF-CONCERN AND SELF-TRANSCENDENCE: THE CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMATIC

A dialectic of the personal and the depersonalizing appears to be one of the paradoxes of recent experience. For a number of economic, educational and other reasons, the past decades have been marked in many parts of the world by a massive migration from the countryside into the towns and cities.<sup>1</sup> At first it was thought that the size of the town and of the factory would relieve the personal pressures of village life, that when the obligation of a more extended family and the all-seeing eyes of the neighbors were remote, persons and families could be truly free. Tolerance understood in this passive manner as non-interference—or was it non-caring?—was considered desirable and, indeed, appears to have constituted no small attraction, drawing many young families to the city.<sup>2</sup> In fact, however, the problems of life are never so easily solved. Upon reflection, it can be seen that the attempt to dispense with so basic a dimension of the person as his/her social character was doomed to failure, for it generated through social dissatisfaction and deep loneliness a living death.<sup>3</sup>

Further, the ever more close interaction of increasingly diverse peoples, which has characterized modernization, urbanization and nation-building, could only exacerbate, rather than resolve, problems of living with others. As the level of work rises above a mute carrying out of orders, as parents begin to play an active role in planning goals for schools and health, civil society emerges. And as people take a more active role in a democratic system, and as all of these economic, educational and political decisions increasingly affect and are affected by national and international life, the level of interaction between persons increases geometrically. Decisions come to be made less individually and autocratically, and more through discussion in the home or work-place, community or nation, indeed the world. Tomonobu Imamichi speaks of a basic inversion of the practical syllogism reflecting the fact that energy, transportation and communications are provided by a developing technology and now are largely in common possession. It is not I, but *we*, who have these means; hence, it is *we* who

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<sup>1</sup> Vance Packard, *A Nation of Strangers* (New York: McKay, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> Richard Sennett, *Authority* (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 84-121.

<sup>3</sup> David Riessman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1961); J.B. Lotz, *The Problem of Loneliness* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1967).

must choose. Further, it is no longer a matter of choosing in terms of a goal to which they will be applied. Now the means are so large that we are burdened with the responsibilities of husbanding these massive means with which we now are charged and determining goals which render them profitable and regenerative.

Anonymity and disengagement from others is neither realizable nor desirable. Modern life intensifies the need to interact positively with an ever expanding range of peoples, traditions and interests, and this at ever more penetrating levels of life and work.<sup>4</sup>

The problem is one of self-identity in interaction with others, of the constitution of the human person in free and responsible interchange. Hence, growth in self-knowledge and self-identity is now required if we are to move from a passive posture of patience to a positive search, to assimilate views drawn from the experiences of others, and to weld them into the complementary systemic relations required for modern living.<sup>5</sup>

A brief catalogue of present tensions suggests the depth and difficulty of the problem of taking the step from passive tolerance to active inter-change and unity. First, within the person there exist multiple tensions between, on the one hand, the traditional content of one's culture built upon community and, on the other hand, the cumulative and often depersonalizing demands of a life whose every phase is ordered according to the abstract rationalizations of industry and commerce, educational systems and political theory.

Secondly, between social, national, and other groups—and on the basis of the most subtle shadings of color or style of hair, birth or personal mannerism—one group comes to be considered not merely slightly different, but markedly inferior, or somewhat threatening. Even where no differences exist, some negative evaluation is imposed in order not fully to accept or recognize a group's freedom and dignity. Often the group resides in a distinct sector of a country or even of each town, surrounded by a climate of apathy or, more probably, of incipient antipathy. In some cases, they are cast out to swell the growing tide of the world's 14,000,000 refugees, where they languish in camps, wander in hunger, and are indiscriminately exploited or even attacked. This is a primary problem of our time.

Thirdly, this phenomenon of alienation reappears between countries and continents; it shadows man's every advance. As the ability is developed to communicate and interact with peoples and cultures ever more distant and diverse, the modalities of alienation keep step, adopting ever more sophisticated and powerful economic and even military forms.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Drucker, *The Age of Discontinuity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

<sup>5</sup> Imamichi, *ibid.*, pp. 4, 6 and 8.

At the present juncture, we face a particularly exacerbated form of these tragic tensions. After a half to three quarters of a century of attempts to supplant the natural bonds of human community by a notion of class scientifically constructed upon the triumphant industrialization of the machine age, peoples were freed to seek their destiny once again. Suddenly, it has become urgent to face ancient frictions as well as more recent and unresolved grievances—often the results of forced transport of peoples in cruel and despotic attempts at social engineering and territorial expansion. What is more, this must be done in the context of new and unaccustomed independence and before the civilizing factors of the various cultures have been able to be identified, much less rebuilt.

This is the excruciating, lived dimension of the basic metaphysical problem of self-identity and, hence, of otherness. To ignore the depth of the contemporary problematic would restrict one's response to the level of compromises and accommodations possible in terms of the particular sciences. These alleviate the symptoms while delineating the terms and planting the seeds for subsequent confrontation and conflict.

The real problems of interrelation between persons and cultural groups can be faced only by looking more deeply into the nature and origin of self-awareness and of self-identity to see whether this sets one against others or, on the contrary, unites persons; and, whether and how this can ground positive interaction or cooperation in the face of the intercultural tensions—even the clash—of civilizations of our day.

The previous chapters have suggested ways of understanding: the person in terms of living and creative traditions; harmony as a philosophy of freedom, of transcendence as a foundation for the dignity and meaning of human life, and of suffering as a path to resurrection and life. This chapter will look ahead, not in the sense of a man-made utopia—because that would restrict human freedom since it could never reflect the full richness of life—but in seeing the person as gift and the implications of this for harmony and peace.

It is possible to develop such a vision in terms of beauty and the aesthetic order, but in so doing it is necessary to conceive this in such a way that it does not detract from, but transforms humankind and its interactions in space and time. Above we saw that in terms of existence and unity the many could be reconciled in the vision of the Transcendent One: as all persons are participations in this One they are brothers and sisters one to another. The danger remains that this would be overcome by either/or self-centeredness, on the one hand, and an overriding emphasis upon community, on the other.

It would be possible to build the vision in terms of truth, or consciousness, also as treated above. This is more commonly found in philosophies of justice, whether in the liberal mode of Rawls or in that of critical theory. But, if the problem of egoism is not resolved, there is danger that focusing upon justice might lead to being dragged back into conflict over possessions and profits.

To protect against this and to open the road to creative progress, it is important to go further in terms of the good and of love. There are two approaches to this, one directly in terms of being, the other in terms of our self-consciousness as persons.

As noted above, in the appreciation of being as standing against nonbeing or nothingness lies the basis for the notion of “perfection,” in the sense of the complete realization of a being according to its nature. When realized, this balance of the nature and actuality of being constitutes a stable state; but when not yet realized it is the basis for seeking “perfection”—a plant grows, an animal seeks food, and human seeks to know. In this way the good, as the perfection of being, is the basis of the dynamism of the human search, not only as realizing the achievement of perfection, but of awakening the search thereof.

This participational relation of all limited beings to the All-perfect divine as source and goal creates a dynamic field for all beings in which the human will is able to choose any instance of perfection in its search for its perfection. Yet at the same time, it is not necessitated by anything less than Perfection Itself. The all-perfect is then the creative context of human life. Unfortunately, if one’s search for perfection closes upon self, this very dynamism becomes corrupted into a basis for conflict with others.

Once placed within the context of the transcendent as infinite and All-perfect, however, something more appears which transforms the total meaning of life. For then one observes that the All-perfect source has created not out of a need or self-seeking; the work of creation is not a search for self-realization, but rather a sharing of perfection. In this, being comes to be seen in a dramatically new light, namely, not simply as self-seeking, but as self-sharing and self-communicating. The dynamism of being, then, is much more than a mean struggle for survival; it is rather a search for creative realization and sharing.

## **AFFECTIVITY**

This insight, derived from the creative love of the divine and concerning the basic generosity of being, is ever in conflict with the creature’s self-centeredness which shrinks the self to ego as each person desires to establish him or herself by him or herself. Milton’s account of *Paradise Lost* becomes too truly a parable of our lives, describing in classic terms what Sartre states more technically as modern man wanting to be both ‘in-himself’ and ‘for-himself’.

There are reasons in the very nature of modern thought why this has become a special problem in our times. In order to achieve scientific control of life in terms of mathematical clarity and empirical evidence, the dimension of teleology by which persons are drawn beyond themselves was put to one side. Also excluded from consideration was affectivity, one of the idols in Bacon’s terminology. The result has been a highly rationalized

and analytic view of life in which all that is not subject to being reduced by the mind to simple empirical components or as a distinct part of Descartes' "man-machine" was rejected. In these terms the affective dimension of life came to seem irrelevant to understanding the person for it had no place in rational calculation. Humankind itself was to be understood by reduction to single, simple and indifferent individuals as its basic reality. The result was a sense of isolation in a lonely crowd, and accompanying asocial or antisocial behavior.

Indeed, these proclivities have come to be so ingrained in some cultures and are so characteristically modern that it would seem less likely that the implications of universal principles such as those of human rights would be appreciated, much less be able to overcome self-centered concerns. Hence, it is necessary to look foundationally into human experience itself and follow the way in which, at the various levels this bespeaks affectivity, and thereby engagement with others. These are not compromises of our rights (Hobbes), but modes of self-realization in the context of time and space.

An important philosophical development of our times has been phenomenology as a method of looking into human consciousness (Husserl), especially in its embodied spatial and temporal condition. Here the usual horizon of perception is reversed. The approach is not that of a detached observer who perceives only external realities as objects. Nor is it that of the human mind in a process of active self-reflection and self-determination. Instead the point of reflection is that of affectivity as the originary mode of finite being, that is precisely its capacity for reception. Just as a painful impression is not something distinct from its perception but is the presentation of the pain itself, so affectivity is itself a presentation in subjectivity of the reception of being.

To appreciate this it should be noted that time has a reversible character. There is retention from the past as this goes through the process of self-constitution and hence must retain from the past what it accomplished (otherwise there would be but a series of discrete moments and no constitution of self). There is also protention, a reaching toward the future, toward realizing all that is hoped for. The two mutually imply each other, similar to the way in which one hand cannot touch the other without being touched. I do not constitute myself in time without retention of the past, but such retention implies that each moment is future oriented.

This retention from the past is not merely speculative; it is an active process of positive constitution. Further, as it is the constitution of my self, it has an affective and even passionate character. Looking toward the past there is fascination with the sense of original paradise or perfection, which is combined with anguish at its loss. At the same time, the protention toward the future is essentially a desire of the perfection it promises yet anguish at the direction of life toward death. Thus, in affectivity the extension or distension of life from birth to death intersects experientially or perpendicularly with the intentionality of feeling or affectivity, both

positive and negative,—of hope and fear, as Plato says in his *Laches*—to constitute our lived experience.

Lived precisely as mine, this constitutes my life as a deeply experienced emotive and emotional reality, reversibly both moving and moved. Indeed, the degree of its affective intensity, whether positive in enjoyment or negative in horror, constitutes the qualitative level of our life. Hence, if one wishes to transcend, in the sense not of dismissing but of sublimating the quantitative reductionism that is the effect of the scientific fascination of the modern mind, then it is to this qualitative dimension, realized in affectivity, that one should turn.

## GIFT

This affective sense is most alive in our response, not simply to our various physical sensations, but to other persons to whom we turn in elation and sorrow and hence in whom we peer most deeply into ourselves. “In introathy, I situate myself both here and there, as the other of the other but with an otherness which is mine”<sup>6</sup>, so that reversibly, in Husserl’s words, “to feel one’s body is also to feel it as for the other”.<sup>7</sup> This is most important for our sense of self-awareness, for this takes place in the context of relatedness: it is in the other that I come to recognize myself. In this lies the radical corrective to self-centeredness in the human experience of pride which is the root of all evil and sin. For in this light I am decentered: I lose my sense of being the whole in relation to which all else is subordinated. Instead, it is in the other that I appreciate myself as personal.

This has great meaning when seen in terms of the origins of our bodily life from our parents and particularly the psychological implications of this origination. Here again we are not taking the position of an impartial observer of some isolated and objective fact, but are interested in the affective dimension as expressive of the qualitative character of our life. But if “what is lived affectively is seen only afterward in its effect upon behavior in the world”<sup>8</sup>, then we should look into the psychoanalytic interchange of human life in order to appreciate the deep affective reality of retention and protention, our deepest hopes and fears, from which this emerges.

When we do so we see that the affectivity of the child is derivative not of a mere biological event, but of the mutual recognition or openness of the parents to each other. Emerging from this the infant enters into finite existence as a realm of meaning already marked by the established loving relation between one’s parents. This points one beyond the Oedipal stage. By identification with the parent of the same sex one enters into one’s

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<sup>6</sup> Florival, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Expressed Philosophic Premise*.

<sup>8</sup> Florival, p. 1.

proper existence. This is not a role added on indifferently, but the beginning of one's proper mode of existence.

As specified sexually in the body one's identity is properly relational; it is toward the other sex. As received from the meaning-giving act of procreative love of the parents this is not a mere physical fact, but an inscription of the child into the circle of meaningful relations with its polarity of anguish and desire. This interdependent existential relationality is constitutive of the relational growth of the person.

Taken as such, this teaches the child the symbolic dimension of a sense relationship. In the experience of Oedipal jealousy, by living affectively the reality of the sexual difference the child discovers the meaning of the notion of "*différence*" in general, that is to say, the notions of relationship, connection and symbolic meaning. He or she grasps the field of meaning as such and what underlies every form of rationality.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, for the human person what begins in the sexual *différence* where all differences are by the same token relational in the affective order of meaning, expands along with the development of consciousness into the broad panoply of the physical universe as a meaningful whole and through all the modes of personal and social encounter. This generates the truth of cultures and of civilizations with their scientific and aesthetic, ethical and political articulation.

As noted above this affective pattern of extended and sophisticated hopes and fears is not an object of observation that can be properly thematized. Rather, as a system of correlations of the experience of anguish and desire, it is our life-world which, writ large, is not simply our experience of being as if of an object, but is the life of being as received, lived passionately, and transmitted to others.

In the light of this reflection on the affective dimension of being a number of considerations emerge. First, a philosophy constructed on a physical and quantitative paradigm is in principle inadequate to take account of the human and social quality of a persons' life. Such a scientifically calculable approach to reality expunges from life all meaning and value. It threatens the culture not only of one people, but of humanity as such. This is the terrible pathology of the Enlightenment which comes increasingly to consciousness and calls for a post-modern world. This must consist not in a solitary, skeptical sense of rejecting foundations and principles as many would want, but in sublimating these within the free and creative life of the spirit lived passionately and essentially with others.

Thus, the affective experience of meaning through desire and anguish manifests much that is of the greatest importance for human life in our times. A metaphysics and ontology, or study of being, carried out as if

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<sup>9</sup> Florival, p. 8.

being or existence were indifferent to consciousness and bliss, would be an abstraction in which the term 'being' would have extension (that is, can refer to each thing), but not the intention or depth of meaning required as the context of a life of meaning and value. This implies, in turn, the need for a metaphysics of Being which is "love," for it is this which gives meaning to humanity. This is not an arbitrary construct reflective only of the human, but a sharing by all in that bliss which is eternal and gives temporal life great meaning and beauty. One key manner in which to look at human life then is that of gift, reflection thereupon should provide the foundation projecting one into cooperation with others as neighbors in a life whose purpose is sharing in eternal bliss (*ananda*).

Lived temporally and in interrelation, otherness intersects at the existential level of anguish and desiring. This is realized concretely from birth until death against the original background of giving life from generation to generation. This implies for being a personal and, therefore, affective dimension. Transposing the Heideggerian context, this evokes the Being which "loves" man and gives him meaning.<sup>10</sup>

## PERSON AS GIVEN

This can be approached in another phenomenological manner by reflecting carefully on the mode of operation of our own conscious life. One place to begin is with the person as a polyvalent unity operating on both the physical and non-physical levels. Though the various sciences analyse distinct dimensions, the person is not a construct of independent components, but an identity: the physical and the psychic are dimensions of myself and of no other. Further, this identity is not the result of my personal development, but was had by me from my beginning; it is a given for each person. Hence, while I can grow indefinitely, act endlessly, and do and make innumerable things, the growth and acts will be always my own: it is the same given or person who perdures through all the stages of his or her growth.

As noted in the previous section this givenness appears also through reflection upon one's inter-personal relations. I do not properly create these, for they are possible only if I already have received my being. Further, to open to others is a dynamism which pertains to my very nature and which I can suppress only at the price of deep psychological disturbance. Relatedness is given with one's nature and is to be received as a promise

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<sup>10</sup> Florival, pp. 10-11; M. Heidegger, "L' homme habite en poète" in *Essais et conférences*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), p. 244.



and a task; it is one's destiny. What depends upon the person is only the degree of his or her presence to others.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, this givenness is often taken in the sense of closure associated with the terms 'datum' or 'data', as hypothetical or evidential. On the one hand, in the hypothetical sense a given is a stipulation agreed upon by the relevant parties as the basis for a process of argumentation: granted X, then Y. The premises of an argument or the postulates in a mathematical demonstration are such. On the other hand, in the evidential sense, data are the direct and warranted observations of what actually is the case. In both meanings, the terms 'given' or 'data' direct the mind exclusively toward the future or consequent as one's only concern. The use of the past participle of the verb stem (*data*) closes off any search toward the past, so that, when one given is broken down by an analysis, new givens appear. One never gets behind some hypothetical or evidential given.

This closure is done for good reason, but it leaves open a second—and, for our purposes, decisively important—sense of 'given' which is expressed by the nominative form, 'donum' or gift. In contrast to the other meanings, this would seem to point back, as it were, behind itself to its source in a manner similar to the ways historians use the term 'fact'. They note that a fact is not simply there; its meaning has been molded or made (*facta*) within the ongoing process of human life.<sup>12</sup> In this sense, it points back to its origin and origination.

However, this potentially rich return to the source was blocked by the shift at the beginning of the 19th century from an empiricist to an anthropocentric view. In this horizon, facts came to be seen especially as made by humans. These were conceived either as individuals in the liberal tradition, or as classes in the socialist tradition—to which correspond the ideals respectively of progress and praxis. However, because what was made by humans could always be remade by them,<sup>13</sup> this turned aside a radical search into the character of life as gift. Attention remained only upon the future, understood simply in terms of man and of what man could do either individually or socially.

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<sup>11</sup> Maurice Nedoncelle, "Person and/or World as the Source of Religious Insight" in G. Mc Lean, ed., *Traces of God in a Secular Culture* (New York: Alba House, 1973), pp. 187-210.

<sup>12</sup> Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation* (Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 34-42. I am particularly indebted to this very thoughtful work for its suggestions. I draw here also upon my "Chinese-Western Cultural Interchange in the Future" delivered at the International Symposium on Chinese- Western Cultural Interchange in Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the Arrival of Matteo Ricci, S.J., in China (Taiwan: Fu Jen Univ., 1983), pp. 457-72.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, nos. 6-8 in *F. Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1934), pp. 82-84. Schmitz, *ibid.*

There are reasons to suspect that this reductive humanism is not enough for the dynamic sense of a cultural heritage and a creative sense of harmony as cooperation with others. Without underestimating how much has been accomplished in terms of progress and praxis, the world-wide contemporary phenomenon of alienation not only between cultures, but from one's own culture and people suggests that something important has been forgotten. First, by including only what is abstractively clear these approaches begin by omitting that which can be had only in self-knowledge, namely, one's self-identity and all that is most distinctive and creative in each people's heritage. Focusing only upon what is analytically clear and distinct to the mind of any and every individual renders alien the notes of personal identity, freedom and creativity, as well as integrity, wholeness and harmony. These characterize the more synthetic philosophical and religious traditions and are realized in self-knowledge, deep interpersonal bonds,<sup>14</sup> and under the personal guidance of a teacher or guru.<sup>15</sup>

Second, there is the too broadly experienced danger that in concrete affairs the concern to build the future in terms only of what has been conceived clearly and by all will be transformed, wittingly and unwittingly, into oppression of self-identity and destruction of the integrative work of cultures, both as civilizations and as centers of personal cultivation. Indeed, the charges of cultural oppression and the calls for liberation from so many parts of the world raise founded doubt that the humanist notion of the self-given and its accompanying ideals can transcend the dynamics of power and leave room for persons, especially for those of other cultures.

Finally, were the making, which is implied in the derivation of the term 'fact' from 'facere', to be wholly reduced to 'self-making,' and were the given to become only the self-given, it might be suspected that we had stumbled finally upon what Parmenides termed "the all impossible way" of deriving what is from what is not.<sup>16</sup> His essential insight that all is grounded in the Absolute—which is shared by the Hindu, Islamic and Judeo-Christian traditions—is a firm guard against such a self-defeating, stagnating and destructive route.

## PERSON AS GIFT

It is time, then, to look again to the second meaning of 'given' and to follow the opening toward the source implied in the notion of gift. Above, we had noted some indications that self-identity and interpersonal relatedness are gifts (*dona*). Let us now look further into this in order to see

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<sup>14</sup> A.S. Cua, *Dimensions of Moral Creativity: Paradigms, Principles and Ideals* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1978), chaps. III-V.

<sup>15</sup> W. Cenkner, *The Hindu Personality in Education: Tagore, Gandhi and Aurobindo* (Delhi: South Asia Books, 1976).

<sup>16</sup> Parmenides, *Fragment 2*.

what it suggests regarding the dynamic openness required for cooperation between persons and cultures.

First, one notes that as gift the given has an essentially gratuitous character. It is true that at times the object or service given could be paid for in cash or in kind. As indicated by the root of the term 'commercial,' however, such a transaction would be based on some merit (*merito*) on the part of the receiver. This would destroy its nature as gift precisely because the given would no longer be based primarily in the freedom of the giver.

The same appears from an analysis of an exchange of presents. Presents cease to be gifts to the degree that they are given only because of the requirements of the social situation or only because of a claim implicit in what the other might have given me. Indeed, the sole way in which such presents can be redeemed as gifts is to make clear that their presentation is not something to which I feel merely obliged, but something I personally and freely want to do. As such, then, a gift is based precisely upon the freedom of the giver; it is gratuitous.

There is here a striking symmetry with the 'given' in the above sense of hypothesis or evidence. There, in the line of hypothetical and evidential reasoning, there was a first, namely, that which is not explained, but upon which explanation is founded. Here, there is also a first upon which the reality of the gift is founded and which is not to be traced to another reality. This symmetry makes what is distinctive of the gift stand out, namely, here the originating action is not traced back further precisely because it is free or gratuitous. Once again, our reflections lead us in the direction of that which is self-sufficient, absolute and transcendent as the sole adequate giver of the gift of being.

Further, as an absolute point of departure with its distinctive spontaneity and originality, the giving is non-reciprocal. To attempt to repay would be to destroy the gift as such. Indeed, there is no way in which this originating gratuitousness can be returned; we live in a graced condition. This appears in reflection upon one's culture. What we received from the authors of the *Vedas*, a Confucius or an Aristotle can in no way be returned. Nor is this simply a problem of distance in time, for neither is it possible to repay the life we have received from our parents, the health received from a doctor, the wisdom from a teacher, or simply the good example which can come from any quarter at any time. The non-reciprocal character of our life is not merely that of part to whole; it is that of a gift to its source.<sup>17</sup>

The great traditions have insisted rightly both upon the absolute reality of the One and upon the lesser reality of the multiple: the multiple is not the Real, though neither is it totally non-reality. Anselm's elaboration of the notion of privation contains a complementary clarification of the gratuitous character of beings as given or gifted. The notion of privation was developed classically by Aristotle in his analysis of change, where

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<sup>17</sup> Schmitz, 44-56.

privation appeared at the beginning of the process as the lack of the form to be realized. He saw this as more than non-being, precisely in as much as it was a lack of a good which is due to that subject. Hence, in substantial change, because the basic potential principle is prime matter to which no specific form is due, privation plays no role.

Anselm extended this notion of privation to the situation of creation in which the whole being is gifted. In this case, there is no prior subject to which something is due; hence, there is no ground or even any acceptance. Anselm expressed this radically non-reciprocal nature of the gift—its lack of prior conditions—through the notion of absolute *privation*.

It is *privation* and not merely negation, for negation simply is not and leads nowhere, whereas the gift is to be, and once given can be seen to be uniquely appropriate. It is absolute privation, however, for the foundation is not at all on the part of the recipient; rather it is entirely on the part of the source.<sup>18</sup> This parallels a basic insight which is suggested in the *Upanishads* and is perhaps the basic insight for metaphysics.

In the beginning, my dear, this world was just being (*Sat*), one only, without a second. . . . Being thought to itself: ‘May I be many; may I procreate.’ It produced fire. That fire thought to itself: ‘May I be many; may I procreate.’ It produced water. . . . That water thought to itself: ‘May I be many; may I procreate.’ It produced food. . . . That divinity (Being) thought to itself: ‘Well, having entered into three divinities [fire, water, and food] by means of this living Self, let me develop names and forms. Let me make each one of them tripartite. (*Chandogya Up.*, 6.1-3, 12-14.)

To what does this correspond on the part of the source? In a certain parallel to the antinomies of Kant which show when reason has strayed beyond its bounds, many from Plotinus to Leibniz and beyond have sought knowledge, not only of the gift and its origin, but of why it had to be given. The more they succeeded, the less room was left for freedom on the part of man as a given or gift. Others attempted to understand freedom as a fall, only to find that what was thus understood was bereft of value and meaning and, hence, was of no significance to human life and its cultures. Rather, the radical non-reciprocity of human freedom must be rooted in an equally radical generosity on the part of its origin. No reason, either on the part of the given or on the part of its origin, makes this gift necessary. The freedom of the human person is the reflection of one is derivation from a giving that is pure generosity: a person is the image of God.

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<sup>18</sup> Anselm, *Monologium*, cc. 8-9 in *Anselm of Canterbury*, eds. J. Hopkins and H. W. Richardson (Toronto: E. Mellen, 1975), I, pp. 15-18. See Schmitz, 30-34.

In turn, on the part of the gift this implies a correspondingly radical openness or generosity. The gift is not something which is and then receives. It was an essential facet of Plato's response to the problems he had elaborated in the *Parmenides* that the multiple can exist only *as* participants of the good or one. Receiving is not something they *do*; it is what they *are*.<sup>19</sup> As such, they reflect at the core of their being the reality of the generosity in which they originate.

The importance of this insight is attested from many directions. In Latin America, some philosophers begin from the symbol earth as the fruitful source of all (reflected in the Quechuan language of the Incas as the "*Pacha Mama*"). This is their preferred context for their sense of human life, its relations to physical nature, and the meeting of the two in technology.<sup>20</sup> In this they are not without European counterparts. The classical project of Heidegger in its later phases shifted beyond the unconcealment of the being of things-in-time, to Being which makes the things manifest. The *Dasein* provides Being a place of discovery among things.<sup>21</sup> Being maintains the initiative; its coming-to-pass or emission depends upon its own spontaneity and is for its sake. "Its 'there' (*Dasein*) only sustains the process and guards it," so that, in the openness of concealed Being, beings can appear unconcealed.<sup>22</sup>

The African spirit, especially in its great reverence of family, community and culture—whence one derives one's life, one's ability to interpret one's world, and one's capacity to respond—seems uniquely positioned to grasp this more fully. In contrast to Aristotle's classical 'wonder,' these philosophers do not situate the person over against the object of his or her concern, reducing both to objects for detached study and manipulation. They look rather to the source whence reality is derived and are especially sensitive to its implications for the mode and manner of one's life as essentially open, communicative, generous and sharing.

## HARMONY AND GENEROSITY

In the light of this sense of gift, it may be possible to extend the

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<sup>19</sup> R.E. Allen, "Participation and Predication in Plato's Middle Dialogues" in his *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, Keegan Paul, 1965), pp. 43-60.

<sup>20</sup> Juan Carlos Scannone, "Ein neuer Ansatz in der Philosophie Lateinamerikas," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 89 (1982), 99-116 and "La Racionalidad Científico-Technológica y la Racionalidad Sapiencial de la Cultura Latino Americana," *Stromata* (1982), 155-164.

<sup>21</sup> William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967), pp. 532-535.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Kockelmans, "Thanksgiving: The Completion of Thought," in Manfred S. Frings, ed., *Heidegger and the Quest for Truth* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), pp. 175-179.

notions of duty and harmony beyond concern for the well-being of those with whom I share and whose well-being is, in a sense, my own. The good is not only what contributes to my perfection: I am not the center of meaning. Rather, being is received and, hence, is essentially out-going.

Seen in terms of gift, person and community manifest two principles for social dynamism in the development of a cultural tradition of harmony: complementarity which makes the formation of culture and interchange possible, and generosity which passes it along in an active process of tradition. First, as participants in the one, self-sufficient and purely spontaneous source, the many are not in principle antithetic or antipathetic one to another. Rather, as limited images they stand in a complementary relation to one another as participants or images. This is reflected in the enjoyment experienced in simple companionship in which, by sharing the other's experience of being, each lives more fully: the result is more than the sum of its parts. What is true here of individual persons is true as well both of groups of peoples and indeed of peoples and of the cultures they create through self-knowledge. It is this complementarity, derived from their common origin, which makes cooperation in work and decision making, whether in commerce or in culture, fundamentally possible and ultimately desirable.

This has two important implications for the person and for relations between peoples. Where the Greek focus upon their heritage had led to depreciating others as barbarians, the sense of oneself and of one's culture as radically gifted provides a basic corrective. Knowing and valuing oneself and one's culture as gifts implies more than merely reciprocating what the other does for me. It means, first, that others and their culture are to be respected simply because they, too, have been given or gifted by the one Transcendent source. This is an essential step which Gandhi, in calling outcasts by the name "harijans" or "children of God," urged us to take beyond the sense of pride or isolation from which we would see others in pejorative terms.

But mere respect may not be enough. In fact I and another, my people and another, originate from, share in and proclaim the same Self, especially as Good or Bliss. This implies that, to the degree that our cultural traditions share in the good, the relation between the integrating modes of human life is in principle one of complementarity. Hence, interchange as the effort to live this complementarity is far from being hopeless. In the pressing needs of our times, only an intensification of cooperation between peoples can make available the indispensable immense stores of human experience and creativity. The positive virtue of love is our real basis for hope.

A second principle for interchange is to be found in the participated—the radically given or gifted—character of one's being. As one does not first exist and then receive, but one's very existence is a received existence or gift, to attempt to give back this gift, as in an

exchange of presents, would be at once hopelessly too much and too little. On the one hand, to attempt to return in strict equivalence would be too much, for it is our very self that we have received as gift. On the other hand, to think merely in terms of reciprocity would be to fall essentially short of my nature as one that is given, for to make a merely equivalent return would be to remain centered upon myself where I would cleverly trap, and then entomb, the creative power of being.

Rather, looking back I can see the futility of giving back, and in this find the fundamental importance of passing on the gift in the spirit in which it has been given. One's nature as given calls for a creative generosity which reflects that of one's source. Truly appropriate generosity lies in continuing the giving through participating in one's tradition, shaping it creatively in response to the needs of the day and the discoveries of the era, and handing on this good to others. This requires a vast expansion or breaking out of oneself as the only center of one's concern. It means becoming effectively concerned with the good of others and of other groups, and for the promotion and vital growth of the next generation and of those to follow.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL LIFE**

The implications of such generosity are broad and at times surprisingly personal. First, true openness to others cannot be based upon a depreciation of oneself or of one's own culture. Without appreciating one's worth, there would be nothing to share and no way to help, nor even the possibility of taking joy in the good of the other. Further, cultural interchange enables one to see that elements of one's life, which in isolation may have seemed to be merely local customs and purely repetitive in character, are more fundamentally modes in which one lives basic and essential human values. In meeting others and other cultures, one discovers the deeper meaning in one's own everyday life.

One does more than discover, however. One recognizes that in these transcendental values of life—of truth and freedom, of love and beauty—one participates in the dynamism of one's origin and, hence, must share these values in turn. More exactly, one comes to realize that real reception of these transcendental gifts lies in sharing them in loving concern in order that others may realize them as well. This means passing on one's own heritage and protecting and promoting what the next generation would freely become.

Finally, that other cultures are quintessentially products of self-cultivation by other spirits as free and creative implies the need to open one's horizons beyond one's own self-concerns to the ambit of the freedom of others. This involves promoting the development of other free and creative centers and cultures which, precisely as such, are not in one's own possession or under one's own control. One lives, then, no longer in terms merely of oneself or of things that one can make or manage, but in terms of

an interchange between persons as free and peoples of different cultures. Personal responsibility is no longer merely individual decision making or for individual good. Effectively realized, the resulting interaction and mutual fecundation reaches out beyond oneself and one's own culture to reflect ever more perfectly the glory of the one Source and Goal of all.<sup>23</sup>

This calls for a truly shared effort in which all respond fully, not only to common needs, but to the particular needs of each. This broad sense of tolerance and love in a time of tension has been described by Pope John Paul II as a state in which violence cedes to peaceful transformation, and conflict to pardon and reconciliation; where power is made reasonable by persuasion, and justice finally is implemented through love.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Schmitz, 84-86.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, "Address at Puebla," *Origins*, VIII (n. 34, 1979), I, 4 and II, 41-46.



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# **THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY**

## **PURPOSE**

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

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A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

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