The Idea of Man

Concepts of Human Ontology

Mark Aman

THE IDEA OF MAN
Concepts of Human Ontology

Mark Aman

Cover Art: Andre Rublev, 'The Trinity', circ. 1411

This edition produced by
Verus Publishing

www.verusbooks.com

Copyright 2020 Mark Aman
This book remains the copyrighted property of the author and may not be duplicated or redistributed in whole or in part without express permission.

ISBN: 978-1-951267-41-4
Imprint / Publisher: Verus Publishing

Table of Contents

Preface
Prologue --- p.1
1 - Significance, the Essence of Man --- p.2
1a - The Priority of Essence to History --- p.10
2 - The Significance of Pointing --- p.13
3 - The Significance of the 'Edge' --- p.20
4 - The Significance of Language --- p.31
5 - The Birth of the Person --- p.40
6 - The Possibility of Knowing --- p.56
7 - Thinking and Knowing --- p.62
7a - Thinking - 'What' Things Are --- p.74
7b - Thinking - 'How' Things Are --- p.78
7c - Thinking - 'Why' Things Are --- p.88
8 - Thinking and the World of Things --- p.97
8a - The Possibility of Understanding --- p.110
8b - Time and the Stillness of Things --- p.120
8b(1) - Time and the Passing of Things --- p.123
8b(2) - The Ontological Basis of Time --- p.131
8b(3) - Time, Eternity and the Significance of Death --- p.150
8c - Thinking and the Control of Things --- p.156
8d - The Possibility of Being(s) Out of Control --- p.170
8e - Time and the Order of Things --- p.186
8f - The Ontological Force of Gravity --- p.196
9 - Thinking and Healing --- p.214
Author Notes

Preface

The author is indebted to the thought of Erwin Straus[1] whose seminal insight as to the importance of upright posture in establishing a good understanding of what it means to be human became the point of departure for all that follows here. The present work, while it clearly perceives the limits of Straus' thinking on the subject, is in no way intended as a critique of the ingenious and fruitful development of his pioneering thought. Rather, its purpose is to extend and expand the meaning that is inherent in this idea in a direction that Straus, as a busy psychiatrist and academician, concerned first of all with the healing of his patients and the training of his students, had neither the time nor interest to accomplish.

What will distinguish our work here from that of Straus, given our shared point of departure, is the concerted emphasis that we will maintain on the ***vertical*** dimension of upright posture and its essential and singular significance to the origin and formation of the human being, to his calling of the world into being through language and, prior to all, to his necessary and necessarily vertical (upright) relationship to Being itself.

In short, where Straus considered upright posture to be of central importance to human experience and a key to understanding the distortions of that experience that occur in conditions of psycho-physiological illness, we find at its vertical core the key to a wealth of *ontological* significance that extends far beyond the realization of any particular human purpose or condition that might unfold in the horizontal plane of experience, but which rather defines the very essence and idea of the human itself, the idea of man.

[1]Straus, E. W. (1966). Phenomenological psychology: The selected papers of Erwin W. Straus. Translated, in part, by Erling Eng. New York: Basic Books.

Prologue

THE IDEA OF MAN

If we look at the origin of man, surely there we will find his essence. And with this essence broken from its hiddenness, the 'point' of man's existence, the reason and logic of his being will surely manifest itself. In the light of that manifestation, we will see man clearly and finally gain an understanding of who, how and why he is. So, this entire labor of thought must not only begin, but remain and dwell at the point of his beginning and only there because there and only there is to be derived a good idea of man. From this good idea, got finally right, 'ideas' about man, his history, politics, science and technique, his world of time, space, language and art, his social, psychological and moral nature will flow in a cascade of understanding that is simple, accessible and nourishing to his soul. So, by all means, let's begin at the beginning.

1 - Significance - The Essence of Man

The evolutionary appearance of man in pre-history did not proceed as a simple and direct development from a single ape-like ancestor. Nor did his development occur in only one particularly hospitable place that could be recognized as his original 'cradle'. Rather, the record of early man shows a complex lineage that is diverse and diffuse in both time and space. And yet, from the pre-historical record we can be certain that man, as man, began to walk the earth approximately 3 million years ago across a vast territory of the present African, European and Asian continents.

"As man"… This redundant qualifier which we felt the need to add in the sentence above could better be phrased as a question. What is the essential quality that defines the presence of 'man' among his pre-hominid and hominid ancestors? By what measure of judgement do anthropologists in their search for first and original man decide that among the bones at one site of excavation there has been found evidence of man, while at another it can be concluded that man was not there? This question is critical. The answer to this question will frame the idea of man by recognizing that original and essential element without which and before which man could not be present.

In this most simple and objective and original sense, what constitutes the 'idea of man' is first and foremost his upright posture - 'uprightness'. The discovery of man's

oldest presence on earth to date, 'Lucy', finds only bones that verify an upright posture. And so, with near awe and reverence, she is called 'man'. Archeological sites of a later date will find all sorts of recognizable and familiar traces that verify man's distinctive presence - tools, artifacts, burial sites, primitive structures and art. But these later refinements should not be confused with essence and the very first of man can be recognized 'as man' simply by the physical characteristic of holding himself upright. This uprightness, possessed as the distinguishing essence of the first man is nothing less than the essence and origin of man… that without which man 'as man' is impossible to conceive.

The significance of this cannot be overestimated. This quality of man is essential not only because it is possessed by the first man, but precisely because it is unalterable and inescapable to any conceivable man of any time or place. It has neither to do with what man does nor with anything that he could possibly make, think, acquire or destroy. Rather, this quality is identical with man. It has only and everything to do with what man IS.

And yet, holding this idea of uprightness as essential, what can we make of the fact that man spends a third of his life in the horizontal oblivion of sleep and dreams, that at least another third or more might be spent in a sitting position, that sickness, injury or disability may 'lay him low' in a thousand different ways, that the expression of sexual love naturally avoids the vertical, that at his best, man is given to a host of dubious moral 'inclinations'? Isn't the life of man predominantly lived literally and figuratively outside the straight and narrow

line of vertical rectitude? Isn't uprightness just one among many possibilities of posture that characterize being human? The answer lies plainly in the fact that, while there are an infinite number of postural modes and variations, there can be only one 'true' vertical and it is to that possibility, only One, that man is constantly and essentially, morally and physically attuned. This compelling, unique and singular attunement, even while sleeping, resting, loving, lying in sickness, drunkenness or debauchery, is the very essence and substance of being human.

'Begin at the beginning to reach the end. Begin in the middle and end in a muddle.' In the first and essential quality of 'uprightness' we have discovered the beginning of man, the source of the reason and logic of his being from which a good idea of man can possibly be conceived and further, from which true ideas about man can rightfully flow.

Essential ideas, ideas of 'being', are at once the poorest and richest of ideas. On the one hand, by logic and definition, they contain nothing but what is necessary and inherent to a thing, excluding the rich and confusing array of qualities and variations that find themselves in the world. To say in the present case that 'uprightness' is the essential quality of man is the poorest statement imaginable. The understandable reply is, 'So what'? Like people who live close to necessity, who are simple and poor by choice or circumstance, such ideas are easily overlooked and ignored, their value underestimated. And yet, ideas that contain undiluted essence, that are close to what is necessary and inherent for a thing to be, while

poorest in their simple content, are indeed the richest of ideas in their significance, in terms of what they signify, what they 'point to'. To have an idea of a table for example that is essential, that contains only what is necessary to every table, is to have not only the opportunity of understanding what a table IS but beyond that, the inherent significance of a table, what it 'means' or 'points to'. While the essence of a table might be described in a few simple words perhaps as a 'flat, raised surface', many volumes could be written and works of art performed about the 'meaning' that such an idea has for the world and life of man, for his eating, working, meeting, reading, writing and playing. The essence of a table points to man as he is in all these activities and thus the significance that flows from this essence is profound and extensive. If it is so with tables, mere things in the world that 'point to' man, how much greater a treasure of significance must inhere to the idea of 'uprightness' - the very essence of man himself. With uprightness we recognize man's essence. Now, from this we seek his significance. To what does man point?

Man's evolution toward upright posture draws him in a vertical direction that is unique in the animal kingdom. While vertical space, the heights of trees and the air above, is explored and mastered by a multitude of species, man is the only one for whom verticality itself is a necessity. Whatever evolutionary, bio-mechanical advantages were afforded man by standing erect, the effective freeing of the hands from locomotion for example, verticality soon came to determine man's development in a way that superceded the forces of

evolution and biological determinism. Man, 'as man', the upright animal, whether by chance or by design is not important, broke free of the determinism of the natural world. Suddenly on the earth (if 3 million years can be sudden) there is an animal that, rather than adapting its biological self to its environment by a torturous process of generational selection, adapts the environment to its needs. Suddenly, there is a creature for whom the central determinant of evolutionary selection in animals, survival, is not the primary necessity. For this free creature, the primary necessity, first even before biological survival, is 'to stand'. Uprightness is the first and original 'value'. For man, to remain in orientation to the vertical is more necessary than to remain alive. Verticality, uprightness is his essence, his very being and to lose that orientation is to cease to exist 'as man'. This 'counter-evolutionary' logic is further proven by the fact that with time and history, countless men will kill, die and sacrifice their lives for the original value of uprightness and for the ideas that seem to sustain it.

Whatever the evolutionary path that brought man to assume uprightness, standing upright, man finds himself determined by a different logic than the biological one that bore him and 'raised' him. For man, biological necessity, while inescapable to sustain his life and remaining the first of 'urges', is superceded by the need to BE. Biological determinism is transformed into ontological determination. Man is indeed determined, but determined toward being. He is determined to be. For man, it is first necessary to BE according to the significance and value of his innate essence, uprightness,

and only secondarily necessary to be alive. So closely and dearly did even the earliest of man hold the value of Being that he clearly believed that the being of himself and his fellow men and women did not end with biological life. The ritual burial sites that are found where early man is found bear heartrending and wonderful testimony to this belief. Thus man moved from evolution to history. Evolution does not apply to man.

Free from the strict determinism of biological and evolutionary logic, man is free for the logic of being. To understand this logic, we return to the question of the significance of uprightness for the being of man. What does uprightness signify? To what does man, necessarily, 'point'? For the answer, we need only to look at him. Man points 'up'. The essence of man is to be drawn vertically as a radiance from the center of the earth to… the realm of ideas… to Heaven. He is the being whose very being is physically constituted by pointing vertically, 'up'. Simply and solely by standing upright, his essence IS significance and what he signifies is 'on high'.

Before there were tools, before there was art or language, man's distinctive essence was caste in the vertical dimension as a pointing, a reference, a signifying, as an IDEA. Standing upright, man is identical with the primordial idea… the idea of the supreme, the highest, the ideal Being, the idea of Being itself. Simply put, man IS the idea of God. Man points to God. Or it could be written… Man is the idea of God. God points to man. Which is right? Who is 'prior', God or man? It doesn't matter. The question has no significance. Because in either case, there is a necessary and inherent relationship

between the ideal Being and the mortal one. God needs man (to be) and man needs God (to be). The only thing of importance, and it is of ultimate importance, is that the alignment of man and God in the vertical dimension is necessary and is necessarily vertical, oriented by gravity from the depth to the height. This relationship in this specifically vertical direction is the condition for the possibility of Being itself, necessary for any thing to be, for the world itself to be. Michelangelo gave near perfect expression to this mutual pointing, but in which God indeed points with more force and purpose. God needs man more than man thinks he needs God. Correctly in this depiction, man is shown as only 'half awake'. He points but only with half his heart and languid strength.

The idea of God is the first and essential idea of man. God is that ideal to which man, in his essence and in his being, from his first day on earth, simply as standing upright, points. As such, it is an idea that is so much a part of his core, his very being, his soul, that he cannot think it or speak it. He can only believe it. Man thinks the ideas of things that exist in his horizontal space. He is the author of those ideas. He calls them down and articulates them with ease. He names, makes, destroys and remakes tables, chairs, nations, hammers, houses, automobiles, codes of law and works of art. But thinking the idea of Being itself is nearly impossible for him since this idea is inseparable from man himself. Man IS this idea. Man's essence as standing upright IS this significance. And so, man lives his uprightness and his apprehension of the meaning and significance of the vertical dimension in the only way that he can… in the mode of belief… thanking,

meditation, prayer, devotion, sacrifice. He lives it in the mute recognition of the value of uprightness that is contained in a moral creed, in a mantra of wisdom or in the life-history of a truly upright man and in the practice of that creed, the repetition of that mantra and the emulation of that man. The beliefs, values, practices and histories of what we call religion are inseparable from man, the sign of his being as the idea of God.

1a - The Priority of Essence to History

'The Essence of man is significance'. Far from being an abstract 'philosophical' formulation, this is the simplest and most concrete of ideas. Man embodies significance, man IS significance simply by drawing a line with his body from the center of the earth vertically… 'up'. In this way, by nature and by physical bearing, man signifies, 'points'. The first, original and fundamental pointing is the vertical one that man does naturally, without thinking, without speaking, without conscious awareness. Then, flowing from this primordial treasure of Being, the significance of every human act, every thought, idea, plan and project, is ultimately measured vertically, according to the purpose of signifying and touching and knowing more adequately that to which man, in his nature and his being, points. Pointing vertically, to the ideal, to the realm of ideas and ultimately to the idea of Being itself, is nothing less than the essential purpose and fundamental value of all human endeavor, thought and action.

But this characterization is the ideal of man. It speaks of the way man is 'meant' to be. This is the man of Eden who knows perfectly what his essence, his place and purpose, is. But man is not ideal and Eden is 'no longer' his home. He is mortal, fallen. He is vulnerable. He is weak of body and weak of will and it takes time - hours, months, centuries, millennia, for him to accomplish things of value. He is distracted and confused. He stumbles and fails and is prone to all sorts of illness of

body and mind. He dies. But in no way do man's repeated, lasting and constant failures devalue his essence or disqualify the meaning of his being. Just as constant as his failure is the abiding possibility of his being as he is truly 'meant' to be. 'Meant to be' by the God to whom he points, that points to him. The essence and purpose of man, to point on high, 'to God', is *prior* to his failure. It is temporally prior as possessed of the first man and it is logically prior as the most original and essential quality possessed of any conceivable man.

The biblical authors ingeniously expressed this priority by depicting man's beginning as originally and perfectly in alignment with divine Being. From this original, 'right' relationship with Being, they understood that the being of things would flow naturally to make a world of goodness and plenty, a garden. Understanding his essence and true purpose, man would not be confused and muddled and the world would be set easily and comfortably in order according to his good will and the clear strength of his mind. Depicting this relationship and this world as original but 'lost' is a way of expressing both the priority of that relationship as it was 'in the beginning' and at the same time its abiding priority as a possibility that is present but 'lost' at each moment and that projects itself with hope toward a heavenly future. The mythical account, with ingenious sensitivity and insight, carefully and truly conceives man's original, evolutionary situation in its essence, when man, as man, standing and pointing 'up', first appeared on the earth.

So, 'Eden' is nowhere to be found in the archeological record. It was not a place on earth but rather it was and

IS a possibility for being. It is necessarily *prior* to history because even the first page of the history of failure cannot be written without the possibility of success. Man's living according to his nature, in truth and uprightness, in harmony with Being, with himself, others and the world, is a possibility that is not to be found at any time or place in history. Rather, the presence of this possibility and its constant 'loss' precisely IS history.

We have identified man's 'origin' with the physio-ontological 'pointing' that is constituted by upright posture. Now we seek the significance of this uprightness as it shows itself in history, in the record, laid down in stone, paint, ink, thread, song, wood, silicon and a thousand other means, of his being on earth.

2 - The Significance of 'Pointing'

The first page of that record tells a truly amazing story, the story of the first 'thing' and certainly one of the first 'ideas'… the 'hand-axe'. This simplest of tools, a crudely sharpened triangular-shaped rock, was ubiquitous among widely disparate populations of early man. Like a pre-historic version of the modern 'hand-held device', it seems to have been something that every early man, 'just had to have'. But the really amazing thing about this object was the duration of its 'popularity'. For more than seven hundred thousand years in the Nile Valley for example, the hand-axe was the only object that seems to have been fashioned by man. What a momentous span of time for a single, unaltered idea! Surely there must be more significance to this idea than meets the eye in the form of a crudely shaped rock.

The psychologist is well acquainted with the fact that all things fashioned by man are, on some level and in some way, a 'self-portrait'. Man himself is 'reflected' in all things of significance and especially in those things that he actively and purposefully 'makes'. This is simply to say that all things that man points to, insofar as they have significance, also point to him. How in this crude, flaked and pointed triangle of rock can we find a portrait of it's maker? With this question, the methodology that we confess to have followed only 'intuitively' up to now, becomes clear. Our question to this first of human ideas and implements must be the same as the question that we

just asked about man himself… What is its essence? (its being) And proceeding from that essence… What is its significance... what does it signify? To what, to whom does it 'point'?

As is the case with man himself, whose essence, uprightness, is so simple and obvious that its significance has been largely overlooked in nearly three thousand years of systematic thought, so it is also with the simplicity of man's first tool. Beyond the basics of how the tool was made and used, what can be said of any significance about an implement as simple and crude as this? And so, as with man himself, we quickly pass over the essence that is so apparent (that is to say, 'hidden') there and move on to the more advanced works of early man - tools, art and artifacts that seem more worthy of attention. And even regarding these, our 'scientific' interest is largely occupied with the details of 'how' - how they were made and how they were used. Study in this vein will normally conclude with only a few speculative, i.e. seemingly 'unverifiable', comments about the far more significant and fascinating question of 'why'. This as if there were not 'verity' to be found in the essence of a thing.

In its essence, the hand-axe is a rock that has been shaped by 'flaking' equal amounts on either of two opposite sides to make a 'point', a sharpened 'edge' at the bottom. The fact that it needs to be held in the hand requires that it be made in a more or less triangular shape with most of its mass at a flattened or rounded top. At first it might have been used as a more efficient striking tool for crushing bones for example to gain access to the

nutritious marrow. Later, with the discovery of techniques to achieve a finer, sharper edge, it was no doubt used for its more subtle cutting power, for such jobs as separating the flesh from animal skins and shaping wood.

Far beyond these practical, everyday uses, the hand-axe came to hold a significance for early man that proceeded from its essence, its *idea*, as a massive 'point', as a massive 'edge'. In each of these essential respects, as a 'point' and as an 'edge', we will find profound and extensive significance for the life of early man as well as for historical and modern man. In this significance we will discover the sense in which this simple, original tool is indeed a 'self-portrait' of it's maker. We will consider each of these essential aspects in turn.

The triangular design of the hand-axe, with its greater mass at the top and pointed bottom, naturally imparted a certain 'direction' to its use. As it seems to have been made to fit in the full center of the human hand, it's hard to imagine that it could be used effectively in any but a vertical, downward motion. Grasping it, the hand became empowered with a 'point' that could be directed with force against objects, transforming their hard, resistant surfaces according to man's will - breaking bones for precious marrow, cracking nuts for tender meats, shaping wood, not to mention the 'flaking' of stones to make more hand-axes. Probably very little game would have succumbed to such a clumsy hunting tool, though no doubt on occasion its power was used to kill other men, beginning the human practice of using deliberately pointed objects for this purpose.

We're used to reckoning the pace of the development of ideas in terms of decades and centuries. The modern world is 100 years old. Systematic thought began in Greece less than 3000 years ago. 5000 years is the span of written history. And the entire record of civilized human life is easily contained in a period of 20,000 years or less. So for us it's even hard to conceive of the length of time that it took man to move from the utilitarian 'thing' to the 'idea' of the hand-axe. Man used only this one pointed tool for *hundreds of thousands* of years with neither alteration nor innovation before he began to grasp with his mind the essence, the *idea* of the massive 'point' that he grasped with his hand.

After hundreds of millennia of 'practice' with this pointed rock, man suddenly awoke to the idea of what had occupied him for so many ages. Transcending the utilitarian, he suddenly 'knew what he was doing' in fashioning and using the hand-axe. Simply, at this critical moment in human development, man realized the power and the possibilities of 'pointing'. Awakening to the essence of the tool as a 'point', man quickly discovered that pointing in and of itself was powerful. While he pointed vertically downward with the hand-axe for 700 millennia, he now began to find new direction and purpose for his pointing. He fashioned hafts for his age-old tool that gave him the possibility of leverage and of directing its point more effectively and forcefully in a horizontal plane rather than a vertical one. Soon, the horizontal direction of the point predominated first in the form of the spear and then in the arrow. With these developments man became a matchless hunter and

warrior. And indeed the perfection of directing pointed objects, lately made of metal, toward horizontal targets continues to modern times.

But this is only to speak of points in stone, wood and metal and the tools and weapons that they made possible. And yet man's apprehension of the idea of 'pointing' was far more profound and extensive than this. Man's awakening to this idea was an awakening to his very essence as 'one who points', as 'one who signifies'. The hand-axe is a self-portrait of man, the being whose essence is pointing, whose essence is significance. In the point of the hand-axe, man could see himself reflected and begin to understand the power that he held not only in his hand but in his very nature and being - the power to point.

It was indeed a long time in coming, but with this first and essential idea held in a nascent 'mind', pointing became for man as natural as breathing and man was set on a course to became the rational animal and lord of the earth. Just as his own body, standing upright, forged a primordial relationship with Being in the vertical dimension, so too did man have to look no further than his own body for the ultimate and perfect 'tool' with which to point horizontally to things in the world - his arm, hand and index-finger. By pointing with his finger, man forged a relationship of being with 'things' that took on being and derived their significance by virtue of this pointing. The act of pointing is nothing less than the pre-lingual dawn of consciousness, the incipience of the world itself.

We speak here of pointing as forging the being of things. But what, in the mere act of pointing to a thing, is 'forged'? Certainly the material constitution of a thing is not changed merely by man's cognizance of it. The stone or tree that man points to remain materially as they were. The mere act of pointing might seem to be of no consequence whatsoever. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. What is forged by the act of pointing is the ***idea*** of the thing - a link, a connection, a reference to its essence, its being. In that sense, man imparts being to things by pointing to them in two dimensions… horizontally with his finger (later with his voice and other means) that points to the particular thing before him and vertically to the *idea* that constitutes the essence of the thing - its being. The vertical dimension of pointing is implicit in all horizontal pointing because it is by virtue of the original alignment of man with Being, constituted by his upright posture, that he is able to 'channel' being to things. He does this by thinking their *idea*, by 'understanding'. Standing upright, man understands (stands under) ideas of being. Only in this two dimensional pointing do stones become stones and trees become trees. While the tree must have seen the light of many days to have grown tall and strong as it appears before man, it's not until man points to it, understands (stands under) the *idea* of it, that it sees the light of Being. The question of whether 'things exist' prior to man has no significance. The only thing of importance is that there is a necessary relationship between man and things and that this relationship-of-being is constituted by a two dimensional pointing, the horizontal explicitly and the

vertical implicitly. There is no significance that is not derived from pointing. Pointing indeed 'matters' to things, to all things. It forges the very essence of things by 'standing under' their ideas. The relationship-of-being that is forged by the simple act of pointing is a necessary and essential relationship. Things need man as man needs God, to be. And man needs things as God needs man, to be. It's the essence of man, standing upright, to point vertically in reverence to Being. In that sense, upright posture is the original and abiding attitude of prayer. In pointing horizontally, with reference and understanding, this prayer is answered in the form of a world that is rich in things and good ideas.

3 - The Significance of the 'Edge'

Essential to the hand-axe are its 'point' and its 'edge'. In both respects, we expect to find a reflection, a portrait of man. So far, we have shown that as a 'point', it enabled the human hand to strike with concentrated, directed physical force against objects (and with later refinements against animals and men), subduing them. More importantly, the power of its point suggested and initiated the ontological power of pointing with the index finger that imparts being to things by at once drawing reference to them in the horizontal plane and understanding their ideas in the vertical one. Now it remains to lay out the sense in which the hand-axe as an 'edge' portrays man, its maker.

Upright posture quite literally set man apart. Taking his view now 'from above' yet with his feet planted firmly on the ground, he gained a great advantage over his fellow creatures… prey, predators and adversaries. From this higher vantage point, coupled with bi-polar vision and free, dextrous hands, man found himself at a distance not only from the ground on which he stood but from danger and the immediacy of physical need. This biological development was unique and remarkable in itself and yet, far beyond and above this, the meaning of man's biological 'advantage' was extended and amplified by its ontological significance.

Gaining height, man began to view what had been an 'immediate' environment at a distance, from above. In this

dis-stance, the world of things was destined to be created, named and put in order. Ontologically, things obtain the space that is needed for their being precisely in the distance that is created by man's standing apart from them. What we call 'space' is the 'medium' that is created when upright man finds himself apart from things, which take their place in this distance. Standing upright, man is anxiously surrounded by a field of nothingness in which things are. Things are imparted their 'status' of being when and only when man stands up, apart from them, yet vertically under their ideas. Lost from the immediacy of the pre-world, upright man re-unites with things at a distance by understanding their ideas and longing for their Being. Outside of this field of nothingness and the verticality of under-standing there can be neither things nor any possible being nor any possible world. Upright posture and the emptiness that it creates is necessary for Being. Man, no thing, standing anxiously and precariously apart from and above things, is necessary for Being.

This separation of man from the immediacy of the pre-world and his regaining contact with 'things' in a world of his understanding was a development that occurred over an immense span of time. The first moments of history that interest us here took hundreds of millennia and countless generations to occur. Throughout this unimaginable length of time, the hand-axe was present to man as perhaps the only thing that he purposefully made, kept and used. At least it's all that remains to us. Nevertheless, from its ubiquitous and persistent presence in the archeological record, it's certain

that the hand-axe accompanied man at every step of his journey into being. Without doubt, this one tool was intentionally in the hand of man at the dawn of consciousness. So, we take it as the key to understanding the events of this dawn and from this, the essence and significance of the creature to whom this dawning broke.

It's only speculation of course, but it seems reasonable to assume that the hand-axe as a 'pointed' tool was more easily achieved from crude working than the hand-axe which held an 'edge'. Of course the points of hand-axes could be of greater or lesser quality as well, but to achieve an edge to the axe required a qualitative refinement of the point, regardless of how fine or crude it was. Essentially, to create an 'edge' requires that a point be extended in a line. And as with points, edges may be either crude and dull or fine and sharp. But in any case, flaking the rock to a fine edge would extend its capabilities many times beyond what could be accomplished with a simply pointed tip. Our own everyday familiarity with knives and other edged tools makes this easy to understand. Instead of simply breaking hard material, the edge could shave and shape softer materials like flesh, vegetable matter, wood and softer stone to yield a wide range of desirable physical results. And yet, far beyond these, the unintended (i.e. ontological) result of its use over hundreds of millennia was that it shaped it's user and maker into a creature who was able to divide, articulate and order things to make a world.

To understand the further significance of the hand-axe for man's ontological awakening we need to look

more closely (literally, as with a magnifying glass) at what first seems to us obvious, familiar and well-understood, i.e., the physical structure of its edge. In essence, the edge of the hand-axe, like that of the machete, kitchen knife or battle sword, is a line in space where 'something' and 'nothing' coincide. This can most easily be understood by anyone who has labored over an edge in steel to bring it to its finest and sharpest state. The entire process is one of bringing the strong, hard substance systematically 'down to nothing'. At this point (along this line) an edge is formed where matter is as near to nothing as a thing in the perceptible world can be. The exquisite line of matter that constitutes the edge is precise to the extent of its non-existence. The closer the substantial steel has come to not being at that line, the finer and more effective is its edge. It's no accident that the finest edge can be brought to the hardest material - where the contrast is greatest between the obdurate being of the substance and the non-existence that it meets at its edge. For early man, this meant a careful choice of stone for working to find a type that would not only obtain such an edge, but hold it for as long as possible through the work that was being done. Flint-stone was the easiest to work, while the later discovery of obsidian could hold a surgically fine edge for a long period of time. For man throughout the ages to our modern time, the choices of material became progressively wider and more refined to include metals of various types, from copper to bronze, steel and carbide as well as the ultimate 'rock' that is the final choice of the edge-maker, the diamond. And yet all such choices and modes of working the material toward

it's edge are made and done under the same principle - to make the thing like man himself, a place where nothing and something coincide. And in exactly this way, as a solid nothingness, does the edge of the hand-axe portray the creature, man, that made, held and used it in the Nile Valley for 700,000 pre-historical years.

This physical, artificial meeting of being and nothingness at the edge of his tool, put a nearly magical thing in the hand of man - a thing the power of which was at once physical and metaphysical, that is to say, distinctly human. To understand this magic, we return again to the commonplace example of the edge being worked in modern steel. Few adults have never sharpened a knife, axe or chisel. Using whatever means, grindstone, hone or rosin-strap, to remove material to the point of 'nothingness', the edge-maker will eventually reach the moment when he is ready to test the work and discover the state of the edge at hand. This is normally done by feel with the thumb stroked gently across (never along) the line of material that forms the edge. A prickly sensation means that he is at least getting there. A smooth and non-threatening feel means there is still much work to be done - the tool is not yet dangerous. Danger is a given that dwells alongside any power. In this case, the essential power of the edge… to cut, to divide, to bring the presence of nothing to things, is inherently dangerous. The person making and using the edge maintains a constant and vigilant awareness of its power and hence its danger. Simply changing the direction of the stroke of his thumb, *along* the edge rather than *across* it, will instantly bring a cry of pain and the unwelcome sight of blood. His

thumb, which had been whole, is now divided. The edge is no 'normal' thing. Sharp tools are never given to children or to those who lack the judgement to use them wisely. The edge, where something and nothing meet, is a dangerous place, as man, whom it reflects, is a dangerous creature. With little more than the power of the edge, and its terror, the Mongol Hordes of Genghis Khan were able to acquire and hold a vast empire for many decades. The stroke of the blade along my finger divides it where it should not be divided. The stroke of a battle-sword divides a man from his limbs or his life. And yet, if this edge were a scalpel, it may also divide a cancer from the body of a man and thus keep him whole.

Its uses in history are utterly innumerable, but essentially, the power of the edge is the power to cut and divide. The physical power that early man found in his hand when he held the hand-axe was the power to divide flesh from skin for clothing or shelter, to divide stalks of grain from their roots in the ground, to divide the branches from a straight shaft of wood or the useful bark from a tree. In these and countless other ways, man used the edge of the hand-axe and its derivatives to shape a world of things that was constituted by the dividing, articulating presence of nothing to mute, seamless immediacy. Originally and essentially set apart from this immediacy by standing upright, surrounded, sometimes anxiously, by the field of nothingness that assumed its place in this dis-stance, man in turn set things in the world apart from each other in an orderly way by dividing, understanding and naming them. Man is less anxious when the world of things becomes his home and

dominion. And indeed, with this ontological power 'at his hand' both literally and figuratively, the world became man's domain and all things became subject to his order. The willful, physical routines described above that distinguished man's unique genius among his fellow creatures were constantly in step with the far greater metaphysical power that was bestowed on him by his essence, uprightness, to designate, name and order the world of things - to assign to things their being. It is exactly man's presence in the world as a dangerous 'edge', a creature constantly and anxiously poised 'at the point of nothingness', that brings the possibility of being to things along with the possibility for this same distant, dangerous, anxious man to take his place and make a home among them.

As a 'point' and as an 'edge', the hand-axe portrays man. Considering this crude triangle of rock in its essence and significance has given us a good start toward understanding the idea of man. But our interest here is not really with hand-axes. We are interested in man. So what interests us now is the fact that man himself, at the point in time of about 40,000 years B.C., finally, finally lost interest in the hand-axe. This tells us what we already know - that it's the nature of man to progress and surpass. In the Nile Valley, hand-axes needed to be left behind for a new world of tools, materials and ideas to develop. And yet, the dual essence of the first tool that we have laid out is not and will never be surpassed. The significance of the tool, of its point and its edge, remains throughout history and will remain through any conceivable future, precisely because it is essential, that is, it points to man and, by

way of man, to Being. Essence, Being is prior to history and is not subject to it. And in the same way, knowledge that derives from an understanding of essence obtains the priority that is reserved for it by its relationship, via upright, under-standing man, to Being. Methodologically, there is indeed verity to be found in the essence of a thing, primarily and especially, as we have seen, in the essence of man himself. The path that this method marks out is promising and we can be confident that, if we follow it patiently and faithfully, it will lead us to a good idea of man.

We can demonstrate the continuance in history of the essential significance of the hand-axe by considering one historical development that occurred many tens of thousands of years after the little, triangular, stone tool had been left behind, discarded and forgotten. 'Discarded and forgotten' in fact, but not in essence. The new development that will take place will be a likeness of man's first tool (as the tool was a likeness of man), also in stone, but this time pointing, as man does, 'up'.

In the tens of millennia preceding 3000 BC, man populated the uniquely hospitable and fertile valley of the Nile copiously, mastering agrarian techniques and developing a stable and well-ordered society unique in history even to the present day. The Egypt of the Old Kingdom pharaohs was absolutely exceptional for the prosperity, stability and good social order that it maintained over many centuries. In the context of this remarkable early society, the essence of man, to stand and signify heaven, and the dual essence of man's first tool, to 'point' and to bring nothingness to things at its edge,

found supreme expression in what could be described as history's most monumental and wondrous human achievement, the building of the pyramids at Giza. In the pyramids, the hand-axe in its ontological essence was sanctified.

Construction in stone was a new and exciting way of building for the Egyptians. Indeed, the pharaoh Zoser's 'step' pyramid at Saqqara, built only some years before those at Giza, was the first stone structure in the world. Clearly, this breakthrough of building technique was partly related to advances in making edged tools with sufficient strength and hardness that allowed stone to be divided and formed into manageable blocks. The pointed and edged tools and weapons of this time and place were made not in stone but in copper and the copper tool that most resembled its 'discarded and forgotten' stone predecessor was the hand-held chisel, hammered with a sledge made of wood or stone. It was with thousands upon thousands of these chisels that solid rock was precisely divided and shaped into the millions of ponderous, rectangular blocks that were used to build the pyramids. The edges of these new metal chisels injected the solid bedrock of the Giza plateau with the distinctively human-intentional presence of 'nothing' at the point of their edge - dividing it into countless, precise sections that were methodically ordered and set in place according to the plan of the mammoth structure. The copper edges dulled quickly against the rock and there was an entire army of men responsible for heating, repointing, tempering and honing the tools before they were returned to the quarrymen for another round of

relentless pounding. The work was dangerous and exhausting but it was not done by slaves. It was performed by free men with a common idea and purpose.

The pyramids were the product of a collective longing for Being that reached near obsessive proportions. The builders were clearly driven by the belief that their pyramid, if done properly and well, if gotten 'right', would offer a chance for man, in the person of the pharaoh but including all his faithful subjects, to unite with Being and that this uniting would initiate a genuine transformation of the earthly world. The process of construction was driven at every step by the profound belief that the world of man and things cannot be the same once a man has truly and perfectly been welcomed to the world of ideas. The pharaoh, already uniquely aligned with the vertical dimension as 'ruler' in a political sense and already a God on earth in a religious one, was simply understood to offer the best chance for success in this other-worldly, worldly endeavor…. the most likely offering to be welcomed and accepted 'on high'. So the pyramids were not built as 'one man's tomb'. Rather, they were understood as the CHANCE of an entire civilization to achieve world-transforming presence to the divine, in short, to reach heaven.

There is perhaps nothing in history that could match the dynamic grandeur of these gold-tipped monoliths when seen by contemporaries. At the building-site of the pyramids, the Egyptians dared to imagine and project the real possibility that the essential human longing for Being might finally be fulfilled. With this religious idea, the Christian sacrifice was presaged more than two millennia

before Christ walked the earth. The effort to construct a building that could ensure the safe delivery of the God-man pharaoh vertically to the realm of ideas was an effort to reach the heaven of Being (and thus to transform the world) by sheer leverage, brute force and massive determination. Only in the perspective of the 4500 years of history since then can we see and say that the offering of living flesh and word that constituted Christ's life was more perfect and the results to the world more promising than the stone monument, however magnificent, and the corpse of the pharaoh, however well preserved and richly appointed. Only in this sense and from this retrospective view, can we say that the pyramids were a failure in what they clearly attempted to do. Indeed, compared to the Christian tradition, they have no successors. And yet, what a magnificent and awe-inspiring failure they were!

4 - The Significance of Language

The hand-axe and the index-finger are structurally inherent to the millennia-long, prelingual awakening of man to his essence as a signifier. The limitations of each are obvious. But in no way should these limitations, long surpassed, allow us to underestimate the wealth of significance that inheres to these primitive, original structures. Rather, it's precisely in the quiet simplicity of their profound limitations that they become 'perfect examples' from which equally profound significance can be brought forth.

Unlike the hand-axe in stone that has left a time-line of its appearance, its period of use, and disappearance, there is no way for us to know at what point on this line or in what context or circumstances man began the act of prelingual pointing, that is to say, the point at which the world of things began. But we can 'assume' and we are aided in our assumptions by the fact that the very structure that we seek, along with its function, remains intact. The essential significance of the prelingual pointing with the index-finger that initiated the world is easily accessible because it remains a part of us, a part of the daily experience of nearly every living person. The laboratory for the methodical inquiry into matters of essence is large indeed. The object of study in this case is as close as the hand that writes these words, as near as the memory of pointing today when I was asked for directions on the street or later, in which cupboard I had

put the wine. Only, by discipline, we must not allow the sophistication of our thought to overwhelm the simplicity of the subject. Thinking more of its bright self than of its humble object, thought naturally flees from essence. So, at the risk of seeming simple-minded, we briefly though necessarily must take a step back from long-acquired lingual intelligence and imagine the very first, inarticulate efforts at establishing the being of things by pointing to them. This step backwards, though necessary and essential, will be brief. What interests us here is the lingual phenomenon itself and we will refer to its precursor only to provide a background against which the strange genius of human language can stand in contrast.

Pointing with the index finger is the first moment of the world… a world necessarily shared with others for the benefit of whom the thing or the way is pointed out. There is no possibility of a solipsistic world since pointing is essentially an intersubjective act. As the first moment of 'presence' of man to the world and others, pointing with the finger is the first moment of time. The fact that this first 'moment' had a torturous and halting span of 3 million years, that its details and circumstances will forever be vague to us, should not prejudice us against the possibility of achieving concise and certain knowledge about the beginning and thus the essence of the world in which we currently live. It is, after all, not another world that began at that original moment but this very same one and with the same essential structure. In its essence, the World, like Being itself, MUST be only one. Though we can imagine and construct a world 'before' the present world was initiated or imagine

'another world' of intelligent life on a distant planet, these constructions, however rich and scientifically well-ordered, will mislead us if they forget their own world-constructing essence as a pointing to things 'before' or fantastically 'distant'. There can be neither 'before' nor 'beyond' the acts of pre-lingual and lingual pointing that initiated the world. There can be only one World, initiated by pointing, and this assertion will hold true in its essence even if we learn someday that this one, 'our' world indeed began in another context, on another planet, initiated by different means than a finger and a word. The details are not important. Important is the essence and structural significance of the World that is born in the act of pre-lingual pointing.

By this elemental act, the world of objects was initiated when man, drawn anxiously and precariously upright, found himself at a distance from things with which he had been hitherto in a simple and seamless contiguity. This immediacy and continuity of life we can assume to be the worldless 'experience' of the sentient animal. The animal is simply identical with its environment, both internal and external, because it is completely at home there and has no need to be otherwise. The mouse 'exists' for the cat and vice versa not as a 'thing' in its 'world' but seamlessly, as part of itself. That is to say, it does not exist at all. Bestial consciousness is 100% 'narcissistic', i.e., unable to remove its SELF from the flow of its genetic and sentient predispositions. Because of our close kinship and affection for animals, we easily succumb to the use of the language of Being with respect to animal behavior, as if

the two-eyed, walking, grasping, scratching, sniffing, suffering, chewing creature possessed some interiority like our own. But no, this is our compassion. The animal has no need nor any wish to stand apart from things and live in a world of objects and others. It is entirely and naturally content in its wonderful sentient self. The anxious, unnatural situation in which man stands upright, above and apart from things, in need of a world in which to live, is completely alien and unnecessary to the self-enclosed, self-contented animal.

Mute pointing divides a 'thing' from the pervasive field of sentient experience by drawing a horizontal line precisely between my body and the thing. Pointing is a cutting, dividing. The pre-cise line is like a knife's edge that injects nothing into the field of experience so that the thing is 'carved out' from it. The line of pointing mutely says… "**Not** there and **not** there, but precisely **this, there**!" The thing pointed to, **this** thing, like all things then and now, and like man himself, obtains its being as 'a place where something and nothing meet'. This thing, like all things, derives its being from human being. The power of pointing to make a world of things is the ontological transposition of the power that man discovered in the use of his first tool - the power of nothing that exists at the edge (and in the line) to carve (delineate) things from sentient ubiquity. The precise line of pointing, like the edge of the hand-axe, surrounds the thing with nothing, allowing it to be. By pointing, upright man acts in the horizontal dimension as he exists in the vertical one, as a reference to Being.

Just as the use of the hand-axe is a crude and primitive beginning to the history of man as a tool-maker, so is pre-lingual pointing a poor and primitive mode of signifying. And yet only in such simple beginnings can the eventual genius of man as consummate builder and poet be truly and essentially ascertained. While pointing already requires the distance from immediate experience that sets upright man apart from his animal kin, nevertheless it remains bound by the presence of its object before it. It requires that the object be within sight. The advent of language, the first spoken word, occurs when the object that had been present is lost, is not there, not in sight. In its absence, pointing breaks down and from this disarray, the object is called - called back into being. In this calling, the lost thing receives its name and its being as an 'idea'. Thus, on loss, absence and a more or less desperate calling, is the world of human language strangely founded.

The world-creating sound of this call - language - is the sound of Being. And man, thus calling, becomes a 'per-sonus', a 'sounding through' of Being in the world. The game that is spotted in the bush or on the plain can be adequately referred to by pointing. And if the hunters are skillful and quick, their pointing will turn lethal and everyone will eat. But when the game escapes or cannot be found at all it needs a name to call it. At that moment of calling, the lost thing is replaced with an idea and the particular specimen that had been present in sight is understood in its 'ideal' essence. Well, while you can't eat ideas, they nevertheless may be sustaining to the animal who lives by the logic of Being - perhaps even moreso

than a certain successful kill. By calling the elusive animal, naming it, drawing an artistic likeness of it on the wall of a cave, holding it in his mind and thinking its thought, man becomes the master of it in its essence and it becomes an immutable part of the world. In this calling, naming, drawing, understanding, thinking, the thing obtains its being - its unique place in the world and its unique connection, through upright man, to Being itself 'on high'. Upright man's unique, essential and original sense of Being, his physical, postural essence as Being-signified, his profound and constant longing for Being, gives him the power to bestow being on things by naming them and lays the foundation for his decisive mastery of the world.

According to the dynamic of world-creating language, the lost thing, being called, derives its being not from the mute frame of nothing that carves it out from the field of proximate experience, as by pointing, but rather, from not being there at all. The force of its being-held-in-mind as an idea is equivalent to the force and extent of its absence. The urge and the power to utter its name or render it artistically is drawn from the clearing of it, the painful absence of it, the empty space where it once was. The name called fills this emptiness with the worldly presence of the thing now as a potential, a possibility for being which transcends the obdurate or capricious nature of the thing in sentient experience. 'Holding things in mind' by naming them, man was able to create a world that was truly his - a world in which things took on an immutable stability along with indefinite potential and possibility. The world of ideas, of language, art and

culture, born of the violent and painful force of non-being, transcendent, frees itself from the limitations of sentient experience for the infinite possibilities of Being. The world of language and ideas, man's world, is a world of possibilities in which things are not simply there, but alive with Being. The world is alive with Being.

Of course, it wasn't long before not only those things lost, but all things were named, held in mind, understood in their ideas and thus made simultaneously both 'virtual' and 'real' as possessing the potentiality of worldly being. Rather strangely, even perversely, the being of a thing in the human world required that it be regarded precisely **as** absent, as dwelling first **above**, in the realm of ideas, and only then, by virtue of understanding, **there, here** as a thing in the world. Further, as the names of things proliferated, language was required to comprehend the nuances, actions and interactions of things as well as their relatively static, nominal 'being'. Thus developed the need for verbs, adjectival and adverbial expressions and well as nominal ones. With the transcendent genius of language at work to make a human world, more and more things with their events, patterns and structures… ideas, were 'held in mind' by man and so his brain naturally grew to outsize proportions. At the same time, the power of mute pointing receded and, like the hand-axe, it is present to us today as a mere vestige, useful in only the most trivial circumstances of signifying… to point out directions or the location of something close at hand. Although today we live in a world that is thoroughly human, a world of culture, language, science and art that

is everywhere alive with being, yet these vestiges remind us of its simple origin and essence.

Inherent to the structure of the simple act of pointing and the world of language that proceeded from it are the most essential elements of the world of human experience that are familiar to us. The advent of language initiates time and the dynamic of subjectivity and objectivity that becomes the world of knowledge and action. It creates the possibility of interiority that forms the mind and eventual psyche of man. And it requires intersubjectivity, the presence of others, male and female. Chronos, Episteme, Psyche and Eros are born at once in this primordial, world-creating act. Little wonder that it took 3 million years to accomplish it.

The world begins with the calling, naming of things which imparts to them their being, their place and purpose. The purpose of a thing is to represent an idea which it signifies, glorifies, longs to be but cannot be, except in an imperfect, temporary, small and worldly way. And yet there is a calling and a naming that precedes this world-creating one… the calling and naming of others. It's even easy to imagine the first occasion when a name was bestowed upon a person, not solemnly at birth as soon became the custom that holds today, but in desperation, when a member of the group had gone missing. Just as objects are called from their absence, the one missing needed a name, unique to him or her, with which to be called back into the safety and well-being of the fold. In such original situations, and out of such need, humans were first called by name and given names. The

world began in a social context and the distinct calling of others was the first rite of social inclusion.

Paradoxically, calling the other by name imparts identity and uniqueness to the person, precisely sets him or her apart from the group, while purposefully and dearly including them. Likewise, it allowed for the horrible, punishing possibilities of exclusion. The identifying character of this distinct naming is akin to that which imparts being to a thing by pointing or linguistic naming and yet it is entirely different as its 'object', no thing, is different. Other human beings are not things, not objects at all and are named out of respect, care, admiration and love. Unlike the naming of things, to name another implies and imparts no mastery over him or her. Like me, like us, others hold the world-creating power of pointing, naming, calling things into being and the power to name and call, include or disclude me, us. Others, like me, like us, also upright and thus signifying Being, are the very presence of Being in the world. To stand in the presence of others is to understand Being, or at least to have this possibility. Thus this presence is sacred and rightfully deserves to be held in unfailing respect. And yet we are all familiar with and sometimes guilty of the vindictive and disrespectful perversion of the power of language when it takes the form of 'name-calling' and 'pointing the finger' at others to define them as mere things. Man is fundamentally a moral creature who creates the world in a social context and such perversion of the purpose and significance of language is a shame upon his essence and anathema to Being.

5 - The Birth of the Person

The fact that the biblical authors conceived of man as having been fashioned from earth bears testimony first of all to the fact that these authors were, by gender, men. Loathe they are, the proud male of the species, to admit that they have been born into the world from female patience, care and suffering, from the warm fluid of the mother's body. The process of evolution itself is a long, moist and infinitely patient one that more closely adheres to the female principle than the male one. If indeed it's true to say that man was fashioned from earth, it must be with Mother Earth that God the Father made him. To leave 'her' out of the story in her original maternal role while including her as an afterthought, taken, with no sense of irony, from man's body and assigned the subservient role of companion and helper, betrays a prejudice toward the clear linearity of the male and a certain discomfort with the circumspective, nuanced curvilinearity of the female. Of course, this prejudice is well corrected in the New Testament story of Christ's conception and birth and in the honor of supreme sainthood that's paid to Mary, His mother, in the Christian tradition. Nevertheless, the discomfort of the authors of Genesis with the originating, creative power of the feminine echoes through history and exerts a distorting and problematic force, not only in the Christian tradition, but in nearly every human culture.

Constrained by language, we have used the inadequate, singular, gender-specific term 'Man' to refer to the human species as we thusfar have followed the logic of its transition from evolution to history. The inadequacy of the term is obvious in that it would seem to exclude or at best include only by implication, the female half of the human race. Apart from this glaring lack, by what virtue does this simple, 3-letter word apply to its object in a way that the more gentle, complex and inclusive formulations, like the species-specific 'humankind', the abstract 'humanity' or the plural 'men and women', would not? Accepting and even apologizing for its evident lacks, the clear, resonant virtue of this term is its simple singularity, its name-like quality. 'Man' in his essence, like the world which he calls into being, like Being itself, is One and should best be called by one, singular, resonant, concrete name. And so 'Man' is not said here as an abstract, descriptive term, but as the name by which the human, the complex plurality of womankind and mankind, can be addressed. What we seek in saying it is not conceptual, terminological specificity as much as the sound, the name by which human being is called.

Imperfect though our language is, what's essential to understand is that man is born and raised into a world of others - a family, clan, tribe, nation - that is comprised more or less equally of male and female members. The human world is essentially both sexual and sexually-charged as males and females respond to the compelling, procreative need to find one another, unite and make a home and family for the continuance of the species.

Men and women of humankind, fathered by men and born of woman, obtain their identities as unique individuals, their names, in the social context of parents, family, friends and community. Each man and each woman, since the first, ancestral calling of the world into being, begins life with a distinctive name by which he or she can be called. A nameless human being is inconceivable. If one is found, a feral child for example, a name will be decided, bestowed and certified with all due haste so that that person, with the rest of us, can be called. Beginning with the hallowed rite of naming, the human person is born and at the same time called into the world. This first, distinctive and yet inclusive calling is essential to the person, the first, greatest and simplest gift that a parent, in the context of the greater community, will bestow. And of course, this gift of naming is not complete with the issuance of a birth-certificate or whatever record or recognition of the name is culturally accepted. Answering the call of one's given name is life-long. The young child will feel cherished and respected as it gradually learns to recognize and respond to the unique sound of this call. The teenager will tremble and flush at the sound of his name when it's read from a list of those who were caught cheating. The young adult ardently strives to make a respected name for himself in his chosen field of work. And the older person grows acutely aware of the sum of his life's account as if it were written in the most precise yet merciful terms somewhere next to his name in a heavenly ledger.

The paradoxically inclusive yet exclusive parental-societal act of naming lays the foundation for the person

by conferring upon him or her the inviolable, inalienable **right** of personhood. Upon this foundation, he or she will claim and take a place in the world that is theirs alone, upon which a unique identity can be built. The name grants the person the right to their own domain, an 'inner world' of mind and psyche over which he or she must be the sole and absolute ruler. Naming grants a right like a deed to a piece of ontological real estate that will be the unique 'standpoint' of the person throughout life. However successful or unsuccessful they may prove themselves to be by horizontal, worldly measures, whatever their relative ability to command others, to trade, work, own, love and prosper in the world, yet the original and essential value of this rightful bequest can only be measured vertically, that is to say, not measured in worldly terms at all. First and finally, in the vertical dimension, it is understood that the right granted by naming to the unborn peasant and the unborn Czar are the same. Their names are their sacred claim to human being, to the power of speech, to the power of under-standing Being that is the right and wealth of each man.

The all important word 'right', which in its most fundamental sense refers simply to 'true vertical', nonetheless contains a dual meaning from which we can elucidate the physio-ontological circumstances of the person who finds himself born and living in a world of both vertical and horizontal dimensions. This word is incomparably rich in meaning because it pertains exactly to the very essence of man, uprightness, while also, in its secondary, derivative meanings, referring to much of what comes to form the 'inner world' and psyche, the

personality of the person in the horizontal, historical world. Let's begin with the vertical since that is the dimension that man 'as man', the signifier of Being, primarily and essentially inhabits.

What is 'right' points, like man himself, to Being, to ideas of being, rightly under-stood. What is right is correct, just, well-balanced, like man himself, neither biased one way nor the other, but just right. Rightness comes as naturally to man as breathing. Man constantly seeks the 'right' in all things. To get a graphic feel for the original, compelling sense of the term, simply stand up. Naturally, you know what is right. It's not easy to do it, but try to incline yourself just a few degrees in any direction and immediately you know that something is wrong and you naturally return to the exact and precise verticality of uprightness. If you stray too far from the true vertical, you will need to take a step to catch yourself or else you will fall. Only right is comfortable for man, physically as ontologically. It's an amazing, implausible physical power that we possess, to stand as we humans do. It almost seems as if we float, defying the forces of gravity. It seems that there must be some vertical force as well holding this 180 lbs. of matter in alignment, drawn out as it is over nearly 2 meters, precariously poised on just a few square centimeters of skin and bone at the sole of the foot; moving even… fluidly, rapidly, walking, running, dancing, but never losing its innate discernment of right.

Then, from this intrinsic and singular, vertical sense of Right, derive the many meanings of the term as they are applied to human affairs in history, in the horizontal,

worldly dimension. In the worldly way, the 'rights' of the peasant and the Czar will indeed be vastly different. The deed in my hand gives me the right to my land and house, the duly-signed title, the right to my car. I have a right to my possessions unless I am a slave or serf in which case someone else can claim to hold the right to me. The ever-changing legal codes of every community, state and nation meticulously define and parse the rights of their citizens. The registrars, bureaucracies and courts of the world are filled with papers that seek to declare, ascertain and sort the rights of human beings. And so also each person has the right to privacy and to their personal time and space. Unless they are a prisoner who has been forced to give up most rights and always within the limits of necessary work and duty, a person can decided how and with whom and in what places and circumstances to spend their time.

The rights of the person to privacy, possessions, personal time and space are 'inherent' to him since, as the word suggests, they pertain to uprightness, his very essence. That is to say, they comprise those things in the vast world that are not only close at his hand but that 'inhere' to his very being. And it's the sum of these simple, everyday things that constitute in large part what we call the 'inner world' of the person. 'Inner' because they inhere… not because they exist spatially 'inside' him somehow, but because they belong to him **by right**. The 'inner world' of the person is indeed a part of the One world, shared by all. It is simply that part which is inherently, by right, his own.

How easy it is amidst the clamor of dispute and the imponderable weight of law to forget the simple essence and origin of human rights. But simply, ontologically, this vast array of 'rights' of the person, whether legally defined or simply understood in the common sense, are predicated upon his being originally and essentially **Right** as a named human being, as an upright signifier of Being. The act of naming identifies the person not nominatively as a thing in the world, but verbally as alive with Being - signifying, saying, sounding, singing Being. The power and presence of Being will be heard in the ringing coherence of his speech and recognized in the distant penetration of his gaze. The presence of man to Being and of Being to the world through man forms the very core of the person and so also the core of 'personality', the inner world or psyche. This original and essential presence, this 'sounding through' of Being in the world occurs by virtue and in terms of physio-ontological Rightness. Rightness is the call of Being that each person hears in the sound of his name, a call that is uniquely answered in true words and just deeds as well as in dissolution, confusion and failure. Rightness is the very essence of the person, the condition for the possibility of speech and action, that to which every word ultimately refers and every deed aspires. Rightness is the hallowed center of personal life, the soul. As thus central and essential, Rightness with Being inheres so forcefully to the person that his closely guarded personal possessions and 'rights' seem extraneous and unnecessary in comparison. While rights and possessions will be acquired and lost in the play of life, the named person's

Rightness with Being is originally, essentially, constantly and only his own.

While Rightness is the most inherent possibility to the person and therefore forms the living core of his unique self, his soul, we have also identified those things that inhere to him 'by right' as constituting in large part the everyday human experience of self... self-consciousness. To understand things in the world as 'mine' is a strong pillar of the strength of 'mind'. My things, my rights, declared and undeclared, my people, family and friends, inhere to me uniquely and thus contribute to the formation of my inner sense of self, my psyche or personality. A person feels 'most himself' at home, surrounded by those things and others that inhere most closely to him. In familiar surroundings a person can rest, free of the challenges and claims that natural forces and other people inevitably make upon his time, space and possessions. Although there are innumerable variations on the theme, from grand estates to desert yurts, from high-rise flats to caves to cardboard boxes, and including even the possibility of life 'on the road' living on the good graces of strangers-come-friends, a person needs a sense, at least a short list, of 'mine'.

Inherent also to the person is that which inheres by virtue of **identification**. What we speak of as 'personal identity' is constituted by the array of worldly things, qualities and states of being that the person accepts, whether by choice, assignment or force of nature, as his **own**. This field of inherences is made up of those assertive, objective terms which, in everyday speech, follow the subjectival phrase, "I am…". In this way, my

identity is constituted by the 'things' that I am… 'a carpenter', 'a Catholic', 'a homeowner', 'a teacher', 'a criminal', 'a philanthopist', 'an amateur photographer', 'a boy scout', 'a hockey fan', 'a doctor', 'a bum'. Although such positive expressions of 'identity' are ubiquitous in everyday thought and speech, they may also present an intractable obstacle to self-understanding when they come to overlay the central core of the person whose being is not defineable in any vocabulary of things.

In this way, the psyche or 'inner world' of the person is made of all that which inheres to the core of his being, his Rightness with Being. Beginning with his name, this includes those things that inhere by right of birth or by right acquired as well as by the status that is afforded through identifications, whether they be positive or problematic in nature. But not only 'by right' and in terms of 'identity' is the inner world of the person constituted. Inhering also to the person are his or her own body with its sensate conditions of pleasure, pain, fear and hunger, its sexual, genetic and instinctual determinations. As well must be included the conscious and subconscious memories of emotive experiences that have not been fully forgotten, the patterns of behavior that result from those forces of sensation, instinct, memory and emotion and the body of knowledge and patterns of thought that have been acquired by the person's education and experience in life. With this brief inventory of human experience we've nearly spanned the subject matter of the science of psychology which understands itself as the science of the person, of those developmental forces, cognitive capacities, emotional states and behavioral patterns that

form the personalities of men and women. Fear, pain, hunger, sexual desire, joy, guilt, anxiety, despair, conscious cognition and the subconscious awareness of dreams… all these states and qualities of experience inhere strongly to the embodied human being and thus inescapably inhering, come to form, along with the possessions and identifications that we have already mentioned, a large measure of what we refer to as the person's 'mind'. In this case, 'mine' not by right or status but because, being this named person and no other, I have no choice. With these states of mind and body I am largely 'stuck' and so strongly that they not only ad-here but 'in-here' to me and so come to form my self-awareness as precisely **here**, as an 'interiority' that is separate from the world 'outside' the boundaries of me. But in its essence, the perceived interiority of the person does not make as much a spatial designation as an ontological one. And this pure, ontological self-certainty with which Descartes famously awoke, the unqualified, subjective, 'I am!', depends not only on the cognitive self-awareness that he prized, 'I think…', but on all the senses of the body. Ontological awareness is available equally to all persons, not just those particularly thoughtful ones.

We learn in school that the human, like all land-dwelling mammals, possesses the 5 senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell that carry information about the world around, including internal bodily states, to the brain for processing. From this information, the creature is able to react or respond to its environment in an adaptive and beneficial way. While humans, with their outsized cerebrums, may have become a bit abstracted

and distracted from these elemental processes, 'lost in thought' so to speak, other members of the animal kingdom remain absolute geniuses when it comes to interpreting the cues and clues of temperature, light, sound, taste and scent for the purpose of keeping themselves alive or just making themselves comfortable. And yet there is one physical sense, not even normally included on the list, to which the human species has evolved to become utterly sensitive and in response to which he is the outright master - the sense of balance.

With only two relatively small 'soles' in contact with the ground, the human physique would be absurdly top-heavy were it not by virtue of the sense of balance with its ability to maintain the full, straight length of the body within a few degrees of perfect vertical. As well the human body retains a precise sense of the vertical even as it assumes a sitting, reclining or somersaulting spatial posture. Balance delivers verticality, defines the center of the body and thus becomes the 'rule' by which all physical movements derive their spatial, gravitational orientation. By virtue of the sense of balance, the vertical is kept constantly and firmly in mind and in this way, though it is vital in some form to all members of the animal kingdom, it is the essentially and perfectly human sense.

The sense of balance, the essentially human sense of Right, is the condition for the possibility of uprightness, the essence of man, and hence is the key that can unlock a good understanding of the person and the idea of man. The sense of balance is the physiological basis of the human sense of Being from which naturally flows the world of the person… the world of language and the

world of things. All things, all that is in the world and all that is human, derive their sense, their meaning and purpose in terms of balance. Balance, in its most accessible, simple, common sense, is the single, exquisite term in which the logical undertakings of physiology, jurisprudence, psychology and ontology are indistinguishable. All questions regarding man must root themselves first and finally in terms of balance, the sense of Right. In fact, all logic, regardless of its object, requires and aspires to this essential, primordial term. Since its one and only purpose is Being, it must be the one, primary, logical term of any inquiry or proposition. What conceivable logic does not aspire to Rightness? The physical sense of balance is the soul of the person and the sense of the world.

In this section, we have described the formation of the person beginning with the rite of naming which establishes him or her in soulful Rightness with Being. By his or her name the person is called into being, initiated and welcomed into the world of language, others, things and ideas. Then, from this primary and ownmost position, from this original Rightness, from this soulful core, the person develops a worldly 'mind' which is constituted by all that which, in its worldly account, 'inheres' to the soul, whether by legal or other right, by identification or simply in terms of the givens of destiny, the inescapabilities of body, mood, instinct, experience, memory and character. From these inherences by **right, identification** and **destiny** the everyday human experience of ego, the mind of the person, is formed.

Not surprisingly, given the fact that thought generally flees from essence, our prevailing 'scientific' ideas of the person are tenuously founded on variations in the vast field of extraneous inherences that constitute the 'mind' rather than on the soulful Rightness with Being, the power of speech, that lies at the core of being human. In this mode of inquiry, what is Right with the person is considered simply to be 'allright' and, thus taken for granted, does not attract particular scientific interest, concern or study. These ideas, conceived in flight from their object, generally become so voluminous and convoluted that the phenomenon of the person tends to be caste in a shade of complex, unknowable, 'psychological' obscurity that is far removed from anything essential. In the same way that western medical science is more comfortable describing the infinite complexities of disease than the simple wholeness of health, the sciences of man, eschewing essence, proceed on the premise that the person is solely constituted by the sum of those forces that inhere to him and bear on him. Thus, the human sciences have developed a vast catalogue of ideas of personal illness which, while oblivious to the essence of man, nevertheless provide necessary and useful guideposts on the path of healing when things 'go seriously wrong' with the person. In fact, these complex renderings of human personality may indeed faithfully reflect the normal, worldly condition of man as he lives for the most part in what we are calling the horizontal, worldly dimension. In this dimension, the paths of life can indeed become easily twisted upon themselves in vicious circles such that the person becomes lost to

himself and in conflict with others. In this condition of loss and strife, the everyday, ontological sense of balance, 'allrightness', drifts away and the person finds himself in confusion as to Rightness, lost on twisted, conflicting, worldly paths, perhaps overladen with rights and possessions that he must hold and defend, obsessively pursuing a career as a banner of identity or troubled with inherences of mind - desires, fears, memories - that cannot be reconciled or forgotten. In this wrongful condition, the person needs help to restore the vertical sense of balance that imparts the ordinary possibility of Rightness with Being - allrightness. While it's to the legal profession that we turn for help in sorting the inherent rights of a person, to find agreement, reduce conflict and restore rightness to a given situation, the psychologist is there to help us identify, understand and manage these even more closely inherent and troublesome complexities and imbalances of personality that arise from constitutional deficiencies, traumatic experiences, developmental crises, difficult relationships, addiction and a host of other causes and influences.

Adopting as it does the logic of natural science, the science of psychology tends to reckon both the problems and the cures of the person in terms of things and the forces that move them in patterns of action and reaction. Surely, this kind of logic, when carefully conceived and skillfully applied, may be useful in unravelling the tangle of worldly inherences that can confuse, afflict and burden a person. And yet, to the extent that there can be a cure of personal illness in the context of the therapeutic application of this psycho-logic, this cure is constituted

precisely by an abandonment and divestiture of these very 'things' that inhere with such tenacity and seeming importance to the soul. In the healthful context of psychotherapy, memories are forgotten, obsessions are abandoned, guilt is dissolved, compulsions are given up, addictions are broken, crimes are forgiven, status is devalued and the assertion of rights is relaxed. The process of therapeutic cure is a 'mystery' to scientific psychology, meaning simply, in scientific terms, that it is a phenomenon requiring more study, compiling of evidence and refinement of theory. And yet, these very terms are hopelessly misapplied to the 'object', no object at all, that they would seek to comprehend, the human person. Insofar as the work of therapy is conceived in these terms, the advance of the distressed person, with the help of the therapist, to healthful 'allrightness' may be accomplished more 'in spite' of the therapist's core scientific ideas than because of them. Hence the 'mystery', at least to the scientific mind, of the cure. In a new state of health, the person will declare, "How could these things, these wrong ideas, have held me so tightly in their grip? How could I have believed them? They may be mine, but I am none of them." And we would ask here, how can a logic that recognizes only the push and pull of things in the world and insists on mere evidence as a basis for its ideas possibly understand the person, precisely No-thing, standing as he does in Rightness with Being… as the edge, the action and the sound of Being in the world, the condition for the possibility of there being things in the world at all? Such logic, that would pertain itself only to the thing-like inherences of personality

while ignoring the essence, the core of Rightness to which these 'things' and 'states' and 'rights' inhere, however well-intended and marginally effective in its therapeutic application, is doomed to muddled inadequacy.

6 - The Possibility of Knowing

Asserting that the person can neither be adequately understood nor therapeutically healed strictly in terms of psycho-logics that follow the 'objective' methods of the natural sciences challenges us to layout more clearly the alternative. If not by the scientific method, what sort of logic is it that is required to gain a good understanding of the human person and that has some hope of imparting in a therapeutic setting, the healing balm of self-understanding to the troubled, confused and overladen person? To pose this question in a broader, epistemological context - What kind of reliable certainty can be ascribed to any proposition that cannot be objectively verified through rigorous, controlled methods of testing? Among the various hypotheses that might be proposed to account for a given phenomenon, isn't it always necessary to compile and compare evidential data to determine which is the 'right' one? And isn't the mathematics that underpins all of these conceptual operations, laying out the relationships that determine the essential structure of things, from simple carpentry to the proverbial rocket science - isn't that mathematics, as the guarantor of such rightness, the true and purest language of logic? To the extent that anything in the world remains in question, outside of such knowledge, isn't that only because it is waiting its turn to be added to the ever-expanding compendium?

All these 'leading questions' can be resolved into one that is so often put in a contest of thought between 'science' and 'religion' that it has come to sound trite. But it's that contest that is trite, not the question itself. We ask it here toward a profound understanding of the method and the logic that we employ in this work which seeks a good and hence a true and certain idea of man that is far from the certainty of mathematics. The question is this - Is there anything in the world of things that science cannot comprehend - that is unknowable not due to the insurmountable difficulties that supremely complex systems might present, but inherently and essentially impenetrable to any conceivable mathematical analysis? We'll have our answer by looking at the logic of mathematics itself.

The genius of mathematics is its power to clearly and precisely set forth the relations of things in time and space - the angles and forces that unite and order separate things. And the inherent limit of this logic is its need for multiplicity to apply itself. There can be no mathematical understanding of a singularity. ONE is anathema to quantitative logic and this logic must fall speechless in the face of it. Mathematics points to the structure, action and interaction of things, but never to the things themselves, that is to say, as they are named, in the singularity of their being. Mathematical logic, the logic of science and engineering, as powerful, useful and effective a tool of thought as it is, nevertheless flees from the things themselves because it cannot reckon with the identity, simplicity and individuality of ONE. Thus it is a relational logic rather than an essential one and thus as

well, it yields a relational understanding of things while it cannot, by definition, formulate an essential one.

Mathematics needs at least two to get started. In the face of one, it has not the slightest idea. Let's take an example to show the difference between the certainty of the relational knowledge that is afforded by natural science and the certainty of knowledge that characterizes the understanding of the human person and the essence of things in the world.

The key-wound clock that ticks the time on the wall above my head is a complex array of gears, springs, 'escapes', spindles, hammers and chimes arranged in a marvelous, mathematical precision so that the hands on its face will accurately tell the time of a 24-hour day in two 12-hour cycles. Each of the dozens of gears that it takes to accomplish the precise rate of turning of the two hands must be cut to the exact diameter and with the correct number of teeth to turn at its prescribed rate in relation to its mating gears of different sizes. The minute motive force required to set the gears turning is provided by my hand via the spring-winding and regulated by the pendulum connected to the delicate 'escape' mechanism. All the ratios of the gears and the means of delivery of force that are necessary to produce the desired result of 'time-telling' must be mathematically formulated before the clock can come into existence, that is, before it can be called a clock. A similar, failed effort by the clock-maker who has not applied his mathematics correctly will be called a piece of junk. So there certainly is a sense in which the mathematics of a thing, the orderly relations of its parts, is essential to it, necessary for its being called,

that is, for its being. It's the genius of science and its mathematical logic to clearly set forth the static and dynamic relationships by which 'parts' form and create 'wholes' that are imbued with the dignity of 'things', that is, that are worthy to be called - 'clocks', 'automobiles', 'diamonds', 'street-lights', 'protons', 'cabinets', 'solar-flares', 'spleens', 'shoes', 'zinc', 'Jupiter', 'birch-trees', … 'junk'. All the material things in the wide world , including the organs and systems of the human body, can be understood in terms of this most useful and effective paradigm of thought as it proceeds either constructively or destructively toward its understanding of things. Constructively, it determines what is required to bring a certain idea, design or effect into being as in the above example of the clock. On the other hand, its approach to given, naturally occuring things, for example, birch-trees, Jupiter or the human body, is in the manner of an intelligent and careful *de*struction of the thing into its component parts and systems.

Strictly according to this paradigm, the clock in the example above exists not as one thing but many, even an infinite number of things, if the metal of the gears were to be assayed to its metallurgical elements with certain molecular properties, atomic and sub-atomic structures. In this paradigm, nothing in the world escapes this division and reduction. Nor can it escape the multiplication that regards any thing as one to be compared among the many as in a statistical analysis, for example. Strictly according to this paradigm, nothing in the world is granted a right to exist as its one, whole and unique self, the ideational identity that naming originally

conferred upon it… 'clock', since all things, according to this logic, MUST be divided and multiplied. Things, so conceived, tend to be deprived of peace and place and the dignity of being themselves. Is it any wonder that the world which progresses under the predominance of this way of thinking becomes progressively a world of junk... a whirl of parts seeking and finding a brief moment of useful cohesion on their way to the landfill.

As a critique of the methods of knowing things that natural science offers us, we simply want to show the inherent limits of this method and the knowledge that it affords us. Crossing a shuddering suspension bridge on a very windy day, of course we want to believe that the designing engineers spent more time working out the mathematics of the stresses that wind might place upon the span than reflecting on the idea of a 'bridge' as it might occur to intelligent, social, far-seeing, land-dwelling mammals living on opposite sides of a waterway. For the bridge to be worthy of the name, it needs to have been properly, mathematically conceived, but for it to exist at all, it needs to have derived its being from a naming, an idea that is substantially prior to any effort of design or construction. In that one, substantive, certain idea, is the significance and the being of any possible bridge and the one key to a good understanding of what a 'bridge', essentially, is.

Bridges, clocks and birch-trees will be known in their essence not by taking them apart but by understanding their significance, that is, by looking to that to which they point, the idea that confers upon them the dignity of being. It's not by the scientific method that such

knowledge is possible since the idea of a clock, that which gives sense and meaning to any possible clock, its being, tends toward identity and singularity and the impenetrability of absence. Absence? As we recall, ideas, the calling and naming of things, are born in the absence of things. Thus born, ideas are absent from things, 'on high', and therefore confoundingly inaccessible to science and its demand for evidence of the sort that it can put its hands or eyes on.

And it's not only the scientific mind that is confounded by the absence of ideas to things. Generally and constantly does the idea of a thing, its being, hold itself away and out of reach of knowledge. Occasionally, the rare genius of the artist or poet will evoke the idea of a thing with an adequate though relatively opaque understanding of its being, its true and original essence. But for the most part, things are poorly and vaguely understood - either taken for granted in their obvious utility or multiplied and divided in the comparative and analytic terms of science.

7 - Thinking and Knowing

By what method, then, is there the hope of achieving true and certain understanding of the essence of a thing, true knowledge of its singular idea, the reason of its being? The method can best be called thinking. 'Thinking'. Is this the same 'thinking' that we've said naturally flees from essence, having neither time nor interest in the simple singularity of things, ever busy, ever ready to multiply and divide things, ever in search of new things and new ideas to think? Certainly, for the most part, thinking, even the serious thinking of the academic disciplines, is indeed conducted in a more or less busy, 'unthinking' way. The activity of thinking defines man as Homo sapiens and so a good understanding of the idea of man requires a good understanding of thinking. In this unique case, the method and the object of knowledge are one and the same. So, with the dual purpose of laying out the method of thinking, our method, and discovering its essence, let's take the path of thinking to find out what thinking is.

The path of knowing called thinking leads first of all *back* to the origin of the thing, the phenomenon of interest, at the first moment of its appearance, when it first came into being. So, with the goal in mind of understanding the essence of thinking, we need to find thinking at its original moment, that is, we need to re-call the original instance of thinking. So, already - What is thinking? Thinking is first of all a re-calling, a re-

spectful, re-flective return to the idea of the thing as it was originally called into being. Where language and art are a calling of the absent thing into being as an idea, thinking *re*-calls the idea of the thing for the purpose of understanding and articulating the rightful reason of its being what it is. The essence of thinking is to understand the essence of things as they are originally called and conceived into being - their idea. In short, thinking thinks profoundly, to their origin and essence, the ideas that we call 'things'.

Due to this initial 'backward' motion that characterizes the direction of thinking, the activity of thinking is generally associated with solitary, sedentary idleness, an activity hardly worthy of the name compared to the progress of knowledge that is possible when thought proceeds in a relatively 'unthinking' scientific, progressive and productive way. Why waste time with thinking when there are so many pressing matters and questions that, in the same time, could be conclusively resolved? As opposed to thinking, it is generally understood that progress is only to be achieved in terms of the relational logics that are employed in the natural sciences, in engineering, in the political and legal parsing of human rights and territories, in the constructions of predictive economic and historical models, in the conduct of biological and psychological research. All such efforts of thought together constitute the engine of human order, of human progress, the extension and consolidation by the use of reason of man's dominance over all parts and aspects of the world. Progressively in terms of this order, progressively thinking in this unthinking way, modern

man, the man of science, makes himself at home as master of the world. Thoughtlessly taking for granted the unique origin and purpose, the *idea* that language solemnly confers upon things in naming them, this distorted view forces all things to yield the singularity, integrity and dignity of their being, their essence, to the logic of numbers. To the blind eyes of science it is not the destiny of a thing **to be**- to aspire to the idea, the name and the reason by which it is called into being, but 'to be' comparitively more or less, 'to be' disassembled, reduced and analyzed, 'to be' ordered, counted, mastered and controlled. Toward an understanding of what thinking is, it helps to understand that the logic of science, for all its undisputed power and efficacy, is NOT thinking.

Thinking returns to the origin of the thing the way a man seeking to live in a dry land follows a trace of moisture to the head of a tiny spring in the hope that removing some difficult, obstructing rock or clay might open the source and yield a copious, life-giving, life-changing, fertilizing, town-building flow. Progress indeed - the very pre-condition of it. Thinking seeks the Being that things, albeit in trace amounts, reveal. Simply, thinking longs to understand *Being*, that ONE thing which must be inherent to ALL things, the heart and soul of things. How even simple-minded it sounds to say that all things must possess Being, that a thing without the 'given' of its being is impossible to conceive. Where in the world can be found that thing which has no being, which does not exist? Thinking simply wants to do what comes as naturally to upright man as breathing comes to any animal, to under-stand Being by under-standing,

calling and re-calling, the ideas that reflect and reveal Being as ONE, ever- and omni-present in the being of things.

Precisely by virtue of the *oneness* that it imparts to things, Being, the very essence of things, is off-limits to scientific thinking, even as it must be the central property of any possible object of scientific investigation. *One* is an impossible number for science and at core, this is the limit of the functional reasoning that science brings to the world of things, the inherent limit of its mastery and dominance. The 'objective' logic of science has proven itself to be a marvelously useful and productive tool of thinking. But, contrary to common belief, because of its unique and obstinate blindness to Being, the future does not belong to science. What is only a tool of thinking, however useful, must be superceded by thinking itself. For all its bright efficacy and power, for all the strength of its unquestionable proofs, for all its impressive mastery of the world, or more likely precisely *because* of these positive qualities, the obdurate, proud logic of science progressively accretes like rock and clay at the springhead of Being, closing off the flow of meaning and reason that the rational animal needs to thrive.

The mute simplicity of Being, the 'given' of things, is simply 'taken for granted' by science as it is in the predominant, objective modes of thought that characterize the busy, everyday life of Homo sapiens. And especially modern man, believing as he does unequivocally in the good of science, has no time for thinking the idea of Being. Even the universities that once fostered the value of reflective thought are progressively

giving over their facilities and curricula to science, quietly acceding to the popular idea that a degree in philosophy for example is a fast-track to a career in retail or bar-tending. Better to be prudent and devote one's life-energy to areas of endeavor where greater 'contributions' (as well as to future alumni campaigns) can be made. No, thinking the logic of Being is not today, nor has it ever been, 'where the money is'. Thinking reckons value differently. Taking Being, so generously and bountifully 'given' in things, truly as a gift, thinking, grateful, thanking, has no compelling need to 'own' things and is gladly destined to live and be clothed in ostensible poverty and simplicity.

Just as the world can only be One, united as it is by the calling-to-Being that originates and substantiates all possible things, so also there can be only one Logic or means of re-calling the Being that lives in things, one Reason. We've spoken here of the 'logic of science' as if it were a different beast, a completely different path of knowledge than the path that thinking, *as* thinking, takes. But no, there can be only one path to knowledge of things, one logic of their reckoning and this path and this logic is thinking, the thing that human beings do, the thing that even scientists, in the end, must do. What causes us to initially consider the methods of scientific thought as if they were somehow separate from thinking itself is the fact that they have asserted themselves so forcefully and successfully upon the world of things and in the minds of people. "Sure," it might be said, "thinking is what all human beings do, but science does thinking better. If you don't believe it, go ahead and disconnect

your electrical service, throw away your car keys and cell phone and see how long it takes for you to be convinced." Precisely by virtue of its phenomenal success as it has been applied in the modern world, the method of science, with its countless life-enhancing consequences and guarantees of evidential proof and mathematical certainty, progressively takes upon itself a cloak of dogma, opposing its disciplined regime of thinking to the specious, 'speculative' ideas that may result when thinking does not tie its questions and conclusions to the thing as measured, counted, compared, controlled, multiplied and divided. According to science, any idea worthy of the name needs to be, at least to the greatest possible extent, mathematically proven 'right'. Otherwise, the achievement of knowledge is vulnerable to the deceits of sloppy or wishful thinking, fancy, imagination, mere conjecture and stubborn conviction.

Now, to critique this assumption, following the path of thinking toward a true understanding of what thinking is, and in light of our knowledge of thinking so far achieved, we can in fact easily show, and even in its own mathematical terms, that the scientific method of thinking is especially vulnerable itself to these very deceits. How sloppy and wishful it is for science to imagine itself capable of achieving true and comprehensive knowledge of a thing when it methodically disregards, even disrespects the dignity and necessity of its Being - its idea, its essence, the name by which it is called, the indissoluble, indivisible, ontological real estate that it rightfully occupies in the world. The being that is conferred upon a thing at its naming, the absent idea that

thinking respectfully and imploringly re-calls, is One and cannot be adequately understood by subjecting one or many 'instances' of the thing to dissection, division and analysis. The short story of the limitation of scientific thinking goes like this: Being must be One because a thing without Being cannot be conceived. All things must be and so all things must possess this individuality, this Oneness simply in their Being, as called-into-being. In its necessary Oneness, Being confounds the mathematical comprehension that science requires for its method to proceed at all. In terms of any possible logic, Being, as the One that is present to All, cannot be measured, cannot be divided, cannot be compared, cannot be counted. Thus, it's a pure fantasy to imagine that the scientific method can comprehend things in their essence, that it can penetrate or dissolve the individual dignity and identity, the oneness of meaning and reason that things are *granted* by Being. And this is to speak only of the knowledge of things. How much sloppier and more fanciful is this strict but thoughtless method of thinking bound to be when the 'object' of its investigation is the human being, the sound of being, the very agent and presence of Being and Reason in the world? To repeat the thought with which we began this section, such logic, such thinking, such reasoning, when applied as adequate unto itself, and especially when applied to Man, is 'doomed to muddled inadequacy'.

The scientific method is drawn tight as a drum and exactly in the rigidity of its terms, in the hardness of its logic, is its unique usefulness and power to ascertain, solve and build. The intention here is not to detract from

the usefulness of science as a tool of thought, but only to put it in perspective against the pervasive and destructive delusion that this tool can be equated with thinking itself. Only thinking in its fullest sense could possibly hold a hope of understanding the thinker. Our object is thinking. Science is a marvelously effective means of thinking, but once again, it is NOT thinking.

Thinking has one object and that object is Being. It finds Being everywhere in the being of things. And yet, the work of thinking is the most difficult because, as we have said, the being of a thing is the idea that is conceived to replace it in its absence and that, thus absent from the thing as we commonly find it, must be called and re-called to be understood. So the paradox of Being is that, while it is everywhere, it is not easily found or revealed. The work of thinking thinks to discover the Being in things, to recall, make present, understand, clarify and articulate the absent idea of the thing as a way to know and show it truly, what it really *is* in its essence and its being.

How does thinking go about this work? First, it must put itself in an attitude toward things that is very different from the thoughtless regard that characterizes everyday life and scientific investigation, where the being of things is largely 'taken for granted'. The word 'thoughtless' is not meant here in a perjorative way. It only means to describe the everyday mode of regarding things as 'given'. Just as, thank God, we don't need to think about breathing, neither do things, for the most part, require our attention to their being in order for us to encounter them, see their outline, call them by name and make use of them. Indeed

they are 'given', given to us and in that givenness they are ours and that's all we need to know. Normally in everyday life and certainly in science, our interest in the thing begins only after and beyond encountering it in its givenness, after noting the simple fact that it is 'What it is'. The incipience of the thing, its being-called 'What it is', is what is taken for granted. Then, in thoughtless thinking, the thinking of science and everyday life, interest in a thing begins and ends, if it begins at all, with the question, 'How it is'. But thinking thinks differently. Leaving the question, 'How it is' up to science since there is hardly a shortage of interest there, thinking takes the less trodden path to the origin of the thing to discover the Being that it possesses as its 'given', that without which it would not be. And from its original 'given', that it is 'What it is', thinking believes that in the same act of thinking might possibly be revealed its 'giving', its purpose, meaning and reason…'Why it is'. 'What', 'How' and 'Why' a thing is, are the three ontological dimensions of thinking about things, one of which is interesting to science.

The basis on which thinking is able to proceed toward a good understanding of a thing in all three dimensions of its being is its attitude of kinship with things. Thinking first of all understands that it shares with the thing that which is most essential and necessary - Being, the very possibility of identity, the common thread of significance, the ontological property that unites and includes all things in their infinite diversity. This inherent familiarity with a thing is a good start toward a good idea

of what it is, how it is and even, possibly, why it is - a good idea of the thing itself.

Making itself first of all at home in the world of things as a being among beings, thinking does its best to remove the rigid distinction of 'subject' and 'object' which forms the theoretical basis upon which the pursuit of scientific knowledge generally proceeds. In order for a thing to be known 'objectively' in the view of science, it must be strictly set apart from the 'subjective' realm which is understood to be the exclusive domain of the knower. After all, if a thing is not a mere object, but rather possesses the right of its own idea, its own essence, its being what it is, then it could possibly deceive or withhold itself from the knowing subject, from being subjected to the mastery of objective knowledge. So in theory, no sense of 'subjectivity', of identity, of being, can be allowed to the object of scientific study. Or wait, maybe it's the other way around… In setting up the strict dichotomy of subject and object, the scientist, master of objective certainty, also casts himself in the role of a fool. According to the theory of its method, the subjectivity also of the scientist must be carefully excluded from the object of study, so as not to taint the objectivity of the knowledge obtained about it with any possible 'bias'. In this way of thinking, the object must be strenuously protected in its objectivity from the masterful subject whose own preconceptions, deceits and fancies, without careful control, might contaminate the pure certainty of the resulting scientific idea. The stern emphasis on objectivity that characterizes the scientific method would all but eliminate the existence of the subject entirely from

its formula. With its focus bent and biased entirely to the question of *How* the thing is, neither the knower nor the known is allowed subjectivity - the right to be *What* it is for its own *Reasons*.

Thinking thinks differently. Thinking begins where man himself begins - with understanding - *standing*, literally, physiologically, posturally *under* the idea of Being, within the awe and fear and mor(t)al consequence that this idea inspires. Thinking thinks to understand and restore the forgotten dimension of Being that is necessary to things, that bestows upon them their right to be, the rightful 'subjectivity' (to Being) that puts them wondrously, dangerously out of human control. The forgotten dimension of Being, like the dimension of thinking, like the dimension of man himself, is primarily and principally, physically and physiologically, the *vertical* dimension, the dimension of *Rightness*. Resolutely, fervently and constantly insisting the right under-standing of ideas, man subjects himself to the idea of Being by thinking, discovering and rightly reasoning the Being of things. Even the thoughtless and busy thinking of science and everyday life, forgetful as it is of Being and of the reason of its reasoning, is constantly striving to 'get things right' and 'make things right'. Rightness is simply the defining, intentional core of all human thought, action and endeavor (including that which is 'wrong') since the reasoning, thinking creature, man, is that one whose 'given', whose essence, *is* up-Rightness. Once again it becomes apparent that the essence of thinking man, of human being, of Homo sapiens, reveals itself in an idea that is so simple as to be

the most difficult to conceive, so familiar, obvious and ubiquitous as to be the most confoundingly obscure. Standing upright, requiring balance in all things to remain so, thinking and speaking rightly, is not what man does. It is what man IS.

7a - Thinking - 'What' things are

The words 'think' and 'thank' are derived from the same Germanic root and their linguistic kinship is no accident. The attitude of thinking is one of respect toward a thing as a fellow being, a fellow subject (of Being) that '*is what it is*' by virtue of the 'given' of its being. Thinking begins simply with thankfulness for the gift of being that is the origin, substance and right of all things that are. Such an attitude comes naturally to primitive cultures but has been long abandoned by 'civilized' man. Primitive man easily recognizes the fellow-being of the animal that he slays for food or the trees that are taken to build a shelter. And this recognition radically changes the way that these things are taken, 'objectified', subjected to his use. Understanding things in the world as fellow citizens in the realm of Being which possess, as he himself does, the gift of being and the right to be, the primitive man takes things carefully, respectfully, ritually, sacrificially. To do otherwise, to take carelessly or wastefully, to take for granted, without thinking or thanking, could incur the wrath and punishment of those things, their offended 'spirits', in just retribution. These very 'spirits', the gift of Being that is alive in things, have been ignored and forgotten by civilized man in the establishment of his control and mastery of the world. The modern *State* of control and mastery required the objectification, the subjection not only of things but of other human beings. To us civilized moderns who have long since grown

accustomed to accepting the dominion of powerful states and 'objective' thinking, this seems the most natural state of affairs. But to native Americans, there was no sense in the idea that their land or that they themselves or anyone else for that matter could be subject to a domain other than the domain of Being. To think otherwise was a sign of pitiful insanity. They soon learned, however, just how powerful and purposeful such senseless, forgetful thinking could be. While we moderns easily dismiss the ideas of the natives as primitive animism, nevertheless, a reasonable person could be forgiven a moment of wonder as to what unexpected form 'just retribution' might take for the relentless offenses to the 'spirits of the earth' upon which the modern world is being built. The unexpected disasters of famine, drought and disease that the natives understood in those terms have all been thoroughly accounted for, 'debunked', by modern science as having no relation to 'Being' or its 'spirit' in things. To the scientific mind, such ideas are simply signs of a primitive backwardness of thinking and a pitiful naivete. Of course, this conclusion follows inevitably since, in the view of science, no such relations (to Being) are possible to 'objects' at all. Science is the master of the objective world and certainly, even by definition, nothing unexpected could arise there. Well, indeed, if there are to be the unexpected, undesired consequences of modern offenses to the 'spirits' of Being, constantly *taken* for granted in things, without thinking, without thanking, we can only be certain that they will come in another form than any 'objective' one.

Thinking - 'What' things are

Just as man, as man, constantly seeks and finds a true, balanced, 'Right' relation to the earth in postural uprightness, so man as Homo sapiens naturally seeks the true and right under-standing of things, ideas, by thinking. In the end it is only by thinking that a true and complete understanding of any phenomenon, thing or idea can be obtained since only thinking allows a thing to manifest itself fully by questioning it in the full three dimensions of its being - its 'What' (its givenness - its inalienable right to be what it is), its 'How' (the way that it is - how it manifests itself to be) and its 'Why' (the reason - the meaning of its being). Likewise, the attitude that thinking carries to things is formed by the things themselves in this threefold way. First, with regard to the thing in its original and essential givenness, 'that it is what it is', as worthy to be called into being as this thing and no other, the attitude of thinking is one of respect, even reverence for the fellow subject-of-Being that it finds in the world. Respect for the right of things to be what they are as fellow-beings is fundamental to thinking, the only and necessary good beginning to essential knowledge of things. In this respect, thinking begins by emptying itself of pre-conceptual knowledge, silencing the noise of educated opinion, slowing the haste of thoughtless utility, in order to open itself to the idea of the thing only as it presents itself to be. Thinking invites the thing respectfully into the shared space of Being where the harsh and unfriendly notions of 'subject' and 'object' are neither present nor welcome. Thinking proceeds on the assumption that essence will gladly reveal itself in the presence of fellow-being since the mutual revelation of

true understanding is the joy and fulfillment of all things that are. Respect for the being of things is the premise of thinking.

7b - Thinking - 'How' things are

With regard to 'How' the thing is, thinking initially takes the attitude of curiosity and inquisitiveness. Curiosity is the original, motive power of science that begins with a primitive, childlike desire to 'see inside' things and leads to the attitude of scientific inquiry. Even the sophisticated scientific method of hypothesis-testing retains a certain vibrant, childlike quality insofar as it is fundamentally a rigorous process of playing with ideas. Thinking thinks the 'How' of things by elucidating them descriptively and/or mathematically, most often for the purpose of prediction, control and mastery. It's in this dimension of the being of things, 'how they are', that scientific thinking rightfully occurs. With its boundless curiosity, inquisitiveness and drive for mastery, science seeks playfully albeit forcefully to 'get inside' things by laying out the parts, patterns and systems, the inherent logic of forces that constitute, move and determine them.

Thinking things in this dimension, as to 'how they work', 'what they're made of', 'how big, small, numerous or rare' they are, is the familiar and predominant mode of thinking in these modern times. So successful and effective has it been in establishing predictive control of things, so many bridges has it built, weapons systems has it perfected, medical techniques has it developed, electronic devices has it produced, that it has come to be generally understood as thinking itself, as if thinking things only in this one dimension could possibly yield an

understanding that is true, adequate, essential and ultimately, healthy for man. How is this possible? How is it possible that rational man could be so misled and for so long as to the limitations of a relational logic which insists that things have no *right* to exist in and of themselves as subjects of Being, as part of the one world of being that is shared by all things that are, but rather that their essence is only granted upon taking their 'rightful' place in a mathematically defined relational paradigm called 'the universe'? How is it possible that a logic so clearly deficient and one-dimensional in its reasoning of Being and of the world has gained such ascendency as to be commonly considered synonymous with thinking, the one, true path to understanding things?

The answer is simple and understandable. With its exclusive focus on the 'How' of things, disregarding their given 'What' and giving 'Why' (their full-dimensional being), by turning things into 'objects', science is able to bring things under control. Certainly there is nothing inherently unreasonable or out of balance with the attitudes of control and mastery as modes of human interaction with things. We understand that, having lost the immediacy of the 'natural' world by standing upright, man must make his world from things at hand and the scientific understanding of 'how things are' is important and necessary to this world-building. Utterly misguided, though, is the preeminent idea that this mode of thinking is or could possibly be *sufficient* to a good understanding of things. Intoxicated with the power to control things, objectivist thinking loses itself in the seamless but inconclusive logic of mathematics irrespective of the fact

that there is not *one, single* thing in the world that can be adequately understood by its formulas of inevitable action and reaction. Not *one, single* thing, since mathematics, by its own definition, can have nothing to do with oneness, with singularity. The fact that Being is one cannot be disputed since there is no possibility of a thing that is not. So, if, by virtue of Being, the world is One, what chance does any mathematics have to achieve a good understanding of the world and the beings in it? The wholeness, wellness and singular dignity of things is off limits to mathematics, defining the limit of its understanding of things.

But even putting aside this essential limitation, at the very root of the prevailing misconception of scientific thinking, insofar as it is considered the 'one-true' means of understanding things 'objectively', is the fact that science is not inherently interested in understanding things at all, but rather, in *controlling* them. The genius of science is first and finally about control and mastery of things. Disregarding the being of things, understanding things as 'objects' subject to its control, science has neither interest in nor the slightest clue as to their essence, their significance and their true meaning and place in the world.

The abiding, indissoluble oneness of Being bears the world into being as a home for Man... the sign and sound of Being in the world. Man is at home in the world, or should be, and in this way the native understanding of things in their essence, by right of their being as fellow subjects of Being, is comfortably accessible and familiar to him, or should be. Unable as it is to address or find the

measure of this unquestionable and necessary one-wholeness of the world, science puts in its place the idea of an infinitely complex 'universe' of objects that swim in a predictable, often controllable mathematical matrix of temporal/spatial interaction. What characterizes these 'objects' first of all is their *motion* relative to each other and their *change* over time. All 'things' in the universe of science are changing and in motion as their massive, molecular, atomic and subatomic elements configure and reconfigure themselves according to more or less determinate and mathematically defined forces or 'laws'. In this view, all things in the thusfar expanding universe, from the first milliseconds to the present moment, come into being and pass away in strict accordance to these laws, whether known or unknown. Not surprisingly, this idea of the universe understands human reason itself as subject to these inexorable laws. Any ideas we may have to the contrary are simply a momentary illusion, the pleasant dream of an animal life-form that happened to briefly appear on the third planet from an aging star in the Milkyway system. If this minute, macro-biological event called 'man' seems to be ready to challenge the hegemony of the laws of the universe by proudly casting itself as a possible exception, well, give it just a few hundred millennia and all will assuredly be quiet and orderly in the cosmos once more. And indeed, the laws of the universe that science constructs are proven reliably and repeatedly with mathematical certainty. It's simply foolish to question the truth of mathematical formulae or the proven efficacy of 'rocket science' or any other well-conducted science. No, the reasonable critique of the

scientific method should proceed from within the assumptions of science itself to discover the inherent contradiction on which its proud idea of 'the universe' is based. The purpose of this critique is not to discredit science as a means of knowing the 'how' of things, but to place the 'objectivism' of science in its proper perspective, within its rightful limits as a mode of thinking/controlling things.

Once again, the logical proof of the insolvency of the natural-scientific idea of the universe can be laid out with a ridiculously simple mathematical proposition that advances no further than the fundamental and necessary relation between the numbers '1' and '2'. It is thus: In order for the minimum number of mathematically conceivable events, i.e., *two*, to occur in any spatio-temporal context, there must be a conceived presence of *one* that spans the distance (in space, time or both) between these events. In other words, the abiding, comprehensive, yet incomprehensible presence of one is the condition for the possibility of establishing the mathematical relation or interaction of any two or more 'objects'. In short, *one* is the pre-condition of *two* or any possible multiplicity. And the absolute condition of the one must be that it is itself non-sequential, neither an 'event' in change nor an 'object' in motion (a third 'thing') but rather an abiding, changeless, still presence in terms of which the measure of things can be made. To take a good photo, one must 'hold still' the camera. To take a good measure of the change and motion of things in the universe, one must posit a 'holding still' that spans and

comprehends any possible distance of space or interval of time in which this change or motion may occur.

One, incomprehensible to mathematics, is the profound and only basis of ***two*** or of any possible mathematics. In this it's clear that, even in mathematical terms, there is no possibility of a world that is not one, united not first by laws of motion, energy and change, but by the right and rule of Being, the one and only 'thing', no object, but subject, that must be found in all things, the one and necessary spanning, beginning, end and foundation of the world. And with regard to the dimension of thinking that asks 'how' things are, we can now understand that, exactly to the contrary of the scientific idea that the world is a universe of atomizing, synthesizing objects in constant change and motion, things reveal themselves as given a level of Being in a priority that is determined by their relative duration, substance, extent, stillness, integrity, individuality and resistance to change. Man, whose very essence is the right-alignment with Being through the sounding, signifying, thinking and right understanding of ideas of beings and the idea of Being itself, exhibits these qualities at the highest possible earthly level. Standing upright, ruled by rightness in the vertical plane, seeking and sounding Being in the power of ideas and the power of speech, aligned and allied with Being, man is given a standing, staying power that opens the time and space in which the universe is revealed and reckoned. Though he is made of very fragile and transient flesh compared to things which seem to persist long after his passing, the ideas of his thinking, speaking, imagining, building

constantly refer to the ***One*** of ultimate duration and extent, the ***One*** that must be still so that the wonderful world, the universe, can be.

Scientific thinking proceeds for the most part in blind forgetfulness of the being of things, in obstinate denial of the even mathematically definable limit of its comprehension of things and the world as a whole. Thoughtless, objectivist thinking sacrifices the idea of Being to satisfy its human addiction to control. This willful forgetfulness of the gift of Being forms a conceptual vacuum that science fills by pretending itself in the role of the One, the supreme subject that unites by its 'laws' and its mathematics the multiplicity of the universe. With the gift, the reason and the meaning of Being thus 'out of the way', things can more easily be brought under control. Control and subjugation of things is the distorted ethos of natural science, the ultimate interest and purpose of scientific objectivism.

Modern man lives in an imperium of thoughtless and forgetful scientific thinking that maintains its grip on power through its ability to control and subject things to human purpose and will. There is no inherent necessity for thinking to distort itself this way to achieve the ends, the mastery of things, that science and technique delivers. Thinking that is thankful, respectful and open to the one reason of Being will certainly be fascinated with questions of *how* things are and interested in the control and mastery of things that is necessary to make the world a good home for human being. Man is given the role of master of the world by virtue of his right-alignment with Being and the powers of understanding, naming and

speech that ensue from it. What characterizes thinking in the modern age, however, is the forgetfulness of the source and meaning of this mastery in its obsession with mastery itself. This unfortunate and unnecessary error of thinking hollows out the world and things of sense, meaning and reason in favor of a universe of dead and senseless 'objects' over which, it is certainly true, man can claim absolute, predictive, indeed obsessive, control.

What concrete effect does the forgetfulness of Being have on things and the world? When things are no longer found to possess being or to have the right to be as part of one world, they are subject to the conceptual and actional processes that most characterize objectivist thinking - atomization and synthesization. In this view, true knowledge of a thing cannot possibly be gained from understanding it as a whole, as substantial and enduring in itself, as representing and possessing, however imperfectly and temporarily, its own unique, individual and rightful relation to Being. True knowledge rather requires the systematic atomization of the thing, breaking it down into its structural, organic, molecular, atomic and ultimately sub-atomic components along with an understanding of the forces and relationships that determine the organization and interaction of these components. In principle, the things, including living things, that are found in the universe can neither be created nor destroyed, but are simply in a constant process of reconfiguration, atomization and re-synthesis. The apparent self-possession of things, their seeming to have attained a state of endurance, composure, uniqueness and individuality, a state of *being* that

transcends this process is a pleasant illusion with no material consequence.

Thus atomized, all things in the universe are understood as essentially synthetic. Is it any wonder that in a world where such thinking predominates, things themselves are predominently synthetic? In a recent visit to the doctor for help with the pain of a worn-out knee, I tried to find, anywhere in this gleaming, antiseptic world, a thing, a single thing that was not made of synthetic materials and could not. Artificial plastic or composite materials in walls, floors, ceilings, doors, baseboards, rugs, furniture, art, cabinets, even flowers created the space. The appearance of wood was everywhere but everywhere as a photographic image of wood or thin veneer transposed on a plastic or composite surface. Nowhere in the entire immaculate space, not in reception, not in the waiting room, much less the examining room was there a single 'real' thing to be seen. Then, to complete the experience, the doctor studied my X-rays and let me know that there was not much he could do for my knee other than to replace it with a new one made of plastic and stainless steel. With a gleam in his eye as bright as the polished surroundings he showed me a model of the new knee and demonstrated how smoothly it would work compared to my real, injured, aging flesh and bone.

Of course there is absolutely nothing unusual or noteworthy about this scene or the space that I've described. Unusual only is that anyone would take note or think of questioning it. The artificiality of things that progressively characterizes the modern world is the

assumed, accepted, expected and appreciated state of things as these things become, as a result of the synthetic materials and processes to which they owe their existence, for the most part lighter, stronger, more durable and, best of all, cheaper to acquire. What's not to like?

7c - Thinking - 'Why' things are

What's not to like about the modern world of synthetic things? Best perhaps to approach this question in terms of the third and most profound dimension of Being that thinking would reveal in relation to things. With some understanding of *what* and *how* a thing is, out of the deepest respect for its right to be what it is and admiration for the infinitely complex and interesting way that it is how it is, thinking would pause with its fellow being to consider the question -'Why'. To ask *why* a thing is, thinking does not only seek causality as in how it came to be, but rather the meaning and reason of the thing. This is a dangerous and intimate question of a thing, moreso of a person, reserved only for the most trusted relationships of understanding, a question that cannot be asked of 'objects' and which is therefore rarely of interest to science.

To get a sense of the special intimacy of this question and the profound level of understanding that it would open to thinking, consider how human beings normally interact in everyday conversation. We've said that thinking approaches a thing (or person) with respect to three dimensions of being, in practical terms, with three questions - 'what' ('who'), 'how', and 'why'. We propose thinking here as a formal method, in fact the only possible comprehensive method of truly knowing and understanding things in their essence. And yet this method is also completely in line with the most common

'methods' by which human beings come to know and understand things and each other in the relatively thoughtless thinking that characterizes the everyday world. The question of being that profoundly concerns thinking as a method is ubiquitous in human interaction and discourse, the foundation of even the most trivial and commonplace knowledge of things, the world and others.

Any possible understanding of a thing begins with the question of '*what it is*', that is to say, what right of being has been declared, set aside for it by its name. Nameless things, anomolies, arise indeed from time to time, but *as* 'anomolies', the name that's given to transient things not yet proven worthy of a name. And in exactly the same way, any possible understanding of another person begins with the right to be *'who* they are' that their name proclaims. As we have earlier said, a nameless person is inconceivable. Although there are plenty of everyday interactions with people whose names we will never know, any sort of acquaintance begins with an exchange of names. It's at that point that we speak of 'knowing' a person. And then from this respectful recognition of *who* that person is, we move, with time and shared experience, toward an understanding of *how* they are. As with the understanding of things, the understanding of how a person is occupies acquaintance and friendship for the most part. After 'Who are you?' naturally follows 'How are you?'. Is there a more common human refrain?

The dimension of being that is never raised or questioned in the course of normal human interaction, however, is formed in the question, *'Why* are you?'. *Who*

I am is a given - manifested in my name as a matter of fact and record. *How* I am is a subject on which I can expound more or less at length on any given day. But the question of *why* I am touches a dimension that is so intimate and central to my being that it is off limits to normal conversation even for the most part between trusted friends and intimate partners. Even asked of oneself, this question may arouse a degree of discomfort and be parried with an assertion of its irrelevance with a reply like, 'I don't know', 'It's a mystery', 'I never thought about it (and have no intention of doing so)' or even, 'That's a stupid question. No one can know that.' The religious person may have a quick and certain reply at hand like, 'To serve God' or, 'To the greater glory of God', but even these good and sincere answers would generally seem to be offered more toward the purpose of closing and avoiding the question than giving it the time and thought of true consideration.

And aren't these reactions right and reasonable, since the question of a thing or a person as to the meaning and reason of their being is not a fair question. It's too big a question to be asked and it's too big a question to be answered. In short, the final question that thinking brings to the understanding of things and others, *'Why'*, is an un-askable / un-answerable question. Strange indeed, this question. What sort of question is that which can neither reasonably be posed nor sensibly be answered? What sort of truth, reason, meaning or logic can be derived and understood of a thing precisely by refraining from a question rather than posing it? If not, as questioners normally are, interested, curious, *'questioning'*, in what

sort of attitude must thinking hold itself toward things if the dimension of meaning and reason, the internal and intimate logic of a thing is to be disclosed and understood? If not by questioning, how then must thinking comport itself to understand others when it finds itself in the role of helper with the troubled, confused, overladen person for whom 'questions' of meaning, reason and purpose have arisen with painful and critical urgency?

Thinking falls silent in the face of the question of meaning in the same way that mathematics must fall silent in the presence of One. There must be only one that is One and any poor attempt to duplicate it, divide it in two or confuse it with a question is unthinkable to thinking. Seeking an understanding of things and others at this level of being, as to their meaning and reason and place in the world, thinking moves from questioning to an attitude of reflection, wonder, openness and appreciation. In this comportment it stands before the singularity of the thing or person whose identity, being-one, reflects the singularity, the indivisible, unquestionable oneness of Being itself. It's at this level of understanding that thinking ceases its busy concern with things and strikes the pose of reflection that is so commonly associated with the activity of thinking. In the stillness and quiet of this pose thinking does its best to *com*-pose itself in a right relation of understanding *with* a thing or another person as a fellow subject of Being. In this state of composure, thinking opens the time and place where meaning and reason, the intimate logic of things and human beings can safely be revealed, understood, magnified and

appreciated, where the profound and essential question, *'Why'*, can sensibly be addressed.

Without asking 'Why', while nevertheless dwelling in the context of this question, thinking seeks, along with things and others that share this context, understanding and reason. To understand the reason 'why', thinking understands that it must open itself to the one and wholeness of the thing or person, that is, to the rightful reason, the meaning and sense that their place of being in the one world signifies. Opening itself to things and others in their rightful oneness, the indissoluble connection with Being that all beings in the world must share, thinking may be enlightened with reason, with knowledge of things, true understanding and good ideas. Moving in the opposite direction to the desire that would 'get inside' things by dismantling them to find out the logic of 'what makes them tick', thinking at this level would rather even increase and magnify the integrity and wholeness of things to understand the reason of their being not in shrunken terms of specific causality but rather in the expansive terms of meaning, sense and significance.

What concretely characterizes this core dimension of things in which their reason, meaning and purpose, the very logic of their being can be understood? The core dimension in which thinking thinks is the core dimension of human being - the vertical dimension. Thinking seeks reason and reason, without exception, seeks rightness. Unthinkable is a reason that does not aspire to rightness, to under-standing the right ideas that are the ontological, epistemological offspring of the upright animal who,

thinking, sounding, signifying Being, has ceased to be an animal. And yet, for the most part, Homo sapiens dwells in a state of forgetfulness of the significance of its inherent verticality, the reason and meaning of its being as a person, the sound and signifier of Being in the world. For the most part, whether in everyday conversation or the thoughtless thinking of everyday life, man dwells in the horizontal plane and has little time for thinking that is not in service of finding out *'how'* things can be ordered, dominated and controlled. This seems quite understandable and normal given the fact that food, water, mates and shelter are to be found 'on the horizon' and not on the height. And yet Homo sapiens, no longer an animal, also hungers and thirsts and desires for rightness, justice, meaning and reason in all things and in all relations which are only to be measured and determined in vertical terms.

Forgetfulness of course. How can life go on normally if its weightiest and most profound question excessively intrudes on the time and attention required to secure food, shelter and the protection of the family. But… thinking is more a cultural attunement than an individual effort and the first principle of the balance and rightness that is necessary to the essence of man, to his uprightness, is that nothing human, except perhaps rightness itself, should be taken to extremes. Neither societal nor personal uprightness is possible without keeping this balance in all things. As the feats of acrobats and the magnificence of cathedrals can attest, the greater the balance, the greater the height. In the world of human thought and action, just as with yourself standing next to your desk, any extreme

deviation from the vertical, from what is balanced and right, will lead, like a Greek tragedy, to downfall. The success of the scientific method and 'objective' thinking in its efforts to control things and the world is based on, as well as begetting, a thoughtless forgetfulness and disregard of Being, of the being of things and of thinking, that touches dangerous extremes. In the modern world of 'objects' where the thoughtless thinking of science tirelessly works at once to the benefit and detriment of human being, balanced, reflective thinking is progressively relegated to the margins, just as the native peoples, so wisely naive in their belief in the fellow-being of things, were led to the reservation.

The success of objective thinking in the modern world is based not only on its unfortunate forgetfulness of Being, but on its willful usurption of the vertical dimension for the purposes of order, domination and control. For it's only from this relative 'height', ultimately the rightful place of Being, that order, domination and control are possible. The very concept of 'order' is predicated upon the possibility of viewing things from above. It's from the higher vantage point afforded man by upright posture that he is able to set things in order and create a world of relative 'domains'. From arranging his living space to setting out crops, plots of ownership, plans of battle, city streets and political boundaries, man naturally, virtually and actually takes the height, the view from above, to set his domains in order and 'subject' the world to his control. And of course this power may also be taken to perilous extremes. Much of history is a sad and tedious chronicle of how proud, 'successful' men,

drunk with money and military might, may become so forgetful of their rightful place in the world, that they come to imagine themselves as the exceptional 'rulers' of the world, taking ***as if*** for themselves the one, only and therefore sacred place of height, rightness and reason that is reserved for Being itself, from which the world is naturally and constantly ordered and established by the power of thinking, the power of speech and the power of ideas. 'As if'… And yet these collective delusions have such horrible and destructive consequences for human being that destiny seems to have reserved the deepest pits of downfall and failure for such men and their willing societies. More later about the aberration of 'objective' thinking as it occurs in the political sphere. For the moment our interest is in the similar forgetfulness and even usurption of the order of Being that characterizes the objectivism of science in its similar drive for domination and control of the world.

To which supreme height would science pretend from which to order and control the world? We are all, according to the scientific ethos, finally subject (that is to say, objects) to the mathematically certain, empirically derived and proven 'rules' and 'laws of the universe'. According to this barren logic, nothing in the world, neither living nor inert, qualifies to be what it is, to be understood and respected as fully and finally one and identical with itself, that is to say, to possess being. To bring things under its control, to make way for a world not of things but of objects, all the rights of things to be only themselves must be revoked. In this distorted view, the rightness, reason, meaning and significance of things,

the duration and persistance in time and space that would seem to substantiate their being, is considered a quaint illusion. In this view, while things may *appear* to be what they are for their own reason, *in reality* they are parts of a universe of objects whose logic, in order to maintain its mathematically certain, predictive coherence, forbids and dismisses even the possibility of their possessing reasons of their own, meaning and significance that cannot be formulated in its restrictive terms. In this way, the scientific ethos keeps itself completely and willfully, conceptually **stuck** in the horizontal dimension, in the *'how'* of the world in terms of which the rightful reason of things and the meaning of life is first and finally **not** determined. Revoking the right of things to be *'what'* they are and dismissing any thought or question of *'why'*, science falsely and mistakenly raises the logic of *'how'* to a supreme, unquestionable level. This logic is not innately false, much less likely to yield 'wrong' conclusions. Certainty, after all, is its forte. Only, unbeknownst to itself, its relevance is fundamentally limited in that it is utterly forgetful of Being, of the vertical dimension, the core of language and meaning, the *right*ness of reason only from which genuine under-standing of things and others may occur. Empowered and then addicted to the control and subjugation of things that objectivist thinking makes possible, the modern world finds itself progressively in the thrall of this pretense, transfixed under the influence of this dangerous error of thinking.

8 - Thinking and the World of Things

To retrace our recent steps, recall that we discovered and followed the methodological path called 'thinking' in response to the challenge that arose from our critique of the logic of objectivism as it attempts to understand the human person in the science and therapeutic practice of modern psychology. Along this path it became apparent that the 'muddled inadequacy' that we ascribed to this logic, when taken as a basis for understanding human being, nearly as well describes its capacity to sufficiently comprehend the world of things. Objectivist logic, we found, when taken as a basis for the true knowledge of things rather than simply as a means of rightfully controlling them, is a way of thinking that inevitably *'begins in the middle and ends in a muddle'*. It can do no justice to things, can finally provide no substantial, meaningful understanding of things, since it restricts its interest in a thing to 'how' the thing is with the distinct purpose of controlling it. Meanwhile, willfully, scrupulously and methodically ignored by this logic is the thing *itself* in its essence, its right to *be* what it is for its own reasons…its 'what' and its 'why', its beginning and its end. It's impossible to imagine how true or adequate knowledge of the world of things, much less of human beings, could possibly be derived from such a partial, forgetful, albeit comfortably certain and precise logical process. And yet, however muddled and inadequate it may be, the truncated thinking of empirical science,

presuming its relational logic and mathematical principles to be the beginning and end of things, has come to form and rule the modern world. And this distortion of thinking cannot be dismissed as just a benign and forgiveable shortcoming. Rather it has the most serious consquences for man whose world is both materially and virtually made of ideas.

As we have seen now in a number of contexts, what sets man apart in the animal kingdom is precisely his *being* set apart, standing physically at a vertical distance from things. And further we understand that this physical distance of more or less 2 meters is infinitely compounded and extended when man, over a period of millions of years, gradually awakens to the *meaning* of the rightness, the 'true vertical' that his short length of flesh and bone, with all its strength, will and purpose, strives to attain and sustain. Eventually, man's physical rightness evolves into the human *sense* of rightness, the visceral need and desire for Being and for the just and true ideas that signify the being of things. From this sense of rightness and the vertical distance that it implies, the world is born as man evolves from senscience to conscience. The sentient animal is present to the presence of things and has no need of knowledge, whereas man, the conscient animal, is present to the absence of things, that is, to things as ideas, the knowledge of which forms the very substance, meaning and breath of the world. Of course man, for all his humanity, remains himself deeply sentient, but sentient at a distance and in an absence and it's in the space of that distance and the time of that absence that the world of things is called into being. The

human world, though certainly sentient, is a world of ideas. The man who walks through the forest with an idea of a chair will soon find a chair among stumps and rocks and breaks in terrain, whereas the man who lacks this idea (difficult though that may be for us to conceive) will sit on the floor in a room full of chairs.

Indeed the world is created and *ruled* by the power of ideas and so the question of the relative completeness and coherence, the *rightness* (that is to say, *goodness*) of predominant ideas is of the utmost importance to the life and health of man. For Homo sapiens, thinking is power, indeed the power to rule and form the world. And when this power becomes distorted in its purpose, oblivious to its true source and limits, it becomes dangerous and detrimental. The world currently finds itself under the strongest influence of the imbalanced and disordered ideas of natural science and the natural, 'objectivist' attitude and so, with the intention of restoring thinking in wholeness and health to its rightful estate, we first set ourselves the task of describing the world that such ideas beget - very simply… the modern world in which we live.

As a preamble to this descriptive task, we recall the question with which we began the previous section concerning the modern world in which, as in the example of my visit to the doctor's office, things have become predominantly synthetic, that is, composed of materials that are not to be found in nature but which are obtained from the atomization of naturally occuring things. There we posed the question, 'What's not to like?' about the ubiquitous trend toward synthetic things that often turn out lighter, stronger and nearly always cheaper to produce

than their antiquated, 'natural' antecedents. Further and more generally, 'What's not to like?' about the worlds of wonder that the application of scientific principles has opened to modern man across the broadest spectrum of his action and experience? It would seem to be a pointless, retrograde train of thought indeed that would dare to question the scientific achievements of the last 300+ years, that have 'enlightened' man, lifting him from his precarious place in the world to a position of absolute and conclusive dominance over it. Has not man been given the power of speech precisely for the purpose of naming, ordering and ruling the world of things by the power of ideas? And aren't the ideas and empirical methods of science simply proven in fact to be the best and most effective means of carrying out this rule over the dominion that nature has assigned him? The univocal answer, 'Yes' to the first question should be clear in light of what has come before. The answer to the second question, an extensively qualified 'No', follows from the fact that, for the most part, scientific thought conducts itself in willful forgetfulness of the being, the rightful subjectivity and substantiality of the things that it would understand. Once again, the intention in this critique is not to discredit the genius of science and 'objective' thinking to control things and build the world as a home for man. Rather, what's necessary is to recall the fullest, original sense of thinking from which this genius is derived and to restore the rightful rule of Being as that im-mathematical **One** to which any idea of **two** must ultimately be subject.

The world of things that man inhabits can be divided into two, broad categories - naturally-occurring things and man-made things. The relative proportion of each in comprising the 'world around' varies of course with the particular epoch, location and culture in which man finds himself. In the most recent 1000 millennia of his pre-history, up until about 40,000 years ago, the collection of man-made things was meager indeed, including only, that we know of, the hand-axe. Other than this one, primitive tool and the small, perishable things that it might have produced, the pre-world of pre-lingual man consisted of things 'given' in their natural, organic or inorganic state. Then, gradually, standing more and more confidently at the distance of his uprightness, man moved from his immediate, animalistic, pre-worldly presence to things toward a state of being present to the *absence* of things from which the human world of language and ideas, the world of **things** in the true sense, took shape. With the mutual signifying, naming and calling of things, the presence of Being exploded upon the earth with an unimaginable creative force. The release of this ontological energy occurred slowly at first over the course of hundreds of millennia, but increased exponentially in the last 10,000 years. Over this period, the pre-world awoke to the call of Being that 'sounded-through' the voice of that creature who, standing oddly upright, signifies Being in that standing and in the inherent longing for rightness that it embodies. That creature, the human person, newly arrived on earth, is the one who signifies and issues the being of things in his calling, naming, pointing, painting, in his right thinking

and good under-standing of things. This explosion of Being with all its magnificence, occurred not with the proverbial 'brightness of 1,000 suns', but over time in the warm glow and sparkle of home and city lights, as the world of innumerable things became home to man.

Thus, the filling of the world with things of human make and concomitant recedence of 'naturally-occuring' things is not just a modern phenomenon but rather has been the trend since the dawn of time. What interests us here specifically with respect to the modern world, however, is the way that this natural trend has been seized, accelerated and substantially altered by objectivist, scientific thinking. For the purpose of highlighting where this has brought us, our task is to contrast, in its essence, a naturally-occurring thing with the synthetic things that have come to comprise our modern world for the most part and the method that we will apply to this task is the one that we have simply called 'thinking'. To make this contrast plain, our plan is to properly and essentially *think* a naturally-occurring thing, a white-birch tree.

To follow this method of understanding the essence of the tree as it stands in nature, we must question it as to its being by asking, 'What *are* you?', 'How *are* you?', 'Why *are* you?'. Our choice of the personal pronoun in 'addressing' this inanimate 'object' is meant to indicate the regard of the thinker for the being of the things of his or her interest as fellow subjects of Being. This has nothing to do with primitive 'animism' as the natural scientist will naturally object. Rather, it's an assertion of the world as a place where being is shared by all - by right. It's the

discipline of the method of thinking to suspend the everyday forgetfulness of the being of things in which things are taken as mere objects, subject only to control, analysis and ennumeration by the thoughtless thinker. The claim of innate 'subjectivity' that is made by the thinker on behalf of things does not intend to falsely ascribe animism or will to things which clearly exist in an inanimate state. Rather, the idea is to recognize the right of things to be what they are for their own reasons, not as objects 'under control', but as fellow inhabitants of the one world which all beings, alive with Being, share. The thinker understands that only in this context, only with respect and recognition of the right of the thing to *be* what it *is* in the way that it *is* for the reasons that it *is*, will there be any possibility that the delicate essence of the thing will reveal itself.

What is that thing which is commonly called a 'white-birch tree'? First, we can say with certainty that it is a thing worthy of the rite of naming by which it is distinguished as *this* thing and no other. With its given name it is recognized and included in the world of things. This same thing that can be called by its more casual, English name, 'paper-birch' is also of course called by as many different names as there are languages in use among those people who encounter it. In addition, its unique place in the world of living things is designated in the biologist's classification of life by the name that identifies it as a member of the plant kingdom… genus Betula, 'Betula papyrifera'. All these names, whether casual, common or scientific, intend to do the white-birch tree that stands before us the honor of recognizing its

essential and irreducible place in the world - its irrevocable right to be what it is as uniquely itself and no other thing. Whatever form its name may take, this name is ultimately a call to the essence of the tree which does not expect the clarity of an answer but which stands in awe of its silent presence and simply proclaims *that it is what it is*.

The name of the white-birch tree is a call to its singular, identical essence, its being, in the same way that a person is called by name, but not, of course, to the same degree. All named things indeed possess and exemplify being, but by no means to an equal extent. The world of beings is not a homogeneous matrix of things, but more like an ontological organism that is alive with Being. Things find their unique place in this world according to a certain ontological order and hierarchy. Our white-birch tree, as a living but inanimate thing, is called by its generic name but there is no single tree of this or any other species that would be considered worthy of being called by a uniquely identifying name as human beings are… 'Gordon', 'Penelope', 'David' or even more specifically, 'Beatrice C. Renault', 'Pavel Ivanovich Fiodorov'. Although animals may be called in a diminutive form of a human name, befitting their ability to hear, recognize and respond to its call, such unique, 'proper' names are reserved for the highest orders of being. They may be assigned to unchanging geographical features like 'Kilimanjaro' or the river 'Volga', to societal institutions like 'California', 'Notre Dame' or 'Sears'. But primarily and most profoundly, the proper names, and in their most formal and specific construction, are given to

that creature whose voice is the very sound of Being in the world, who answers the call of his or her name with a clear and resonant 'I am'.

The individual white-birch tree is a thing that, like a grain of sand in the vast desert, stands many orders of being below the proud power of human language to walk the earth as the master and measurer of things. Yet, whatever ontological rank and row in the order of things the white-birch tree or grain of sand may occupy, it should not be forgotten that it is the very same Being that is present and called in the least significant thing as in the most magnificent… the greatest works, ideas and institutions of man, themselves but grains of sand when scaled to the infinity of Being that founds and sustains the world of given things. And where even in this order would stand those proud works of man that would gradually or suddenly, intentionally or unintentionally, destroy this world of given beings so as to subject it conclusively to his will or re-create it in the poor image of himself? The *in*significance of such things and ideas cannot be comprehended and make the being of the white-birch tree or grain of desert sand seem immeasurably precious in comparison. Man, the natural signifier of Being and author of ideas is also uniquely and solely qualified to renounce, forget and obscure the being of things and others by assuming the role of rationally-enabled 'Subject' in a world of ontologically disabled 'objects'. Severing, by such wrong-thinking, the fundamental connection of the world to Being plunges things into a state of well-ordered insignificance that is oppressive and lifeless. Being is the life of things, the

oxygen of the world and where it is forgotten or excluded, man, 'as man', cannot long live.

As we have said, thinking understands that an answer to the question, 'What ***is*** a white-birch tree?', will only be possible if the question is rephrased and put in the second-person. To get a sense of the reason for this transposition and the spirit of the question, imagine the insult felt by a human being at joining a conversation and hearing the first person ask the second person, in the 'third-person', 'Who is that?'. The necessity of using the second-person mode of address in the presence of human beings is obvious to us. We do so naturally out of respect to their fellow being and also from the primitive sense that it can be dangerous to address a person as an object, with a 'name' or any such rude summation of their existence. Unfortunately for the world of naturally occurring things, in the case of white-birch trees for example, no such fear of reprisal is felt.

For the method of thinking, that asks the question 'What' or 'Who' with respect to worldly beings, the second-person mode of address is the only option, since it understands that there is no possibility of an 'object' that is not subject to Being. To understand the essence of the thing, the white-birch tree that stands proudly before our eyes, within our reach and yet beyond our comprehension, we must ask it respectfully as a fellow subject of Being, 'What *are* you?'. And the question, to be worthy of an answer, must be asked quietly, patiently, humbly and without fear of the ridicule that will naturally fall upon a person caught fancifully, 'talking to trees'. The question that addresses the being of the tree is anything

but fanciful. Rather, it has the most profound intent. With this question, the thinker approaches the tree not for its shade, sap, buds for tea or branches for the bath, not for its bark to start a campfire or its wood to make boards. While the sum of what the tree generously gives to human purposes is a clear sign of the physical bond that exists between human being and the world of living things, the thinker addresses the tree on the basis of what is held even more profoundly in common - its being as part of the one, shared world of Being in which all things find themselves and are found.

The question of its being, 'What *are* you?', that thinking thoughtfully poses to the tree is a unique and necessary beginning to any possible true knowledge of it. Where the much more familiar, secondary question, *'How*?', will yield many volumes of information about the white-birch tree regarding its peculiar organic structures and processes, its unique ecology, life-cycle and patterns of growth, no amount of this ever-expanding body of knowledge can suffice or replace the profound understanding that is sought in the question of its being.

Having posed the question, the thinker, standing in the silent presence of the tree, finds his answer exactly in that silence and simply in that presence. To the question of being, whether it be posed to a mute thing or the most thoughtful and articulate person, no clear answer can or should be expected, any more than a monk or nun, addressing the oneness of Being itself in a lifetime of prayer, expects the clarity or 'satisfaction' of an answer to his or her daily, soulful entreaties. In fact, it seems that it's in the punctuation of silence and the unanswered

question that the meaning of being is primarily told. To the cultures of totemism, animals and plants may seem imbued with mystical, near divine powers precisely by virtue of their silence, by virtue of the fact that they are alive with being and yet do not speak. In their sacred-seeming silence, they simultaneously present themselves and withhold themselves just as Being, omnipresent, must withhold itself and remain absent to the world in order to open the possibility for things to find themselves and each other in it. The logic of this absence is not a mystery. How can that which is One present itself *except* as an omnipresent absence?

The white-birch tree is indeed silent in its presence and yet, just in this, it tells profoundly of its being what it is. Uncomfortable with its silence, dismissing the rightful significance of its state of being, the empiricist is all too happy to speak for the tree and expound on its essence in the languages of biology, chemistry, and physics until the thing is brought to full, mathematically coherent account. While the useful validity of such knowledge *about* the tree is not in dispute, thinking reminds that, as a fellow subject of Being, finding itself and being found in the one world of beings, the white-birch tree has every right to speak, or not, for itself and tell, by its presence, what it is. And what it rightfully, silently, joyfully, mournfully tells is that it is a unique and singular presence of that which, being One, cannot be with us here, as beings are. It is the presence, named a 'white-birch tree', of that which, being One, cannot be named. It says that it finds itself given, presented with its unique form, proportion and time by that which, being One, cannot be here or there, now or

then, in some form or other. As if to silently address the busy empiricist, it says that it is evidence of that for which, being One and *therefore* absent from things, no 'evidence' can possibly be found.

8a - The Possibility of Understanding

The substance of the white-birch tree will not be found in its roots, bark, wood, branches, buds or leaves nor in the most intricate and complete concept of its living system. Knowledge of things in their essence must begin and end with that kind of thinking which is called understanding. Understanding respects, admires and seeks the simplicity of things, the sameness, oneness, endurance and integrity with which things find and present themselves. Understanding begins with the simple recognition of the shared presence of Being. There can be no clearer or truer knowledge of the white-birch tree than to understand that it, in its own given way, exactly as I, in mine, exists. Likewise, there can be nothing more incorrectly said about the tree than such 'knowledge' that, be it willfully or thoughtlessly, forgets, disregards, obscures or revokes the gift of its being, that very same gift by virtue of which the thinker, the signifier of Being and beings, is able to think at all.

The knowledge of understanding is the knowledge that occurs in encounter, when beings find the presence of Being in each other and quietly, thoughtfully, thankfully wonder at the possibility of knowing, of understanding one another. While the unfathomable presence of Being is most easily recognized and shared among human beings in the experiences of mutual understanding, compassion and love, just as surely does the true knowledge and understanding of ***things*** occur on the basis of mutual

encounter. By virtue of the gift of being, all things may be understood and nothing in the world is alone.

Encountering the white-birch tree in the state of its simplicity, oneness and integrity, that is, in such a way that may offer the possibility of understanding it, is not as easy as it may seem. Just as we may interact with dozens of people in a busy day without any prospect or pretense of 'knowing' them, so we should not overestimate the familiar knowledge of the white-birch tree that is obtained 'in passing' on occasional walks through a park or a wood or as we might view hundreds of examples from the window of a car or train. Such a passing acquaintance is certainly knowledge of a sort. It suffices the everyday need to know, 'what that thing is'. It provides the kind of wholesome though forgetful knowledge of things that is necessary to feel comfortably at home in the world. Such thoughtless thinking that is the everyday norm serves its purpose, but it is the barest form of dismissive knowledge and is far from the understanding of the tree that thinking requires.

So what way must thinking take to understand the white-birch tree in its essence? Certainly, no descriptive prose or montage of photos could begin to suffice. No scientific discourse or botanical analysis could be adequate. The artist or poet may have a chance to hold forth its unique substance in exquisite, condensed form, but for the rest of us, some time and adjustment of thinking is required. How much time? Well, at best, between 70 and 100 years, which is the optimal life-span of the tree and, coincidentally, also that of the human being. For forest-dwelling people of any prehistoric,

ancient or modern time, who share their world and interact with the white-birch tree over the span of a lifetime, understanding the tree as a fellow subject of Being will come as naturally as drawing breath. Just as surely, their 'scientific' knowledge of the tree and the world in which it lives, though limited, will be uniquely profound and extensive. They will be able to report on the tree as it presents itself in all its states of health and disease, its germination, growth and eventual decline. They will be able to expound at length as to who among its neighboring trees it likes and dislikes, in what sort of soil and on what terrain it thrives. They will recognize the distinct effects of early frosts or abnormally rainy or dry conditions on its growth and well-being. They will know what balance of light and shade it finds most comfortable, what insects and animals are its enemies and what birds make their homes most happily in its branches.

While the image of the white-birch tree that is called to mind by the city-dweller, the botanist and the forest-dweller will be generally the same one, yet the *ideas* and the understanding that is possessed by these three thinkers could not be more varied. No one could doubt the appreciation that may be deeply felt for the tree by those whose walks through a city park may be among the few daily opportunities to experience the presence of what we are calling 'naturally-occurring' things. Nor is there a question of the botanist's breadth of knowledge about the tree as a living organism or his or her fine attunement to the internal and external forces and processes that determine the course of its life. Both of these common modes of understanding the white-birch

tree will form a basis of knowledge, an idea of 'what it is', that is sufficient to the purposes of enjoyment, of appreciation and, in the case of the botanist or arborist, of doing all that is necessary to keep designated trees or populations of trees in a state of good health. Nevertheless, there can also be no doubt that it's the forest-dweller whose ideas most closely approximate a true understanding of what the white-birch tree first and finally ***is***. The profound completeness, wisdom and power of this understanding is contained exactly in its simplicity and in the seeming childlike naivete of its thinking. Such true understanding is simply unable to imagine the possibility of ignoring, denying or dismissing the being of the tree as a fellow presence of Being in the world, i.e., unable to view it as a mere 'object'. Such thinking is naturally thankful for the gift of being that it shares with the tree, naturally respectful of the right of the tree to be itself and present itself in all its given strength and splendor, naturally fearful of the harm that may come if this right is forgotten or disregarded. The simple genius of such understanding lies in the fact that it understands itself not as possessing knowledge *about* the tree but as *knowing the tree*… knowing the tree *itself*. There is a depth and perfection to such knowledge, understanding, that cannot be compared to any other way of knowing.

This way of knowing, understanding, is at once wise, aesthetic, practical and scientific. To understand in this way is to be profoundly, viscerally impressed with the tenacity with which the tree holds its ground and with the way that it, while seemingly stationary and motionless, in fact moves relentlessly in towering pursuit of the sky.

Those who know the tree will naturally know that, in its living state, it is a cornucopia of life-enhancing essences and materials. They will gratefully take from it the buds, leaves, branches, sap, pitch and bark that it offers in abundance and from which an amazing variety of healthful and useful products can be made. When there is a need to take the tree for its wood, it will surely be taken, but taken thoughtfully and thankfully in the spirit of sacrifice. Knowing the tree is to know that it is the living measure of time, that its girth and height at the time of its being taken represents the passage of perhaps as many years as the person taking it has been alive and perhaps many more. As everyone knows, the record of these years is laid down in the wood of the tree as can be seen and counted in the concentric rings made visible on its falling. On a moment's reflection, the person who thoughtfully takes the tree may notice a particularly narrow and discolored ring of growth and, counting nine from the edge, remember that unusually dry and difficult year a decade ago, recalling how everyone suffered that year. To know the tree is to understand that its bulk, its wood, is a massive articulation of the passage of time.

The method of thinking does not of course have the lifetime required to understand the white-birch tree as the forest-dweller naturally does. And yet it certainly can understand and articulate the essence of the profound way of knowing, understanding things that comes naturally to the forest-dweller, living as he does in lifelong, intimate proximity to the natural world, the world of 'naturally occurring things'. Then, from this basis, it will be possible to contrast this way of knowing to our own, modern one,

living predominantly as we do in a world of man-made and synthetic things.

The perfection that we have ascribed to knowledge of the white-birch tree that naturally belongs to the forest-dweller owes itself to what we have called his *understanding* of the tree. Indeed, it is only and exactly this understanding that could be said to be lacking in the casual knowledge of the passerby and the extensive, systematic knowledge of the scientist. Now it remains to ask, in what is this understanding constituted and how could its elements be thoughtfully, systematically applied to things with a view to knowing them more fully and completely than 'objective' ways of knowing can possibly achieve.

Is it any wonder that understanding itself, the unique talent of human being, would be for that very being the most difficult thing to understand - difficult not for the obscure complexity of its terms but rather precisely for their evident simplicity. While the development of the modern world is ample evidence of the power of human reason to confront and resolve the most challenging complexity, just as surely does this development demonstrate how elusive to that same reason is the plenitude and simplicity of true understanding. The impenetrable simplicity of the forest dweller's understanding of the white-birch tree is based simply on the fact of his being its neighbor for a lifetime, being a witness to its origin and its end as a member of the wider family of trees that may be called 'white-birch', just as he understands himself as entering the world, dwelling there

for a time and then leaving it as a member of the family that may be called 'human'.

And what quality of the white-birch tree presents itself to the forest-dweller over this lifetime of experience that is not available to the casual or scientific observer and that could be said to constitute a 'true understanding' of the tree? Essentially, his presence to the tree in the full dimensions of its space and time, its time of arrival, of flourishing and decline, gives him the unique opportunity to know the tree ***as a whole***. Seeing its first appearance on the bare, forest floor, he is aware of the givenness of Being that all beings possess. Seeing the way that it is, its struggle to find light, anchor itself to the nourishing earth and grow strong into the unique fullness of itself, he is aware of all that makes it worthy to be what it is - to be called a 'white-birch tree' - *this* thing and no other. Seeing the end of the tree, whether it be taken sacrificially for human purposes or by the natural forces of time, brings to mind most explicitly the mute, unasked and unanswerable question of its being, the meaning and reason of its presence to the world. With a profound simplicity and wholeness of thought that could be mistaken for naivete, the forest-dweller cannot imagine an idea of the tree that would not include all the dimensions of its being - being what it is, in the way that it is, for the reason that it is. Knowing the white-birch tree this way, as a whole, the forest-dweller is present not only to the bright and magnificent sight of it, to the tough, paper feel of its bark, to the strong flavors of its sap in his beer and its buds in his tea. To he or she who would approach the tree with understanding, as a whole, (and this is critical) it will

reveal of itself what cannot be seen, heard, felt, tasted, counted or measured, what is not and cannot be present, what *must* be absent and inaccessible, i.e., its being - its oneness with Being.

Respecting the oneness and wholeness of the named thing (or person) is necessary to true understanding because only in this one-sameness of itself is the fullness of its idea, its essence, the meaning and significance of its being to be found. Only by respecting the oneness of the white-birch tree as it struggles to be what it is (in the way that it is for the reason that it is) will it be possible to move from 'knowledge about' the tree to true knowledge and understanding of the tree in its essence, as a unique presence of the omnipresent absence of Being.

It's useful at this point to recall the unexpected origin of the world of named things. The need to call things by name, to call things, arose in the event of their disappearance, their absence. What need is there for names, ideas, artistic renderings of things that are fully present as they are to the sentient animal or to the earliest men for whom pre-lingual pointing to present things became the first condition of distance in which the world of things began to take its place. What began as a more or less desperate, urgent effort to 'call back' and restore what had been lost, soon took on a life of its own as man realized the power of possessing an *idea* of a thing that could be re-called at will and so would *never* unexpectedly disappear. Thus began the interaction of present things and absent ideas in which the ideas themselves quickly assumed a priority over things - not only naming and knowing them, but changing,

controlling and creating them. Ideas, the essence of named things, must be simultaneously present and absent in things - *present* so as not to become disconnected from the things that they would re-present - and *absent* so as to protect themselves from the vicissitudes of worldly time where things appear and disappear by forces of change, destruction, decay and death. Likewise, ideas constantly do their best to represent the thing in its wholeness, oneness, singularity - in the fullest extent of its being. Ideas of the white-birch tree will be more or less adequate to the extent that they comprehend the tree as one, whole thing in the fullness of its time, as a unique presence of that which, being One, must absent itself from the world and the time of things.

To say that Being itself and the ideas that constitute the being of things are necessarily absent from the world of things brings to mind the question as to where, if not in the world, Being and its ideas can be found. And the short answer is that this absence is and must be conceived vertically. 'Must be' for the simple reason that there is no other place for Being and the true essence of things than the heavenly - 'up'. How else to leave the world? And when the world and human beings find themselves in that direction, occupying the International Space Station for example, 'up' must take on a new and even more perfect meaning, to whatever infinite extent necessary. For Being, being One, must and will be absent from the present world, whatever the world's planetary or galactic extent. The Rightness of 'up' is a spatial vector of radiance that is drawn from the center of the earth along the spine and sinew of man, pointing to a heaven of

Being that is above and beyond this world. Yet prior to this concrete meaning, it is a logical necessity that refers simply to the essential and necessary absence of Being. For the most part though, and since the beginning of time, simply 'up' in the common sense has been sufficient.

The necessary absence of Being from the world has literally, physically, in the most real and concrete sense and over millions of years, drawn man vertically 'up' in a striving for Rightness that forms his very body and permeates his every thought word and deed. Man is created, literally, physically to under-stand the Oneness of absent Being in the attitudes of prayer, adoration and supplication and to under-stand the being of present things by thinking the ideas that most faithfully, fully and rightfully constitute their absent being. All thinking finally resolves itself in this primordial, vertical under-standing of Being and the being of things. After all, understanding, signifying Being is the essence of thinking, is the essence of man.

8b - Time and the Stillness of Things

The forest-dweller's unique understanding of the white-birch tree develops naturally, in time, as part of his way of life. Over many years, he comes to know the tree not only as a passing acquaintance is known but also to understand it as only a friend or family member can be understood. Clearly, the key element of this understanding is the **time** that allows for the thing or person to be known 'as a whole', in the relative fullness of its, his or her being. The unique singularity of the white-birch tree, the idea that best represents the fullness of its being, is best revealed to the one who remains in its presence through the whole time of its presence as the forest-dweller does by natural circumstance, or to the one who opens himself to the presence of the tree toward an understanding of its being as the thinker does by method. Of course, the method of thinking can only poorly emulate the understanding that comes with the forest-dweller's lifetime of intimate, concrete and interactive experience with the tree. But emulate it can and how much more adequate an idea of the tree will result from even that deficient emulation than from a way of thinking that willfully ignores the origin, purpose and direction of its being.

While we are accustomed to think of time as an inexorable forward movement that is characterized by constant change and with which we are more or less pressed to keep pace, the example of the white-birch tree

shows that, with respect to the being of things and the possibility of understanding them, time has an entirely different, nearly opposite sense. In fact, the unique wholeness and integrity of any thing (or person) will reveal itself only to that way of knowing that can remain still as the thing presents itself in the fullness of its time. The stillness of the forest dweller's presence to the white-birch tree is a given of his way of life. With few if any roads or means of communication with which to get 'carried away', he occupies, in the one-sameness of himself and his small community, a still point, an identical 'one' in terms of which the multitudinous aspects that constitute the complex oneness of the tree can be not only known in their complexity, but understood in the given simplicity of their being. Likewise, the thinker knows that he must bring himself to a halt in the presence of that thing or person which he would truly understand - suspending pre-conceived ideas and listening attentively in singular attunement to the voice or silent presence of that thing or person whom he would know. Both the thinker and the psychotherapist recognize that they must systematically evince the attentive stillness that is necessary for understanding to occur by method, i.e., outside the natural contexts of friendship, family and lifelong presence to things.

The reason that true understanding of things requires stillness of thought is given in the simple fact that absent Being, which must be One and therefore infinitely 'still' (i.e., eternal) and infinite in extent, makes itself present in the finite and temporary being of things. Naturally, therefore, the Being that is given to all things is reflected

in their imperfect 'still'-ness, one-ness and duration, in the perfecting idea that their name makes an effort to call and recall. The stillness of a thing, reflecting the gift of its being, is its readiness to endure and remain what it is. By remaining 'still' what it is through time and change for as long as it is, the individual white-birch tree simultaneously announces both the presence and the absence of Being, that is to say, it is temporal. To understand the presence of the white-birch tree as temporal is simply to understand that it is present as limited and incomplete, that the oneness of its being is absent. And since the singular direction of absence from the present world is 'up', it logically follows that the very idea of time and temporality refer primarily and substantially in the *vertical* dimension, to the *not yet* present possibility of things being wholly themselves as sub-jects of Being and to the loss, the *passing* of such possibility when time is 'up'.

8b(1) – Time and the Passing of Things

'Time is up'. This common expression rings with the true meaning of earthly temporality and reveals, unknowingly, the essential dynamic in terms of which the idea of time and its passing can be understood. It refers to the passing of a worldly thing or event, the final exhaustion of its possibilities and the limit of its being-present. When 'time is up', the game is over and the score is final. What chance there was, is lost. What or who was once present has passed and no longer exists in the world of possibilities. The singular integrity, oneness and 'still'-ness that constituted their being present to the world is given up, leaving only traces of dust, decay, ash and perhaps fossil, memory or ink in a faint and fading record of their being here. 'Time is up'. What this expression unknowingly though pointedly signifies is the vertical dimension in which the passing of time primarily, though unexpectedly occurs. 'Unexpectedly' because thoughtless thinking tends to prioritize the horizontal dimension as the matrix in which time passes with the steady coming and going of days, weeks, months and years that can be measured with the clock and marked on the calendar. My tomorrow arrives like a car that appears over the horizon, passes steadily before my presence and gradually recedes to the distance of the opposite horizon, out of sight and into my past as yesterday. The coming and going of the car on the road in front of me forms a moment of my particular experience of time in terms of a future, present

and passing event that occurs as a movement relative to my point of stillness in the horizontal dimension. Indeed for all of us, as individuals, certain cars, people, kayaks, birds, trains, hockey games, elections, planes, judicial hearings, concerts, thunderstorms pass in the same way before our presence, reinforcing the idea of time as the coming and going of things in the horizontal plane.

Of course, there is no set of such experiences that would be so repetitive, consistent and convincing as to firmly instill the sense of time's horizontal passing that human beings generally possess … except one. Whereas the car in this example gives a sense of the passage of time only to me and to anyone present on the road with me, the rising, passing and setting of the sun across the sky is present 'at the same time' to 'everyone' and thus imparts such a powerful impression of regularity, consistency and universality that this daily passage from horizon to horizon understandably comes to be equated with the idea of time itself. Even while the archaic notion of 'everyone-at-the-same-time' was abandoned many centuries ago along with the flat-earth model of the universe, even in light of the modern discovery of time's relativity to spatial and gravitational context, the lived experience of time remains bound to the horizontal dimension of coming and going that is based on the movement of proximate, passing things and events and especially on the movement of the earth around the sun, the source of days, of light, of life on earth. For the most part, time is experienced precisely *as* this passing, which is certified, marked and measured with calendar and clock as the very time in which we live.

The thoughtless thinking of science and everyday life naturally conceives of time 'objectively' as the relationship, determined with mathematical precision by the scientist, of passing things. It thinks this way because it does not have time to do otherwise, occupied as it generally is, first with its need, then its desire and finally with its lust for the acquisition and control of all that lies within the given horizon… food, clothing, shelter, mates… power. The thoughtless, objective thinking of our everyday life has no time, is constantly 'pressed' for time, because it does not, for the most part, understand time.

Time, simply, is the natural consequence of the omnipresence of Being, the necessary absence of which is reflected in the passing of things. This passing is the time of things, their coming into being, the duration of their presence and final going when their time is up, to unite with Being in its absence. The passage of time is thus essentially not a movement of things in relation to each other (however planetary or stellar in size those things may be), but a relationship of things to Being, in which the inconceivable gift of its presence and the absolute necessity of its absence are, in time, reflected. Given being, things come into the world where they stay for a time until they must leave when their time is up. The passage of time is this passage of present things relative to Being, which, being One, *must* be absent. And it is a passage that is only conceivable in the vertical plane since 'up' is the one and only possible direction of absence from the busy, horizontal world of present things. This is to say nothing new. That 'Heaven' is the domain of

Being, the seat of ideas and the destiny of beings has been well understood since man himself sensed the call of Being, assumed the vertical, honored his dead and began to think.

Many pages ago, we set out on the way of thinking to discover the possibility of achieving true and essential knowledge of things guided by the conviction that no such knowledge can be possible that disregards or takes for granted the *one* 'thing' that *all* possible things must possess - being. On this way, we have come upon the idea of time as inevitable and necessary to things insofar as the gift of their being, with all its wonderful possibilities, must be limited in order to reflect, in their small, unique and temporary way, the Oneness of Being and its necessary *absence* from the world of things. This very limitation, in its absolute inevitability and the passing into absence that it requires of things, is the essence of what we call 'time'. As it turns out, the absence of Being to the world of present things sets forth the momentous, ontological dynamic of time and founds the human experience of time as one of passing. The passing of things - planets, cars, birds, days - in relation to each other and in terms of which time is normally experienced and reckoned, is a compelling, experiential metaphor of this essential, existential passing. Our 'objective' reckoning of time by the movement of things, the time that it 'takes' for a certain change or movement to occur (e.g, the 24 hours of 'time' that it takes for a full revolution of the earth), is possible only insofar as there is a stillness... a thing or person (i.e. a being)... present in terms of which this passing can be observed, measured,

marked and comprehended. Without this stillness of presence, the presence of Being, any idea of the passing of things in relation only to each other, i.e., 'objectively', is meaningless. Ultimately, the passing of things in *any* relation, including the celestial movements that engender the human sense of the passage of time, must be founded on the idea of Being, its eternal stillness and the fundamental possibility of its presence in the temporary being-still of things and persons.

When we first raised the question of the possibility of achieving true knowledge of things, we cited the clock on the wall above my head as an example of how objective thinking attempts to bring a thing to full account (know it) in terms of the mathematical relationships of its component parts at the macro-mechanical, elemental, molecular, atomic and sub-atomic levels. In contrast to this predominant way of conceiving the clock, we proposed the method of thinking as a way toward achieving an understanding of its essence by considering the idea of its being… what it is, in the way that it is, for the reason that it is, as a subject of Being. Now that we have gone some way toward clarifying this method and how it might be followed, it's time to apply it concretely to the thing of our example, the clock, to see if we can discover an idea of its being that might reasonably be called 'true'.

This particular clock is of the traditional, mechanical variety. It's a busy little machine, driven with a keywound spring that provides the minute force necessary to keep the brass-weighted pendulum in motion. A second spring, wound with the same key, arms the mechanism that

gently chimes the hour. It makes a constant, quick 'ticking' sound in the typical manner of such clocks which, surprisingly, is not annoying. On the contrary, the clock brings a certain warmth and comfort to the room with the incessant monotony of its beats. In comparison, even the slightest, softest drip-drip of the faucet, when it is constant, can hardly be tolerated. In essence, the idea of the clock is all about free-flowing movement, so the sound that it makes, while very similar in constancy and tone to the faucet's drip, is more akin to the pleasant babble of the nearby brook than the constrained *lack* of flow that is brought painfully to mind by the objectively similar but unbearable sound from the faucet. No doubt, it's as this barely moving 'anti-clock' that the water torture has its effect.

The coming-into-being that the clock announces is characterized by constant newness in which fresh possibilities-of-being continually present themselves to the world with each new moment of time. This phase of time's existential flow releases the joy of 'having time' that arrives with the birth of a child, with each new dawn and at the clock's strike of 12 that announces the start of a new year. Likewise, the passing of time may be tinged with sadness, regret or anxiety as each tick of the clock brings worldly beings closer to the moment when time is up, possibilities recede and the final passage into absence is at hand.

The purpose of the clock is to 'tell the time' and for the most part, the time that it tells about is the 'objective' time of everyday life, i.e., the passage of time, understood as the constant passing of minutes, hours and days in

precise synchronization with the revolution of the earth. The core of the machine is a revolving spindle on which are fixed two 'hands' that point to the precise time of day that is conveniently laid out on the perimeter of a dial in terms of twenty-four hours of sixty minutes each. At the base of the pendulum is a fine screw that can raise or lower a heavy, brass disc to effect the most minute change in the speed of its swing as well as that of the hands themselves, thus ensuring the accuracy of their report. This fine adjustment must be made in reference to a timepiece of even greater assured accuracy since the synchronicity of our clocks with the true state of the earth's movement as well as with each other is crucial to the punctual scheduling of everyday life. In the manner of a communication device, the clock delivers a distinct connection with the world of coming and going and makes possible the scheduling of appointments and coordination of meetings and events on all scales of size and importance.

In the manner of its controlled and constant movement, the clock announces what we call 'the time' in a clear and distinct way. However, we have asserted that the essence of time that it reports derives fundamentally not from the passage of 'objective' things (whatever their planetary scale) relative to each other ('the time' of the clock-face) but from the passage of Being's presence (in things) into absence. The worldly time of things indeed 'moves' and 'constantly' but in the sense of be-coming present and passing away. And as we have seen, the 'whence' and 'wherefore' of this existential coming and going is conceivable only in vertical terms since this

'movement' is predicated upon Being, whose Oneness requires absence from the world. The clock of our example indicates the priority of this vertical dimension when, at the height of the day that it is made to measure, as well as at the moment of the new day's arrival, both of its 'hands' point in unison – rightly – ***up***. Both the presence and absence of Being are necessary to initiate the possibility of the time of its day. Being, One, absent and infinite in itself could be only itself but with ***time*** becomes everything in the world! Being loves the world. There is no better way to say it.

8b(2) – The Ontological Basis of Time

To get a clearer picture of the priority of this existential dimension of time as against the modern experience of time's passage that our mechanical and electronic clocks report to us, it could be useful to remember what the human experience of time was like during the period which preceded the advent of such time-keeping devices. Even considering this advent as having occurred with primitive sundials and water-clocks developed in ancient cultures of 3000 to 6000 years ago, there remains a period of at least 2,000,000 years prior to this during which it is reasonable to assume that man, 'as man', had an experience of time's passage. It's certainly difficult for us moderns to even conceive how different that experience must have been from our own, but we can try.

To conduct this thought experiment successfully, we first need to clear our minds of some habits of thinking about time that are sure to get in our way. The first, which we have already encountered, is the idea that time is an 'objective' sequence of events that is predicated upon movement - primarily the revolution of the earth on its course around the sun, but also further, the movement of passing cars, flowing rivers, falling tennis-balls, growing crystals, soaring rockets, satellites, planets, stars or even the expanding universe of matter. All these movements are understood to 'take time' and so 'time' must then be the thing that these movements take. According to this

logic, if you want to understand time, then just watch and measure the movement of things and it will reveal itself as the 'x' in the equation, even as that equation becomes complicated by speed, acceleration, the curvature of movement, gravitational forces and the surprising properties of matter. Although the genius of mathematics is able to keep up with all these permutations to determine its 'x' of factor 'time', this logic, though highly useful and interesting in itself, ultimately fails to deliver any coherent understanding of time. As we have seen, without the stillness of being that is given especially to human beings but to all things, such movements are possible to *conceive* but *im*possible as a 'matter of fact'. Only with the advent of absent Being's presence to the world, man, do these mundane, planetary or astrophysical movements become wonderfully, magically, inspiringly possible as part of the one world of being which, as temporal, must be constantly in motion… growing, changing, passing. The idea of time as a merely relational entity, a passing that can occur apart from the stillness of Being's presence, is a chimera. The ‘factor’ of time cannot be its fact. And in fact, the time of the world begins with man's being risen to the idea of Being in his upright posture, use of language and nascent thinking. Without Being and the time of its absent presence that man brings to the world, nothing is possible. With Being and its time, everything is possible, including all that took place in the however distant past, *before* man's arrival. Presence is the possibility of the past and its only possibility.

The second habit of thought that we must try to put aside is our natural inclination to place a story of events in a frame of time that we are comfortable with. For example, a documentary film concerning the development of man over the vast, three million year period that we are considering could be expected to graphically present all its key ideas within the few hours that the topic will remain interesting to its audience. An in-depth book on the topic will immerse the reader for considerably longer. And of course, a lifetime of study in the field of paleoanthropology is in a different category entirely when it comes to the possibility of appreciating what the experience of time would be like for man over so many prehistoric ages. And yet even the anthropologist, whose life's work is to reconstruct the story of the key events in prehistory that led to man's ascendancy, might have some difficulty conceiving the sense of time that was given to the experience of prehistoric man. This difficulty would naturally arise out of the fact that what actually characterizes the 'time' of this inconceivably vast period of early human being is exactly the *opposite* of what his or her scientific interest is looking for, i.e., it is characterized by a near complete *lack* of events. To make this thought experiment, one needs to 'get their head around' the idea that for the period of three *million* or more years of man's early life, i.e., for 150,000 generations of human experience, virtually **nothing happened**.

We say 'virtually' since the development of the first primitive tools and spears, the construction of shelters, the use of fire and the fabrication of clothing certainly

kept man busy in a manner of speaking. The mental movie that is conjured up in an effort to imaginatively comprehend this short list of eventful moments in prehistory is not a very long or even particularly interesting one, however hard we try to effectively dramatize it out of respect for the accomplishments of our distant forebearers. Also, it should be kept in mind that even these few, modest developments predominantly occurred at an accelerating pace only in the last one-tenth, or about 300,000 years, of man's presence 'as man' on earth. This leaves the unimaginable period of 2.5 or so million years of human experience with indeed virtually nothing, to our modern way of thinking, 'going on'. And yet, our sense of the momentous significance of this vast, seemingly 'uneventful' period holds us, layman and paleoanthropologist alike, in a compelling fascination and a desire to tell and retell its story as fully and faithfully as possible.

The days that form the modern experience of time are counted, divided and articulated in 'minute' detail. In this reckoning, the period of one rotation of the earth and a single cycle of light and darkness is divided comfortably into 1,440 of these minutes, packaged neatly in twenty-four, 60-minute hours. The further division of these minutes into 60 seconds has little practical utility but serves as a reminder, by means of the clock's audible tick, the visible sweep of its 'second hand' or the relentless counting of its digital readout, that these minutes, hours and all the events of this day that the clock is made to measure, are ***passing***. The 'pace' of this passing, as measured by the clock is constant, anchored as it is to the

invariable rotation of the earth. The fact that this rate of rotation is 'objectively' the same today as it has been for all 3 million year of man's presence on earth fosters the misconception that our modern experience of time would be essentially the same as that of our distant ancestors. After all, the 'units' in which time is experienced, the days of light and darkness, the weeks of the lunar cycle, the months that mark the seasons are substantially unchanged over this period. Can't it be assumed that the prehistoric day of 2 million years ago was comprised of the same 1,440 minutes (with allowance for slight geo-physical variations) as our modern one? Isn't it the invariable, cyclical 'passage' of the sun, moon and stars across the horizon that forms the primordial basis of the human experience of time, only lately measured and codified by clock and calendar? Certainly and without question, our sense of time is conditioned by the passing of things relative to one another and what greater, more substantial and reliable terms of this passing could there be than the celestial momentum of the planet on which we live in its orbital motion relative to the luminous center of the solar system.

It's easy to understand how the modern mind would especially seize upon this objective sense of time, preoccupied as it is with the rapidly increasing rate of the 'passing' of things, people, places and events in the horizontal dimension of modern life. With the latest means of transportation and information technology at his disposal, the modern person is 'present' to exponentially more 'passing' things and events, even as they may occur simultaneously across multiple 'time-zones', than could

have been imagined a scant century, not to mention millennium, ago. At this rate of coming and going, the clock's 'minute' division of the day into its count of 1,440 equal parts is well used by the modern person. Compare this experience of the passage of time to the human experience of time in remote prehistory. The scale of passing people, things, news and events that occur in the 1,440 minutes of a single modern, urban day would not have been equaled in all of 1,440 **millennia** of prehistoric time. There is no comparison.

The objectivization of time which reduces it to a factor of the relative movement of things in relation to each other is a way to bring the time of life under control. By precisely counting and punctuating our days with calendar and clock, we come to feel ourselves the masters of time rather than at its mercy. In the ancient, flat-earth view, the whole of creation was assumed to exist in a single time of day, defined by the sun's passing across the sky. This simple objectivization of time assumes that a single, definable moment of time *is present* to 'everything under the sun' simultaneously. And for the most part, this simplistic view remains the basis of our everyday experience of time, the time in which we organize our daily lives, even in the modern age. Of course, modern thinking must adjust to the complication of the multiple 'time-zones' that the spherical earth throws into the equation. With this additional factor in play, the calculation to determine precisely what time ***it*** is at any given moment becomes a bit more complex. I understand that it's a mistake to call my Asian friend in 'my' afternoon since that same time is the middle of 'his'

night. Nevertheless, it remains understood as an 'objective' fact that we awaken at different times of the *very same* day in the historical matrix and that, notwithstanding the marked difference in our experience of the 'times' of this day, our shared *time,* given our shared situation in the earth's gravitational field and its position in the solar-system, is ultimately, 'objectively' equivalent. After all, in an emergency, I could call him in the middle of his night so that we could talk in each other's *presence* – a shared 'presence' that would seem to transcend completely the clock and just barely the calendar and yet which remains solidly, 'objectively' anchored in both of these as measures of the assumed bedrock of temporal passing- the diurnal cycle.

Clearly, the increasing complexity of determining the objective 'factor- *time*' is a natural consequence of the increasing speed and acceleration with which things and persons can be seen to pass relative to one another in the last century. What need had a man of diurnal 'time-zones' at a time when it took weeks to move from one to the next? Time-zones came into being when the speed of rail travel made it possible to lose or gain an hour (as a deviation from solar-noon) on a 12 hour trip, which made scheduling difficult. The idea that might occur at mid-day to a 19th century citizen of Boston, that, 'it must now be night in China', would seem abstract and inconsequential indeed , except perhaps if they were to fondly imagine a friend or relative who was living there, sleeping peacefully under a distant Chinese moon. And yet this imaginative state becomes quite real a century later when traces of a human voice are able to cross the planet at the

speed of light, creating the 'simultaneity' of presence that is required to hold a real, if virtual, conversation. As the speed of the movement of things increases, so does the difficulty of determining the objectively 'correct time' in which this movement takes place. I may experience this in my momentary confusion when asked the simple question , "What time is it?", on a flight from New York to Moscow. For the crew of the International Space Station, circling the earth at 17,000 mph and passing through all 24 time-zones in a matter of 92 minutes, the diurnal sense of time is no longer a part of proximate experience. Nevertheless, they keep their watches set to 'Greenwich Mean Time' in order to organize their 'days' in the familiar pattern of diurnal light and darkness in common with co-workers and dear ones on the ground.

Advances in rail, auto, air and finally extraplanetary rocket travel, along with research into the speed and useful purposes of electromagnetic energy have necessitated mathematics of ever-increasing complexity in determining 'objective' time as a factor of passing things. When, among these 'things', are included not only substantial ships, planets, railcars, jet aircraft and artillery shells but subatomic wave(?)particles moving at a velocity of 670,615,200 mph, the everyday sense of time as passing at the comfortable pace of seconds, minutes, hours and days would seem to pass into the realm of quaint illusion. To comprehend the passing of things at such speeds, a new mathematics of factor- *time* has been worked out in the ingenious theories of relativity and with further precision and extension in the ongoing formulations of theoretical and astro physics. These ideas

transform and surpass the Galilean-Newtonian (and everyday) notion of objective time which conceives it as a uniform matrix in terms of which the motion of things can be measured, as a simple factor of distance and velocity in a given frame of reference. They lay out the mathematical reasoning behind the assertion that factors-neither *time* nor *space* can be properly determined in these simplistic terms when the properties of electromagnetic energy, gravitational forces, interstellar distances and velocities at or near the speed of light are taken into account.

The 'space-time continuum' of modern, theoretical physics mathematizes the motion of the most minute and distant bodies of 'mass' and waves of energy that are detectable by increasingly sophisticated and precise measuring machines. For the measurement of time, atomic clocks now divide the fleeting second into over 9 billion equal 'ticks' of the cesium atom. To make an accurate measure of space, be sure that your meter-stick meets the new standard equaling the distance that light travels in a vacuum during the time interval of 1/299,792,488th of a second. The new 'James Webb' space telescope will, it is explained on the NASA website, be able to spot a bumble bee at an equivalent distance from the earth to the moon (a timely analogy, given another piece of recent news that the real bumble bee has been placed on the list of endangered species.) The CERN Hadron Collider is made to atomize the most minute components of atoms in an effort to discover… the properties of even more minute particles that might be considered the *real* 'building blocks of the universe'.

Looking through the lens of these incredible, mechanical, mathematical and theoretical devices, it should come as no surprise that this branch of science indeed sees a 'universe' that is itself incredible, mechanical, mathematical and, for the most part, theoretical.

As with all scientific thinking, the ideal of such investigation is to discover properties and laws of motion, matter and energy, time and space that are universally valid, predictable and repeatable independent of any observer's awkward presence. What is sought is the mathematical model of a universe that is, like the measured speed of light, *'the same for all observers'*, which is to say, 'the same for *no* observers' or, simply, in a word, 'objective', having no direct dependency on a 'subjective' point of view or particular frame of reference. To build this model, the subjective observer is methodically eliminated and replaced by the array of measuring apparatuses themselves along with theoretical-mathematical tools of analysis that are applied to their data output. These analytical tools are also given the task of transforming the conclusions that might apply to the given, experimental frame of reference (the particular velocity and gravitational context in which the devices are set up) so as to be equally valid insofar as it (the experimental frame) might interact with any other conceivable 'passing' frame of reference. This methodological process creates a sort of 'super-observer' (a.k.a. 'science') which is theoretically unencumbered by any inconvenient gravitational or spatio-temporal frame of reference and thus able to execute the 'pure math' of the mechanics of the universe.

Seen in terms of this mathematical model, the idea of objective time does indeed undergo some amazing and mind-bending transformations. Nevertheless, the simplistic, Galilean-Newtonian formulation of factor-*time* remains applicable and appreciably accurate for **most** earthly intents and purposes (GPS reports being a frequently-cited exception) and even for those that might involve travel to neighboring planets within our solar-system. There's more time-confusion resulting from our annual shift to 'daylight savings time', for example, than a trip to Mars or Jupiter would entail. However, when the human subject is sent fancifully off toward distant galaxies at speeds, given the distances involved, necessarily at some large fraction of the speed of light, it turns out that no amount of synchronizing of clocks could suffice to keep him or her 'in touch' with ground control. Passing over such distances and at such speeds precludes the possibility of synchronicity between earthly events and those taking place on the space-vessel. So different have become their 'places' in time and aspects of gravity, that their clocks would move quite literally at different rates, entirely appropriate to their given frame of reference, but requiring serious mathematics to reconcile their factually irreconciliable temporal relations. A graphic depiction of this idea is the oft-repeated sci-fi scene where, on their return to earth, these fantastic space-travelers discover that many years have passed, events have occurred, loved ones have aged during the relatively short time that they were away.

As with all scientific thinking, the 'objective' formulations of the idea of time that are derived from the

calculations of the scientific 'super-observer' compel adherence and belief by virtue of the irrefutable accuracy and precision of their calculations, the demonstrable repeatability of the experimental basis on which they are founded and the practical purposes to which they can be applied. Then, to further cement their unquestioned acceptance, these ideas are also promoted in well-funded, graphics-heavy mass media presentations in which engaging science popularizers (and their supporting legion of computer-graphics designers) lay out with impressive, academic authority, scientific certainty and astounding, visual detail exactly how 'our universe' works.

The theoretical and practical success of this way of thinking, as with any good application of the scientific method, lies in the ability of its 'super-observer' to establish order and **control** over that which it seeks to understand. And surely, the application of this method of thinking to the foundational dimensions of *space* and *time*, in terms of which all the matter and energy of the universe is measured, indeed yields the most profound insight into the form, texture, extent and 'workings' of this universe. And yet, this profound insight gives way to equally profound error when it mistakes the control and mastery of time and space that is granted to its experimental super-observer for the true *understanding* of these dimensions that is granted only to those real 'observers' who understand *themselves* as limited, mortal, world-bound (which is not say, 'earth-bound') subjects of Being. Scientific inquiry is interested in the being of things only to the extent of giving a precise account of

how things **are**, whether the things in question are the mating habits of a certain species of beetle or, as in the present case, 'the workings of the universe' of time and space. The accuracy of its experimental observations and the validity of the scientific debates that they inspire are not in question. But a serious error of thinking is made when the ideas that emerge from these rarefied debates fail to recognize the limited interest and scope of their questioning and, necessarily, therefore, of their conclusions. The glaring failure of these ideas to adequately account for their object becomes especially pronounced when the 'objects' in question are the very time and space that must be the pillars of any possible universe or world.

It's for the science of physics to address the question and work out '**How** time is' in a mathematically coherent account of the passing of things relative to one another. The impressive results of this way of thinking about things are seen in man's new-found ability to travel confidently into and beyond the earth's orbit and virtually to the far reaches of the solar system. As for venturing further into space with some method of achieving the time-cheating speeds necessary to reach the stars 'in a reasonable amount of time'… well, that remains to be seen. In any case, the wizard-like control of nature by the 'rocket' and 'atomic' as well as the more mundane sciences, would seem to put their ideas about this very nature and its time beyond doubt or question. Who would not rather believe the account of a 'super-observer' over that of a thinking subject? But the mathematical thinking of science should not be confused with thinking itself

because in the end, it does not even begin to accomplish what thinking sets out to do. Where science seeks the predictive certainty and precision that allows for the control of things, thinking, in the simple fullness of its purpose, seeks the *understanding* of things in the fullness of their being. That is to say, thinking thinks the *ideas* of the things *themselves*. It proceeds first and finally not with the intention of subjecting the object to its use and control, but with the fervent desire to under-stand it in the stillness of its essence as a fellow subject of Being, as one being understands another, thankfully, as a reflection of the being that is given to all things that are.

Science has no idea what to do with things except to count, measure and control them. Justified by its impressive success in bringing the world of things 'under control', this way of thinking becomes at best forgetful, at worst arrogantly dismissive of the profound, ontological dimension of things, their rightful being what they are, which is the only basis from which their true nature, reason, purpose and meaning can possibly be understood. As we have seen, the scientific method wears ontological blinders that restrict its interest to the '**how**' of things. To question a thing more profoundly as to '**what**' it is or to even dare to wonder as to its inherent reason or purpose, '**why**' it may have been given being, is generally deemed not only foolish and unnecessary but seriously counter-productive to the scientific objective. Applied in the present case to the question of what lies at the very foundation of experience, the question of time, the blindness of this logic is especially apparent. After its impressive, mathematical discourse as to *how* this

dimension measurably manifests itself in the passing of things, events and observers relative to each other, there will naturally be presented the further question about the thing being measured… "Yes, I understand how time works in these models of motion and the importance of these formulas to the accuracy of our GPS systems, but beyond that, what **IS** time? – the time of persons and things in the world, the time of history, action and development, the time of birth, death and decay?" And to this question, the science of theoretical physics, for all its mathematical and experimental genius, answers with an almost simple-minded certainty and clarity:

"Time is what is measured by the clock."

For the purposes of its objective logic and interest, that is the **only** admissible definition. It's true enough. What could be more clear and certain… and yet as void of meaning and substance as the endless vacuum of space through which its hypothetical travelers would need to pass at hypothetical speeds in order to make these models substantially relevant to any real 'observer'.

"Time is what is measured by the clock". This simple axiom unknowingly contains more wisdom and depth of meaning than science could possibly conceive. True to its habit of ignoring the essence of a thing in favor of its utility, scientific method is too busy measuring things to stop, think and understand the significance of what has been said. Impressive advancements in the science of 'clock-making' that allow these measurements to be taken in billionths of a second and the consequent refinement of proven theory that these advances allow should not be mistaken for advancements in the understanding of time.

The fact is that neither the *clock* nor the *time* that it measures will be adequately understood by the sum (nor any mathematical result) of these measures, no matter how precisely they are made. Rather, thinking seeks to understand the essence of the clock and the time that it signifies by questioning the named thing itself – by asking '*What* it ***is***' while remaining open to the possibility that the reason and logic of its being, its '*Why*', might also choose to reveal itself to the patient, respectful and well-intended observer. Returning to our original example of, "the key-would clock that ticks the time on the wall above my head" with which we began this investigation of thinking as a method of knowing, we are ready to ask once again, 'What is this thing' in its essence that signifies time in its peculiar, busy, noisy but unobtrusive way? What ***is*** a 'clock' and what is it trying to tell us about the ***time*** that it is made to signify?

Just as any intention to understand a person begins with knowing their given name as a recognition of the singular individuality that is rightfully theirs, so any thoughtful inquiry into the essence of thing must begin with the name with which it has been called into being. And with this we see that the thing that has been made to 'tell time' has been called, in the English language, a 'clock', the name deriving from the Latin 'clocca', meaning 'bell'. Bell?… Long before the first mechanical clocks were mounted in the towers and crowned the facades of public buildings, substantial bells were set there in the manner of church-bells, not to measure time but to tell it, toll it, sound it. In size, construction and placement, these bells were designed so that their sound

would be heard by everyone around. At the moment of their tolling, the diverse business, bustle and activity of the entire, local population was momentarily given a staying pause in which all thoughts united in a single idea – the idea of time. In this moment of pause, the bell's tolling, whether it be heard from a church tower or a municipal one, evokes a rare sense not of motion or activity but of the ***stillness*** that is necessary for any motion, action or relation to be possible. Amidst the busy comings and goings of everyday life, the sounding of the bell was a reminder of the sacred stillness, the staying, dwelling power that is the basis upon which these comings and goings find their reason and meaning.

The bell does not pretend to rule the busy, worldly day but only asks a moment of attention to the one stillness upon which the passage of time is founded. Long before mechanical clocks were made to atomize time into measured minutes and seconds, the clock in its original form, the **Bell**, was set in place for precisely the opposite purpose – to implore a moment of 'time-keeping' that would reflect the original and true idea of time by sounding the presence of that which, being One, everlasting and infinite in extent, 'at the same time', must be absent. And so this coming presence passes. In this way, the clock, in its true and original sense, recalls to those in its hearing, the One-stillness of Being that is the foundation of the world and the dynamic of time. By imploring those around to 'Stay (stand) for a time', it reminds of the original, vertical dimension in which time is experienced by upright man not as the passing of things in a horizontal plane but as the passing-away of present

things into absence when their time is '***up***'. The bell's toll reminds of the original experience of time's passage that was given to the man of prehistory for whom the passing of things and events in the horizontal plane was virtually nonexistent relative to life in primitive societies of 10,000 years ago, much less a busy day in the life of modern man. For the first thousands of **millennia** of human life on earth, the passage of time would primarily, almost exclusively, be marked by the seasonal coming into being and passing away of given things and fellow beings… trees, flowers, beasts and the lives of parents, mates, children and friends. The sound of the bell is a compelling reminder of the original revelation of time as a constant passage of things, human and other beings, into presence from and to the ever-present absence of Being.

The sound of the bell was heard from the towers of churches and public buildings at the 'high' times of the day, week, month and year. Its ringing would joyfully announce the coming-into-being of life at a birth, baptism or wedding as well as tolling its final passing at the occasion of a funeral. With a more official purpose, it would customarily ring at the beginning, the height and the end of the day – at 6:00, 12:00 and 6:00 o'clock. It certainly is no coincidence that the mechanical clocks that came to replace the bells would be designed such that, precisely and exclusively at these very hours, its 'hands' would be exactly vertical and furthermore that, at the beginning and height of the day, at noon and midnight, both hands point in unison, 'up'. In this way, the clock-face emulates the bell and the vertical dimension of time

from which the meaning of its sound is derived. On a smaller scale, even the mechanical clock of our first example that keeps the time in this room has three distinct means of making its report – by its constant 'tick', by the periodic sound of its chime and by the pointing of its hands on the clock-face. Together, these manifestations combine to 'tell time' in a way that rightfully suggests both the stillness and the passing that is necessary to the being of temporary things. This sense is essentially lost when time is represented in the strict, numerical terms of the modern digital 'clock', reporting as does with perfect accuracy 'what time it is', but revealing nothing as to what this very time, in essence, is.

8b(3) – Time, Eternity and the Significance of Death

The everyday attitude of thoughtless thinking naturally conceives of time as a factor of the movement of things, primarily celestial bodies, relative to each other. Time ***is*** the 'day' that it takes for the earth to make a single revolution in its orbital journey around the sun. When the experimental methods and mathematical formulations of natural science are applied to the issue, this objective way of thinking is taken to amazing extremes of precision, when, for example, it is stated that time ***is*** the one 9-billionths of a 'second' that it takes for a single oscillation of a caesium atom or the warping of temporal reality that would occur when relative movement is taken to the speed of light. As with all scientific thinking, the inherent purpose of its objectivity is to place the phenomenon of time comfortably under the control of the scientific super-observer, by subjecting the phenomenon to its inescapable mathematical logic. True indeed are its conclusions. Accurate indeed are its predictions. Powerful indeed are its capacities to control the world of things. Mistaken indeed, however, are its pretensions to understand adequately the things themselves that it brings under its control.

And difficult it is indeed to break free of the force of this way of thinking and remember that time is originally and essentially constituted not by the passing of things relative to each other but by the ***coming into being*** and

passing away of beings in the world. In other words, time is indeed a passing, but a passing relative to Being itself – a passing into the multiplicity of the temporal world from and to the necessary singularity of Being. The human experience of time, like language, art and consciousness itself, is initiated and founded upon the **loss** of things to immediate *presence* (the state of animal 'consciousness'). The animal is a glorious display of the presence of Being. It is for man to understand that Being, being One**,** must also be wondrously *absent*. And man himself emulates this absence in his own absence from things – the upright dis-stance (from things) in which the world of things (ideas) comes to exist. Realizing this, we can begin to comprehend the positive meaning and momentous significance that is contained in the idea that, for the inconceivable period of 2.5 million years of human experience prior to the first traces of 'human events' (the appearance of tools, clothing, fireplaces), what 'happened' was indeed and definitely – **Nothing** – i.e., the singular awakening of upright man to the necessary and necessarily vertical **absence** of Being that is made manifest first and foremost in the coming into being and passing away of living things and especially of human beings.

The man or woman who was present here, unique, wondrous and beloved, passes into absence as no *thing* possibly can. Their presence was singular and irreplaceable which makes the finality of their passing incomparable to the loss or passing of any other worldly thing or being. Passing things, with time, may return, be replaced or reconstituted. I may lament the loss of my cell

phone but with the understanding that tomorrow it may be found or, if not, replaced with a similar or newer one. Even if my house were to burn with all of my things inside, unique as that house and those things may have been, it is understood that, in the end, houses are houses and things are things and that, with time, everything can be substantially restored or replaced. Compassion makes the loss of a dear cat or dog to that fire more difficult to bear and perhaps it will be decided not to spoil their memory by 'replacing' them. But usually, with time, sentiment gives way to the natural realization that, in the end and for the most part, cats are cats and dogs are dogs. The cute names that are generally given to animals reflect their honored place in the order of being but make no pretense of their ultimate uniqueness or individuality. The passing of a human person on the other hand is an 'event' like no other, a passing of being into an absence that is final, absolute and irredeemable by any worldly means. The human person, thrice-named as a sign of their singular, unique, individual being, is lost to the world in such a way that they can never, with time, even with 'all the time in the world', be restored or replaced. The human being and only the human, among beings, is lost for **eternity**.

Archeological evidence of the practice of human burial dates its beginnings to a period roughly 300,000 year ago. At these earliest sites were found little more than crude, shallow graves perhaps with animal bones or tools put in place near the deceased. Burial sites of a later period of 100-50 millennia ago show the progressive ritualization of the process with painting and

ornamentation of the body and the inclusion of an array of personal goods in the grave. While there is considerable dispute in scientific circles as to the intended purpose of these earliest burials, there can be no doubt that they were the beginnings of a practice of respect for the dead that is as distinctly human as the spoken word itself. In fact, to begin to comprehend the grave and sacred meaning that death holds for human being, we must first remember that the essential human capacities of language, art and the power of speech are founded upon the retrieval, by 'keeping-in-mind', of what has gone into absence. This re-calling of absent things initiates a world of temporary, imperfect, factual things, the idea(l)s of which are nowhere to be found 'in fact' but which are encountered only through unceasing human efforts to make, remake, build, interpret, discuss and formulate things. In this very way, the world itself, since the beginning of time, and the everyday world in which we live, is founded upon **absence** – the inherently vertical absence of the aspired-to ideas that ultimately constitute the being of things… but first and finally, the necessary, omnipresent absence of One-Being… Eternal and everlasting… from the world of passing things in time and space.

The final passing of the human being into absence from the world of time – death – whether it comes suddenly and unexpectedly or only after years of failing health, is that moment of life in which is revealed, finally, to one and all around, the infinite and eternal extent and power of Being. At this mortal moment, life reveals itself as a gift precisely by being taken... willingly or

unwillingly. At this moment of passing into absence, when time is up, Being-Eternal, itself absent from the world, reveals itself as the foundation and meaning of time… as that immortal stillness, oneness and goodness that is necessary for mortal, passing, worldly things to be. The coming into being of the human person at birth is a relatively slow and gradual process requiring months of gestation along with the practical preparations that are needed to secure a place in the world for the long-anticipated arrival. While there are many uncertainties and dangers attendant to the birth of a child, there is no such thing as a sudden, unexpected birth. Death, on the other hand, even when it comes to pass after a long illness, allowing plenty of time to prepare for the inevitable, occurs with a sharp abruptness, defined by the moment in which the person who was present there a moment ago has passed into absence and is gone forever.

Gone… where?…

Clearly, there can and will be no satisfactory answer to this question in the terms that thinking normally thinks. And yet, when thinking submits, as it finally must, to the logic of Being, it may open itself to an understanding in which the incomprehensible death of the human being is necessary. In short, **finitude** is necessary to all things in the world, all beings, and so it must be completely, finally necessary to human beings. Except as finite, how else could beings possibly be, since an infinite being, Being itself, must be only ONE? All beings, finite, and especially the human being among them, possess being and are **related** to Being... One, Eternal and infinite in extent. And so, we answer our question with a question…

Is it sensible to imagine that these poor, finite, worldly beings, having come into being, sounding and signifying Being in the world, would be abandoned to some abyss and forgotten when their time is up?

The illogic of such an idea was certainly evident to those who took it upon themselves to respectfully bury their dead a hundred millennia ago as it has been to nearly every human culture since then. Death is the impenetrable encounter with finitude that reveals and initiates the sacred dimension of worldly being. In the passing of the human person from the presence of time-bound being into eternal absence, the necessary absence of **One-Being** which is the sacred foundation of the world… the ultimate object of language, art and all human endeavor and thought… is made undeniably manifest. Just as the person (per-sonar) was the sound of Being, saying and signifying the absent ideas of worldly beings in the space and time of their life, so now, in absence, in death, they finally and perfectly may signify the sacred absence that is necessary to Being itself. In this way, with this last possible significance, the right-relationship-of-being that constituted the essence of the human person throughout life is consummated.

8c – Thinking and the Control of Things

The compelling power and ascendancy of scientific thinking in the modern world derives from its general coherence with the 'objective' way that thinking most commonly thinks. The 'rocket science' that requires and evolves from the most obscure and refined principles of physics may be uncommonly difficult to understand but its way of ordering the world as a closed system of interacting objects and measurable forces is entirely ordinary and accessible when everyday habits of thought are diligently applied. It's no wonder that this way of conceiving the world predominates. Thinking thinks this way for a very good, though rudimentary, reason – survival.

Man's interest in the world of things taken simply and thoughtlessly as 'objects' for manipulation and control has its origin in his most distant evolutionary past. The first order of business for any land-dwelling mammal is the intake of air which is comfortably brought about by the smooth and regular contraction of one, autonomically controlled muscle – the diaphragm. The second required, life-sustaining task, the intake of food, is not nearly as easily accomplished. For this, every species must find its own, reliable source of nutrients and develop its own, unique skill to subdue, collect or harvest its food and bring it, in palatable form, to mouth. For man, as for all his fellow mammals, to live is to eat.

With the task of finding and ingesting food of such critical importance to the continuation of life, it's no wonder that the nose and mouth parts of mammals develop as their most frontal and protruded, physical feature. This is true of nearly all land-dwelling mammalian life, both carnivore and herbivore, though notably much less so in man. With a degraded sense of smell and receded teeth and jaw, upright man has developed a different bio-somatic approach to the task of acquiring food than his mammalian cousins - primates, of course, being the most analogous, but nevertheless in a qualitatively different category. As the mouth and nose receded in importance to this vital process, what came to the forefront was the use, in concert, of bifocal vision and dextrous hands. With the former came the ability of the eye not only to sense the presence of things by their reflected light, but to ***see*** them 'objectively', that is, from two different points of view at once, which enables a good judgement of the dis-stance away that the thing itself stands. The development of bifocal vision, though by no means adequate in itself, certainly came to facilitate the possibility of spatial consciousness – the perception of things as objects which 'ex-sist' or 'stand out' and away from the perceiver. And of course, the additional perception of these things from the points of view of other human observers and the sharing of these perceptions through language, exponentially furthers the development of an 'objective', spatial world. Simply, the more pairs of eyes, the more 'points of view' that are brought to bear upon a thing, the more 'objectively' it can be regarded. Then, in this newly opened space, man

brings to bear a pair of dextrous hands with which to grasp, explore, hold, manipulate and control the field of objects around that now appear to his acute, bifocal sight in all their exquisite and multi-faceted detail. In this way, man evolves from the 'sense and seize' strategy of food acquisition to more stable, controlled modalities which allow for planning, storing, cultivation and the exploitation of new resources.

Beginning with the acquisition of food, the dextrous hands of man, guided and controlled by his acute, dimensional vision, came to be the primary means of contact with the world of things and others. Where animals lead with their noses, man leads with his eye-guided hands. In the interpersonal sphere, eye-contact and a handshake puts two people firmly on the common ground of mutual respect as a wave of the hand does from a distance. The collective clapping of hands signals the appreciation of a speaker or performance. We've earlier spoken of the essential, signifying function of the index finger when used as a primitive, prelingual means of establishing the 'ex-sistence' of things by 'pointing them out' from the field of immediate experience. This is essentially an act of virtual and mutual grasping that can be applied to all kinds of ungraspable things. And we have noted how this pointing can turn aggressive and disrespectful when directed at another person. Likewise, in the development of language, human hands become a rich and colorful means of expression when used along with the spoken word and even, for the deaf, a language unto themselves.

Apart from these symbolic functions, human hands are primarily instruments of the manipulation and control of things… of food in the 'hand to mouth' economy of bare subsistance, proceeding to hand-axes, spears, clothing, firewood, fences, pottery, harnasses, utensils, knives, sculptural figures, armor, axles, wheels, clocks, electric motors and electronic devices. Simply, through the coordination of hand and eye, man has become the master of the world of objective things. And yet this mastery, when taken to what seems to be inevitable extremes, comes at a very real cost.

Perhaps driven by the archetypal memory of raids upon the food supply and the possibility of starvation, man remains constantly busy acquiring, manipulating and controlling things to his advantage and does so far, far, far beyond any real need of personal or communal sustenance. The accumulation of sufficient resources of food seems inevitably to beget the accumulation of 'wealth' and power in the controlling hands of a few. This phenomenally 'successful' development of human society and the world of things is accomplished by thinking of things (and all too terribly, of others) not as they exist in and for themselves as fellow beings, but rather, as real or virtual 'food'. Rooted in the earliest eons of primate evolution, for a thing to become food, it must be taken in hand and controlled and its right to be itself must be disregarded and revoked. Rather it must, with intelligent, purposeful hand and eye, be selected, gathered, subdued, penned… and finally subjected to the acquisitive control of the one or many whom it would serve and nourish. The necessity to control and incorporate things, to eat, and the

powerful, 'objective', but thoughtless thinking that it seems to justify, is the everyday moral plight of man, by no means identical with, but also not so far from, what is known as his 'original sin'.

But where there is sin (and only there, in its recognition) is the possibility of redemption and man finds his redemption in the spirit and practice of **sacrifice**. When done in this spirit, the life-giving, life-ending toil of seizing and slaughter is sanctified by the thoughtful, thankful acknowledgment of the share of Being that is given ***up*** by the harvest or the animal that must be taken to sustain human life. Although the redemptive spirit of sacrifice becomes formalized and ritualized in religious practice, it is also ubiquitously present in the everyday life of man insofar as that life is founded upon the virtue of 'self-sacrifice'. It could even rightfully be said that self-sacrifice is itself the very foundation of all human virtue. In work well done, in family and communal life, in the understanding and support that's given to another in simple conversation, in a meal lovingly prepared, in military and emergency service, in the care of plants and animals, human beings constantly and freely give themselves as food for the nourishment and well-being of their fellow beings. For human beings, redemption is not dependent upon adherence to a particular religious or ritual conduct but is as commonplace and accessible as a kind word, a helpful hand or a good day's work.

The alimentary and sexual characteristics of sin and the moral struggle that ensues from it are subjects for a future work. For now, our interest is only in

understanding how the primordial pressure to survive is at the root of the 'objective' way of thinking that predominates in everyday life and that is refined to allow for extremes of control by the methods of science. Scientific thinking is all about control and control is first and finally about physical survival, beginning with the work of hands and eyes in fulfilling the need for nourishment. Based on its indisputable power to serve this primordial purpose, the empirical, 'objective' logic of scientific thinking seductively presents itself as complete, unquestionable and unassailable. Unquestionable indeed are its powers of control and the tight, conceptual formulations that enable them. The ideas of things that it generates are certainly, effectively and so blindingly 'true' that only a fool, it seems, would think to contest them. While it serves no useful purpose to question the accuracy or effectiveness of its methods nor even of its conclusions, there is every reason to contest and penetrate the blindness that this method of thinking both requires and inspires. And so we have sought its primordial driving force to show that, however cerebral and sophisticated may be the calculations with which it constructs and controls the world, finally, we adopt this deficient way of thinking as if it were thinking itself and trust in its ultimate veracity not so much with head and heart but from gut and groin.

Any consideration of the blindness of empirical 'objectivism' needs to first identify what it indeed so accurately and precisely sees and what are the evolutionary origins of its vision of the world of 'objects'. In this, a quick look at human physiology tells

us that what man sees, primarily and for the most part, is what is in front of his eyes. And of those many things, we can further assume that what becomes focal and stands out among them are things of his interest… primarily food, mates and danger. What all these things, both focal and peripheral to his acute, forward-facing, depth-perceiving vision, have in common is that they are located in the horizontal plane, at or below the scanned horizon. Above the horizon, in the vertical plane, and with the exception of tantalizing birds which easily keep themselves out of range of a clumsy stone's throw, are only the celestial phenomenae of sun, moon and stars and the elements of weather, the colorful moods of the sky, clouds and the occasional flash of lightning. Obviously, what this second set of perceived things have in common is that they are, for the perceiver, intangible, unreachable and therefore ***out of control***. As such, man came to experience himself as subject to the forces that these overwhelming and distant 'objects' brought to bear upon him. And exactly in that sense, the vertical plane was not understood to hold 'objects' at all, but rather to be the 'realm of the gods', all-powerful 'Others' for whom mortal man himself was an object, subject to their sometimes capricious yet fateful decree.

With respect to the biological urgencies necessary to survival, the vertical dimension holds nothing of interest or value. Raising the animal gaze to the sky is an utterly useless exercise and it naturally remains so in the everyday life of human beings for the most part. After all, there's nothing there. And precisely ***therefore*** it is in the vertical dimension that the absence that is required of

Being takes place. It's in the vertical plane that man is drawn physically upright and in constant orientation to the rightness of things. Man naturally conquers vertical space not by rocket science but by rightly thinking (under-standing) the true ideas of things, by seeking justice and keeping balance in all things since only that which keeps its balance can be right and only that which is right can be true. In fact, every human thought, value, project or purpose is measured vertically in terms of the rightness, justice, balance and truth that it brings to the world. First in posture, then in logic, plan and deed, man innately realizes the primordial call of Being in the vertical dimension.

The distinct blindness of objective thinking to the vertical dimension begins quite naturally as the hominid, like his mammalian cousins, naturally focuses his attention upon things of vital interest that are in front of his eyes, on the earth, up to the horizon. Only as man, over many hundreds of thousands of years, began to awaken to his rightful *human* nature did the vertical assume its privilege and primacy as that 'place' from which life on earth was ordained and ordered. Gradually, the vertical became the sacred and particularly human dimension in which took place the alignment of man to the heavenly 'beyond', giving meaning, reason, order and purpose to the world of things below. Man's upright posture embodies the **Rightness** of this alignment in living, breathing form. In this way, human posture is the precursor to thinking and to the logic that will strive, at every turn, to under-stand and enact this meaning and order by rightly naming, drawing, sculpting, designing,

discussing, building and, simply, thinking the good and true ideas of things.

Clearly there has been, since the first appearance of man 'as man' on the earth, a dynamic tension between the forces of survival that naturally focus his attention in the horizontal plane and the compelling call of a place 'beyond' – beyond reach, beyond control, beyond the limitations of the temporal world – that just as naturally takes its place in the vertical. For man, as homo sapiens, the animal that thinks, this tension, however much discomfort and perplexity it may cause, is unavoidable. The only possibility of escaping the logical and emotional strain that this dynamic ambiguity places upon thinking is to attempt to collapse the logical polarity of flesh and spirit into one, single, inert form – or the other. The endless, fruitless, stubborn and illogical debate between 'science' and 'religion' as to the origin and essence of the human and physical world comes immediately to mind.

Until roughly 500 years ago, the absence of the 'beyond' that thinking requires in order to think, i.e., that man requires in order to be human, was naturally located in the vertical plane where the divine was set in its eternal, heavenly abode. From there, things on earth were put in rightful order according to godly plan and will as understood, interpreted and communicated first by the prophets and then by an ordained, priestly class. In this way, with final authority in the hands of religious traditions and structures, worldly things and events great and small were ruled and ordered 'from above'.

Up to these few short centuries ago, with the beginning of what is known as 'The Enlightenment', the

vertical plane, in all its imposing and impossible inaccessibility, largely retained its place as the seat of the divine – of the immortal gods and the heavenly God. The vertical was naturally considered the direction of prayer, sacrifice and aspiration. Even the ruling powers of the state were understood to be conferred upon the pharaoh or monarch from above as they ruled their kingdoms by divine right. The foremost challenge to the primacy and privilege of the vertical, however, is made when the 'objective' logic of control, originally the 'logic' of nourishment and survival, which has been so successfully applied to building and controlling the human world of things in the horizontal plane, raises the focus of its interest to the vertical, primarily to the movements of the planets and the forces at work in directing them along their celestial courses. At this point and with increasing force to the present day, the once unassailable domain of the divine and the heavenly that had seemingly taken its place safely beyond the reach of worldly things, was conceptually reduced, along with the world itself and all things in it, to fixed quantities of 'matter' and 'energy' that interact within a closed system called 'the universe'.

The direction of the gaze of objective logic 'to the heavens' that began in earnest half a millennium ago has put the god-like celestial bodies and events that once inspired fear, awe and wonder in man, squarely though virtually into the grasp and under the control of the 'enlightened' human mind. And with this new power of thought, as if brought down from these very heavens, has come the most penetrating and consistent insight into the 'nature' of things within the horizontal space of the world

as well. With newfound trust in the power of objective, empirical reasoning, the emotional energy of reverent awe that thusfar had accompanied man's relation to the vertical dimension was re-focused with a new confidence and determination toward discovering and quantifying the properties of matter and energy as they could be found at work not only in the celestial 'above' but 'here below' in mechanical exertions, chemical reactions, electromagnetic energy and the behavior of sub-atomic particles. In all these and countless other developments, objective, scientific thinking has delivered not only a world but an entire universe **under control**.

'Matter' and 'Energy'. The fact that these elemental terms can be accurately applied to the conceptual and manual control of things, be they earth-bound chemical reactions, planetary orbits or the behavior of stars in a distant galaxy, is beyond question. Man has certainly made himself the undisputed master of this closed, mathematically coherent system of objects, forces and events known as 'the universe'. Equally certain, however, is the innate deficiency, the blindness of these terms and the logic that supports them to understand the essence of any thing in this world over which it claims and exerts its mastery. Least of all, is it ready to understand the idea of man himself.

The deficiency of 'objective', scientific thinking lies certainly not in any lack of acuity in its perception of things nor accuracy or completeness in accounting for them. Far from it. The genius of science is exactly the *hyper*-acuity of its unique 'point of view' which ensures the fullness of its ensuing report. Essentially, the

scientific pursuit of 'objective' knowledge simply extends to perfection the innate power that is primordially given to the human being to see the world 'objectively', i.e., *from two different points of view at once*. The acuity of bifocal vision that man shares with many of his mammalian cousins as a means of acquiring food and avoiding danger is essentially the crude, physiological beginning of the scientific method. As we have previously noted, the particularly human extension of this innate capacity to 'objectify' things progresses exponentially along with the development of language which allows for the identification, naming and 'using' of things based on the shared observations and 'perspectives' of many different subjects. In this sense, the 'objective' world is simply the world indeed, the familiar world of everyday life and thoughtless, utilitarian thinking that unfolds for the most part in the horizontal plane.

Science amplifies the 'objectivity' of this everyday mode of thinking by many orders of magnitude with the intensity and breadth of its focus but primarily in its methodical expulsion of 'the subjective' from its 'point of view'. Precisely by this exclusion of the subjectivity of both the knower (the data-bound scientist) and the known (the data-bound 'object'), knowledge of things is assumed to be derived and compiled in a pure, 'objective' form that is valid from every point of view precisely by its being independent of any point of view. Paradoxically, the methodical multiplication of 'points of view' (data sets) that contribute to the objectivity and purity of this knowledge is achieved by the invalidation of any single

point of view from which the object may be regarded or, incomprehensibly, which it may itself hold (i.e., as itself a subject).

At first glance, the achievement of knowledge of things that, "is valid from every point of view precisely by its being independent of any point of view," would seem to fall into the logical category of that which is valid from ***no*** point of view – knowledge that ultimately is, for all its purity, objectivity and universality, in a word, 'pointless'. While there may be some truth to this logical assertion regarding the 'universal' knowledge that results from the methods of science, we can be assured by experience that these endeavors are anything but pointless as long as it's understood that the primary if not sole *point* of objective, scientific thinking is not true knowledge at all, but rather, the **control** of things.

The methods and logic of scientific thinking have yielded a huge wealth of knowledge 'about' things that is applied everywhere and constantly to create a world of things under human control. In this way, 'objective' thinking is the way of the modern world exactly as it has been the way of the human world for the 3 million years that man has, with the coordinated skill of eyes and hands, taken hold of things as 'objects' for his nourishment, comfort and survival. Essentially, there is nothing new in this way of thinking even as it is lately taken to exquisite extremes of refinement which allow for things to be put in use with phenomenal precision and effectiveness for what is often the benefit of man.

The intention to 'objectify' things as a means of controlling them begins as a necessary strategy for

nourishment and lately proceeds, for seeming lack of a better idea, perseverantly toward the accumulation of power, wealth and the ultimate control of worldly things. The objectification of things great and small, mundane and celestial, microscopic and stellar, abstract and concrete, animate and inanimate, including even man himself, that reaches its apogee in modern science, is perhaps a natural development of thinking insofar as thinking thinks, by nature, horizontally, for the purpose of survival and control. But this natural development should never be confused with thinking itself which is originally and necessarily an activity that derives its power and takes place primarily in the *vertical* plane as an innate under-standing of *absent* Being and a striving to understand the being of *present* things. Likewise, the vast compendium of pure, objective 'knowledge' that is systematically guaranteed to be valid from 'any' and 'every' point of view should never be mistaken for the real, imperfect but true knowledge which seeks the revelation of that very singular, subjective 'point of view' that is the essence of the thing itself.

8d – The Possibility of Being(s) Out of Control

Unlike the finite human being, for whom coming into being and passing into final absence is a real possibility, the 'matter' and 'energy' that together make up the closed system of the 'universe', we are told by the laws of physics, "can neither be created nor destroyed". Closed indeed is this system and its logic that nevertheless presents itself to the modern mind as the archetype of boundless possibility. Like the scientific method of thinking on which this system is founded, it is closed to the otherness of Being and beings and therefore closed to the possibility of essential knowledge and genuine understanding of things and human beings. Lacking the beginning and end that gives weight, form and definition to worldly things, there can be neither space nor time for these 'elements of the universe' to coalesce into meaningful, substantial beings. For this to happen, for these 'elements' to become beings, a disruption is necessary to their 'legal' (what is allowed by the 'laws' of observable physics) process. UNobservable, **absent** Being and the finitude that it requires of things is precisely this disruptive element - that infinite, eternal fundament which **must be absent** from the 'system' of the observable, physical world… that bestows upon this world the very space and time in which to exist! By precluding the crown of finitude that is given to all worldly beings, this scientific idea conceives of 'matter'

that can never really matter and of 'energy' that must forever dissipate itself without the force of real effect.

The thoughtless thinking that normally characterizes the conduct of everyday life and that reaches its perfection in the scientific 'objectification' of things may naturally shake its head in disbelief at such reasoning. Supporting this disbelief are, on the one hand, ordinary human doubts and questions regarding the very possibility of that which is absent, unseen, unaccountable, immeasurable and eternal and on the other hand, the demonstrably faulty but powerful and persuasive logic of objectivism that would convincingly resolve all doubts about things and bring essential questions regarding them to a close. Closing them prematurely with deficient, infallible 'proofs' is a shame since these questions themselves, precisely for lack of answers, are the certain guarantors of the even logical necessity of the unbelievable, absent 'Other'.

The efforts of scientific thinking to control things are a natural extension of the particular, human skill that is required of man, first to obtain nourishment and then to make himself at home in a world from which he finds himself newly set apart from things, standing at a commanding though often anxious, vertical distance. The control, manipulation, sculpting, harnessing, forming and building of things and the 'objective' reasoning that those activities require is necessary and natural to man. Also, there is no reason that this way of thinking need restrict itself to things that are found in the most familiar, horizontal plane of view. With the extension of this reasoning in the vertical dimension to once-inaccessible

planetary bodies, 'rocket' and other sciences are brought to bear which allow for the prediction of their celestial movements and the exploration of their distant surfaces both with and without human presence.

This 'ascension' of objective reasoning from the horizontal frame of reference to the vertical, which itself gave further rise to undreamed-of possibilities for control of matter and energy in all its forms, set forth a crisis of thinking that largely characterizes the modern world. With the rise of controlling reason to what had been 'the heavens' and the proven infallibility of this reasoning in predicting and controlling events and elements of the physical universe, there naturally occurred a conceptual dislocation of the divine and eternal from its heavenly domain and the onset of a powerful but misguided belief in the adequacy of this way of thinking to ultimately account for the origin, essence and destiny of worldly things.

The inherent deficiency of objective reasoning is not so easy to discern, especially given the fact that the control that it exerts upon things is entirely in line with the way that thinking naturally likes to think, i.e., with the next meal in mind. As compelling, effective and powerful as this reasoning is, forgetfulness of its inherent limitations leads thinking along a garden path of serious and consequential error.

The first and most fundamental error of objective thinking is the idea that 'objects', per se, exist and are knowable 'in themselves', i.e., regardless of the point of view of the knowing subject. This idea is the unquestioned assumption of classical physics. With

further theoretical development, it would seem to meet its natural limits in the theories of relativity where the observer's point of view is taken into careful account with respect to the time and space in which these things called 'objects' interact with one another. And yet, this hypothetical 'point of view' is not a real subjectivity that bears upon things in a substantial way, but only a 'factor' to be included in working out the surprising dynamics of how things move in relation to one another considering their relative speed, acceleration and the gravitational forces that are exerted in the event of their greater, planetary size. This 'point of *view*' is assigned no more weight or significance than another, objective 'point' in the matrix of time and space that has no view at all! Rather, it is treated as simply another object in motion… or not, depending on the frame of reference in which it finds itself.

In effect, this development of the logic of modern physics is a forced accommodation to the logical fact that any estimation of movement or change requires a stillness and duration in terms of which it may be said to occur. In the same way, any measurable distance or relation between ***two*** things or events logically requires a relatively immeasurable ***one*** to bring forth and hold the ruler between them. And in the case of the full expanse of 'the universe', this immeasurability likewise must be infinite in extent as 'one' becomes 'One'. This unaccountable stillness, duration and singularity of things is exactly the subjectivity that science would eliminate from its reckoning. It is the being, the very essence of

things against which scientific control sets itself in strong and constant opposition.

As a way of controlling, measuring, harnessing, building, engineering things, objective reasoning is a necessary and effective way of thinking. But when it pretends to the true knowledge of things by virtue of its ability to assay their elements, control them and predict their behavior, it becomes at best a source of confusion and at worst a distorted, misleading and ultimately degrading belief system. Perhaps better to call it a *dis*-belief system, acceding as it does to the reality only of those things that it finds in front of its eyes, that can be grasped with the hands of its controlling reason and brought to the mouth of its all-encompassing corpus of factual 'knowledge'. Lately extending its objective reasoning both literally and metaphorically 'to the heavens', empirical thinking would convince us that the controlled, composite view of its 'super-observer' should assume the mantle of privileged subjectivity that is the rightful place of Being itself. With this false assumption, scientific 'objectivism' has become the modern ***religion*** of dis-belief that, on the basis of its powerful control of things, sets itself at war with Being and with the being of things.

Just as the primordial need for nourishment of a certain 'subject' requires the cancellation of the right of its nourishing 'object' to be itself, so does the horizontal thinking of objectivism require the ultimate revocation of the being, the rightful subjectivity, of that which it seeks, 'objectively', to know. And just as human beings, sensing the violation that nature requires of them to stay alive,

redeem this violence in the spirit of sacrifice, so too does science justify its required deconstitution of things with the idea of the benefits to mankind that follow from its efforts. And indeed these benefits are innumerable and indisputable in their positive effect on human life. The control of things, like the act of eating, is both necessary and largely beneficial to man. However, when the objective thinking that these activities require ultimately forgets and negates the innate subjectivity of those things that it controls and consumes, the redeeming spirit of sacrifice and service becomes a twisted ideology of servitude, subjugation and consumption. Under the compelling spell of controlling reason, modern science progressively succumbs to the delusion that it has not only the ability but the **right** to revoke the rights of beings so that they may become objects under its control. It's also not surprising that this development occurs thoughtlessly since thinking, in its true and fullest sense, is of no interest to science. Why waste time, in its view, thinking of things outside the discovery of possibilities for subjecting them to useful and predictive control? In this way, as an ideology of subjugation, scientific thinking makes itself willfully blind to the being of things and to the very possibility of Being itself.

Naturally uncontrollable and impenetrable in the concrete stillness of its presence in things as well as in the inaccessible singularity of its absence from things, the idea of Being is an affront to the calculating, controlling reason of scientific thinking. Infinite Being is the foundation of the world of things by logical necessity since a thing without being is impossible to conceive.

This evident and unquestionable omnipresence of Being requires its being One and, therefore, ultimately absent from the world of measurable, observable, 'objective' things and from the possibility of having its measure taken by any empirical method. Being, One, is the precondition of the logic of two or more and can never be its subject. As One, Being must be singular, indivisible and infinite in extent and, therefore, the ultimate measure and 'ruler' of finite beings regardless of their perceived microscopic, sub-atomic, ordinary, planetary or galactic proportion. The infinity of scale which requires the absence of Being is paradoxically felt in its omni-presence to beings and in beings, regardless of their size, duration or the importance of their place in the order of things. Nonetheless, it's little wonder that the presence of this unfathomable absence is most profoundly seen and felt in the gaze of that being in whom Being most profoundly dwells – the human person.

And yet, according to the religion of natural science, the human being is essentially defined as a temporary constellation of corporeal substance that is distinguishable from a goat, a rock, a planet or a piece of driftwood only in the relative scale and complexity of the elements and forces that constitute its physical system. Ultimately, there is no essential difference among these endlessly divisible things once they are theoretically dissolved into the soup of matter and energy that is known as the universe. Likewise, by this reasoning, essential knowledge of things requires their systematic deconstruction and a strict dis-belief in the **real** differences that constitute their **being** – that factually and

finally distinguish the human, for example, from his fellow animate and inanimate beings.

With the vertical ascent of horizontal thinking to the hitherto unreachable realms of 'space', science planted the flag of empirical reason in the very heaven that had been the dwelling place of the divine. In the place of the sacred subjectivity of divine Being that had been seen to order and rule the world of things, the religion of science installs its super-observer whose meticulous recording of everything it finds *in front of its eyes* provides the grist of data for the mill of mathematical reason to precisely determine the composition and behavior of things. From this reasoning, mathematically coherent 'laws' of matter and energy are formulated that, 'obviously', 'demonstrably' **rule** the universe of things. Enlightened as it thus is by the ethos of empirical reasoning, there is no further need to respect the privilege of the vertical dimension or the rule of 'divine law', thank you very much, as the human mind feels itself quite capable of conceiving and controlling the order of things on its own. Of course, this move of human reason away from the dogma of religious doctrine is also understandably encouraged by the fall of religious thinking into its own errors of thoughtless, objective literalism and its cynical use of 'the divine idea' to control things and human beings. Again, it's no wonder, given the natural way that thinking is inclined to think. Understandable, forgivable as the fundamental error of objective thinking may be, whether it be found in the dogmas of science or religion, that does not lessen the profound and detrimental distortion that occurs when an ethos of objectiv***ism***

disregards the being of things as a means and justification to thoughtlessly control and consume them.

The vertical dimension is that to which man is uniquely drawn, first physically in posture and then in ideational aspirations which are realized in his thinking, making, language, organizing, building and ultimately, in his life of worship. And yet, what can be made of the logical primacy of this dimension now that the celestial realm has been convincingly shown to be nothing more than a vacuum of space, populated by greater or lesser accretions of matter-energy in the forms of generally lifeless, more or less vaporous rocks, planets and stars? We have said that, "The essence of man is significance and what he signifies is 'on high'". What is the possible meaning of this statement now, in this era, when 'on high' is understood by the 'enlightened' mind to consist only of a relatively endless and random void? What is 'up there' worth pointing to? Can we perhaps find this meaning in the intriguing possibility of discovering 'other beings', like us, that have developed on another similar, hospitable planet? Hardly. In the event of such a meeting, however likely or unlikely it is fancifully deemed to be, and assuming that relations with our extraterrestrial counterparts are founded on mutual respect and good will, it's assured that we will be able to point to each other, communicate, share our amazingly different points of view and perhaps even find a way to love. Certainly, we all will be enriched for the experience and for the expansive widening of our world of things. However, we, now together, would then be left with the same question,

the question of our finite being, our finite world… and nothing would essentially change.

The modern fascination with the possibility of encountering 'alien life', like the personification in earlier times of the gods as ruling imperiously from an unseen realm above the clouds, is an understandable but poor imaginative resort for thinking when it confronts the difficulty of conceiving the priority of the vertical dimension to the being of things and especially, as always, to human being.

So indeed, with the seeming conquest of the vertical dimension by the horizontal thinking of 'rocket' and other sciences, the question logically arises as to, "Where then, if not in the heavens above, can Being and the ideas of beings possibly be found?" And yet, even this good question betrays the natural inclination of thinking to think horizontally, i.e., with the intention to 'find', control and order things for its own benefit and satisfaction. Right thinking on the other hand, that aligns itself vertically with respect to Being, puts aside the intention to find, prove, analyze or comprehend that is the sole purpose of objective reasoning. Suspending its concerns for survival and power, such thinking seeks knowledge of a thing not by experimental coercion but rather by invitation… to discover the unique and singular revelation of Being that is their essence as a fellow subject of Being. Right thinking is the very principle of thinking that is the condition for the possibility of any objective, horizontal, mathematical or empirical reasoning. Essentially, the rightness of thinking is conducted along principled, vertical lines and any

horizontal reasoning that forgets this priority forgets itself and, for all its power, effectiveness and control of things, can never, in itself, be Right.

The physiological rightness that is primordially established in man's evolution to upright posture portends his further evolution into the rightness of thinking that is destined to become the crown of creation and the very presence and sound of Being in the world. The possibility of Rightness and of the logic, significance, meaning and reason that flows from it lies with man alone and with the right relation-of-being that is constituted in his right thinking, true speaking and principled action. To imagine a universe of 'objects' whose being consists only in their discernible, predictable relations with other objects and in the composition of matter and energy that comprises them, is simply a flight of fancy. Logically, there is no possibility of a world without the absent singularity of Being whose very unfathomable ***absence*** is seen, felt and understood in the stillness of subjectivity and the finite singularity that is the ***presence*** of Being in things.

So… "Where is Being to be found?"… precisely **no**where in the world of things, neither terrestrial nor celestial. And yet this absence is not the logical basis for doubt and disbelief but rather the logical foundation of sacred certainty since the presence of infinite Being is **every**where signified in the finite being of things… in their stillness and singularity… in the dearness of their being what they are for as long as they may be. In short, Being is constantly found, felt, seen and understood in the dynamic of **time** which relentlessly signifies its *presence* in the being of things here and now and its *absence* in the

failure of finite things to be – yet. History is simply a record of this failure and a foundation of hope for things yet to be. With every tick of the clock, with every rising sun, coming season and passing year, with every present moment of the time in which things come into being and pass away, Being is signified in its eternal absence as that which **is** - not yet. In this way, the simultaneous presence and infinite absence of Being can be found… revealed as the foundation and meaning of the dynamic of time in which all worldly, finite things, mundane and celestial, exist.

Against the idea of a universe of 'matter & energy' that is ordered by laws of physics, we have contrasted a world of beings that are ordered, that obtain their meaning, reason and place in the world, by virtue of the unique share of being that they are given as subjects of Being… however incomplete, poor and imperfect that share may be. Opposed to the concept of composite objects which are defined by their elemental properties and patterns of physical motion relative to each other, we propose an idea of singular things that are defined by their innate integrity and by the relative **stillness** of their **presence**, however temporary, transient and 'passing' that presence may be. Rather than assigning these things a place in the world based on the quantifiable forces and elements of their material systems, we hear and see in them the possibility of realizing their unique meaning and worldly purpose by announcing and expressing, in their own, distinctive way, the **absence** of that Being to whom they are subject… whose stillness, integrity and singularity is so perfect and complete, original and

extensive as to be inconceivable in any worldly terms and inaccessible by any worldly means.

The tendency of the human mind to take refuge in the idea of a closed universe of objects that are potentially if not actually (given obvious limitations of time and 'brain-power') fully accountable in quantitative terms, is entirely understandable. Indeed, this way of conceiving the world follows the natural inclination of thinking to think horizontally, even when it sets its sights on a 'horizon' that includes the behavior of stars in distant galaxies. Forgetful as it is of the unaccountable **given** that constitutes the essence of worldly things and that of the thinking subject, proud as it is of its brilliant accomplishments, objective thinking progressively feels itself finally free of the need to consider itself subject to any 'higher' being or force. For the horizontal thinking of natural science that has conquered the heavens, taking even the (anti-)matter and energy of the stars conceptually in hand, the idea that any priority would be given to the vertical dimension in determining a hierarchy of being or beings no longer makes sense.

The control of things by objective reasoning, and in those cases where control is not possible, the comforting prediction of their properties and movements, puts a seeming god-like power into the collective hands of man while offering compelling justification to the logical means by which these results are achieved. Given these impressive results, a reasonable person could even be convinced that this logic could be *sufficient* to account for the world of things since, after all, there is **nothing** in its entire universe of objects – neither terrestrial nor

celestial, neither human nor animal nor vegetable nor mineral, that can be convincingly excluded from its logical grasp. However, on the contrary, it is precisely therein… in its strict exclusion of that **no-thing** which must logically be ***absent*** from the world of things, **Being**, that its understanding and grasp of this world inevitably and irrevocably fails. Being, necessary to all things that are, necessary to any world or universe of things, simply cannot be logically excluded and any attempt to do so must ultimately end in confusion and absurdity. Any coherent logic of things must include the absence of Being and do so not only as a speculative afterthought to what can be conclusively, 'objectively' known about things but as the central tenet around which this logic must turn. To logically exclude or even disadvantage Being because of its incomprehensible singularity (absence from things) and universality (presence in things) is to make a profound and consequential logical error and it is exactly in this error that we in the modern world progressively dwell.

To speak of the singularity of Being as absent from the world, as incomprehensible and inaccessible to worldly reason, would seem to logically justify the natural tendency of thinking to disregard and deny its very idea while perhaps, depending on the personal convictions of particular thinkers, allowing for its development within systems of ('illogical') belief that are associated with various religious traditions. After all, humankind has made a time and place for the idea of Being as it is announced in temples, churches and mosques on Sundays, Sabbaths and calls-to-prayer.

Indeed, infinite Being is surely and rightly announced and celebrated in these places of prayer and remembrance. And yet progressively in the modern era, the enlightened human mind has no time for such places, busy as it is with thinking and planning the perfection of the world for which it naturally feels, to the increasing extent of its control of things, an increasingly desperate responsibility. In fact, the rise of secular consciousness that naturally accompanies the ascendancy of objective thinking in the modern world makes it all the more timely and necessary to deliver the logic of Being from the segregated space of religious, theological and rarefied, philosophical discourse and bring it squarely into the human main stream of principled thinking, disciplined logic and good, common sense, restoring its rightful role as the key to understanding the idea of man.

We should be under no illusions, however, as to the likelihood that this movement of thought will be successful. It's logical inevitability is squarely matched by the resistance of human nature to any such way of thinking, i.e., thinking as such. The traditional segregation of the idea of Being, which limits its relevance to religious practice and 'moral theory', is more like a quarantine that is meant to contain its obvious implications for everyday life on all levels of human conduct and decision-making within strict, manageable bounds. The problem for thinking is that the idea of Being and of the being of things puts these beings **out of control** and in this, it is the most dangerous and disruptive of ideas. Its sequestration as a 'religious' idea, a personal 'belief' that is rather illogical and entirely

optional, puts it on the margins of worldly life, effectively disables its terrible, central, logical necessity and renders it seemingly harmless. As we have seen, human beings and especially those among them that represent the 'powers that be', are rather addicted to the control of things and think nothing of routinely revoking the rights of beings for the purpose of their control and consumption. In this, the human species is very well served by the objective, thoughtless thinking of science and everyday life… the 'horizontal' modes of thinking that have been predominant for very sound, practical reasons since the dawn of time. Likewise, Homo Sapiens may feel collectively and even mortally threatened by ideas which, in their clear declaration of Being and of the rights of beings, may interfere with this way of thinking and its agenda of the subjection and control of worldly beings.

8e - Time and the Order of Things

As we have seen, the objective thinking of science and everyday life understands time generally, if not exclusively, in terms of the passing *motion* of things relative to each other. The easily and objectively understood ideas of 'time of day' and 'time of year' are simple designations of our place, at any given moment, along the 'length' of time that it takes for the motion of one revolution of the earth – in the first case, relative to its own axis and in the second, relative to the center of the solar system. Likewise, the same logic would apply to a thoroughly mundane event if I wanted to precisely determine (perhaps in some fit of scientific curiosity) the 'time it will take' to get from my house to town. To be accurate, both calculations must include measures of the relative mass of what is being moved as well as a careful accounting of all the motive forces acting on this mass to make its movement possible, be they the celestial forces that maintain the earth in its orbit or, in the case of my trip to town, either the exploding hydrocarbons that take me there quickly by car or possibly the calories of my morning cereal if I decide that I 'have the time' to go at a more leisurely pace by bicycle or on foot.

While such simplistic renderings of factor *time*, which holds it as a constant in relation to mass and velocity, are accurate for the most part in mundane applications of physics, they are hardly adequate to account for the 'time of space' when the movement of

relatively mass-less 'objects' (radiation) at or near the speed of light and over inter-stellar distances are considered. In this realm (as in the mundane one, though imperceptibly), time is fused with space to form a matrix in which the passage of time for an object occurs not 'constantly' but rather in direct relation to the proportion of its mass and the velocity of its motion in space, relative in turn to the mass and velocity of other, passing objects. In this view, the human experience and generally accepted reckoning of time as passing *constantly* is simply a result of the fact that we erringly identify time itself with the relatively constant passage in space of that object on which we feel ourselves most familiar and at home, the planet earth, in its motion relative to the sun. An honest mistake.

Whatever may be found wanting in this crude and poorly-informed compression of the astounding ideas of 20th Century physics, indisputably at the core of these ideas lies the assumption that all the objects in this universe are ceaselessly in motion and that the ideas of 'time', 'space' and eventually 'spacetime' fully derive their meaning from the quantifiable, interactive motion of objects relative to each other… of the earth in motion relative to the sun, of myself or my car in motion relative to the earth, of the sun in orbital motion relative to the center of our galaxy, of the light from a distant star in motion relative to our earthbound eyes.

In contrast to this objective idea of time, we have set out an ontological one in which *things*, not objects, are given time to be what they are… coming into being and passing away as subjects of Being. In this, things, being

themselves, are not forever consigned to the constant motion that objective thinking conceives for them as objects, but rather, are relatively still. The essence, the being of things can be found and recognized not in their constant change and motion relative to other things, but rather, in their relative stillness, sameness, duration and integrity. Conceived ontologically, this constantly astounding and infinitely various duration and integrity is at once the being and the time of things… their coming-to-be as the *presence* in the world of that which, being One, must be *absent* - Being.

Only that which is truly still can truly measure motion. Only that which remains itself the same can genuinely register change. So what possibility is there of a world of 'objects' that have no real possibility of stillness, identity and singularity, confined as they conceptually are to ever-shrinking, ever-moving 'frames of reference' which allow of no genuine rest nor substance nor significance? What prospect is there for things to be themselves if they must ultimately be dissolved in a theoretical soup of ever more insubstantial elements, particles and forces? Rhetorical questions. Obviously, logically, there is no possibility of a strictly and exclusively 'objective' world.

When we speak here of the stillness and sameness that is inherent to things, of course we are speaking in relative terms. The finitude and failure that characterizes human being in history and the transient imperfection of worldly things constantly breaks the spell of stillness in things by announcing the passage of their time – that they, along with all present things, are passing into

absence and that the perfection of their being is not yet, but coming to be. Perfect stillness, sameness and singularity is not given to worldly things. And yet, these things are given the possibility to reflect and embody, in their multitude of forms, colors, sounds and moments, that which IS… eternally still, infinite and singular. This gift of being still, or simply, of being, is given to all things but especially and in unique proportion to the human being.

To say that the stillness and sameness of being is given first and most of all to the human being, by far the busiest and most restless among beings, may at first seem absurd. Surely this possibility is present in greater measure to the docile bovine, the quietly stalking cat, the rooted immovable birch tree if not certainly to the granite outcrop that will stay for ages just as it is through countless generations of human and other creatures that will climb and crawl and grow and perish over and around it. What in the world could be more still and self-same?

This confusion arises naturally from the misleading, objective terms in which thinking generally thinks of time and the order of things. The relative stillness and singularity of being that we say is given with a priority to human being is not predicated upon an objective measure of passing things or events in terms of which we normally, 'objectively' measure the passage of time. By any such measure, of course the rocky outcrop must be considered to possess being, to be itself what it is, with far greater certainty and solidity than any creature whose weak and vulnerable flesh will disappear from the earth

within the span of a few decades. The rock, after all, having perhaps been in its present place and form for many millennia already, may yet have a span ahead of more thousands of years before elements of erosion and geologic or glacial pressures make it unrecognizable such that it could be said to have 'passed'. Compared to the rock, human beings would seem to pass away in 'no time'.

In the bare solidity of its immense, immutable presence, the rocky outcrop is indeed a unique opportunity for the human being to feel the permanence of the earth itself directly at hand or under foot. And yet, even given the impressive stillness and permanence of its presence, we can say with certainty that this presence and its 'time' is incomparable to that of the human being, whose fragile flesh has been imbued with the spirit of eternity only by virtue of which can the rock's tens of millennia be estimated to have passed or be coming. Simply, the rock has no possibility of time nor reason to exist outside the gift of being that is bestowed upon it by its being discovered, named, measured, assayed, admired… *understood* by that creature whose unique alignment with Being bestows on *it* the power to think – to reveal, understand and care for things as fellow subjects of eternal Being.

We already know by what right this rite of being is performed by man. Precisely by his inherent **Rightness**… of posture, of thought, word and deed… does the human being uniquely claim the right (and with it the fearsome responsibility) to declare *what* beings are, to investigate and discover *how* they are and to wonder, in the light of

Being, *why* they are. The power to point, name and call things into being, to disclose the presence of Being in things by understanding their ideas, the power to *think*, is the ontological scepter that is held by Homo Sapiens and that rightfully declares his presence to be unique and necessary to the world of things.

This privileged position of the human among worldly beings is primordially given in the upright posture that at once absents him from the immediate flux of present experience and aligns him with the world of ideas, where present things achieve the *relative stillness* of temporal being. What is called a 'chair' for example, cannot find its existence in any present chair or anywhere in the world of things for that matter. Rather, the being of the chair must, like man himself, be relatively *absent* from this world if it is to attain the relative stillness, sameness and oneness-of-being that is required for the existence of a finite multitude of chairs. Then likewise, by the very same logic but extended from relative to ultimate terms, must we posit the absence of Being *itself* from the world, since no present being can possibly achieve the infinite stillness and singularity that is necessary for the existence of an infinite multitude of beings.

Thus walking… 'with his feet on the ground and his head in the clouds'… the earthly stature of the human being takes on a gigantic proportion relative to the world of things. In his inherent uprightness, man's substantial, physical *presence* is united in one remarkable, physiological form with the metaphysical possibilities that a relative *absence* from the physical world affords him. Standing upright, the human being is perfectly

poised to *under*-stand the possibility of eternal, absent ***Being*** and, in the light of that understanding, to reveal the possibilities of his fellow beings by rightly thinking their ideas… thereby granting them the *time*, the relative stillness, that is required for beings to be. By standing in such a way that he is at the same time both present and absent to the physical world, i.e., vertically, the human being, in a small and insufficient but significant way, emulates the presence of Being *itself* that is everywhere found in the being of things but nowhere to be found among them.

The power of ontological Rightness that proceeds from man's inherent rightness of posture… simply, the power to *think*… sets the world of things in order according to the measure of their time. And of course, this is to speak of time in the ontological sense rather than the familiar, 'objective' one. The time that 'it takes' for the rocky outcrop to pass into oblivion cannot be compared to that of the human being which, though it be measured only in decades, reflects the eternal singularity of Being. In the relative stillness of his ideas, in the thrice-named singularity of his unique identity, in the rightness of his moral bearing and finally in the profound completeness and oneness-of-being that is given in his finitude at death, the human being embodies, albeit in a poor and passing way, the temporality of Being, One, whose time cannot be measured, whose infinite extent cannot be conceived.

Compared to the inert substance of the rock, however great its measured size and longevity, there is no doubt that living things exist on a higher order of being. While

the stuff of the earth has its own magnificent array of forms, colors and configurations, when this stuff takes on the quality of life, it exhibits an exquisite singularity that sets it categorically apart from inorganic things. The living creature *is what it is* with such striking clarity and strength of presence that it is easily recognizable as a subject of Being. Even to the scale of the single-celled organism, the living thing echoes the temporality of Being in two important ways.

First, and what sets it most clearly apart from inert things, it possesses some level of interiority by virtue of its being simultaneously present to the world of things and absent from this world, busy as it must be with the work of becoming and remaining its singular self. The marvelous, systematic way that this work is carried out among the multitude of life-forms, the subject matter of the biological sciences, is endlessly fascinating. And yet, as we have seen in other contexts, no amount of elucidation of *how* living things are can answer for *what* they substantially are or *why* they possibly may be. In address to these questions, the *absence* from the world that we have just noted and that constitutes the interiority of all that is alive gives a strong clue if not a definitive answer.

The relative absence from the present world that is exhibited in common by the paramecium, the cactus, the dragonfly and the polar bear is evident in their unceasing efforts to remain themselves in harmonious opposition to all the physical forces that might upset their homeostatic balance or violate their 'existential' boundaries to a lethal degree. Precisely by virtue of its carefully guarded

boundaries and the interiority that absents and distinguishes its *self* from the physical world does the living thing become a wondrous display of the omnipresent absence of Being.

Secondly, the unique share of Being that is given to the living thing and that ensures its place on a higher order of being than the massive rock is evident in its finitude. By its distinct coming into being and passing into absence, the living being, however primitive and fleeting its presence, evinces a singularity, a 'relative stillness' and wholeness of being that is of a completely different order than that of an inorganic thing whose material substance is not given the possibility of differentiating its *self* from the greater physical world, whose *time* of origin and end is largely indeterminate. To make this determination and bestow on it the right of being, the rocky outcrop must rely on the human being to define its origin, measure its mass, perhaps give it a name but certainly marvel at the eons through which it endures.

And of course the same ontological labor is required of man with respect to his animate cousins who also need the blessing of his interest, thought and care to take their place in the ontological order of things. The stillness and wholeness of being that is uniquely given to living things by virtue of the 'Being-like' absence of their presence to the world and the finality of that absence that is given in their death, is, along the spectrum of life that extends vertically from paramecium to man, **relative**… relative to Being. Only in terms of the infinite singularity of Being itself can the relative being of things be ordained and an 'order of things' be conceived. Only when the absence of

Being, One, is understood as necessary and real, does the meaning of its relative presence in *beings* and the ultimate passage of their time become more accessible to human understanding.

In this hierarchical order of things, man assumes his place at its apex not only as a living thing that is gifted with special talents and skills (don't all living things display a unique genius of their own that makes man appear clumsy and stupid in comparison?) but as that one, living creature who, by right of Rightness and the power of thought, forges a special relation with Being itself. As the embodiment of this relation, man is no longer simply a living thing but an ontological one, the reflection and agency of Being in the world.

Relative to his fellow living beings, man stands alone at the top of the 'food chain' by which so much of organic life is naturally put in order. This means that his flesh, infused with the spirit of Being, **must not** be eaten, that the forces of his being **must not** be consumed, subjected or controlled. The first imperative takes the form of an ultimate, blatant and fearsome taboo. The second puts man in a more nuanced moral position which, seemingly open to extensive interpretation, plays itself out constantly in his economic, political, social and sexual life. The subject of future work.

8f – The Ontological Force of Gravity

Our placement of the mute and massive outcrop of rock on a lower order of being relative to the living things that stand, crawl and grow on and around it should perhaps be done with more care and respect to its being than we have thusfar shown. After all, it's from the very elements of its mass, the dust of the earth, that these living things are made and from which they are sustained. Indeed, man himself is forged and held in his metaphysical relationship with Being by the physical, the physiological property of (up)Rightness that is given in his bones, brain, flesh and sinew, all of which require the elemental stuff of the earth and its atmosphere to achieve their (meta)physical form and function.

Feeling the mass of the rock formation underfoot does indeed give man a direct sense of the earth's massive presence, but this is only to speak of experiences on a relatively small scale that are commonly available to people who might encounter such outcrops in city parks, on river banks or on walks through forested, hilly terrain. When the scale of such encounters is extended to the presence of the Grand Canyon or the sides and peaks of mountains, where the human being is given to consider his near molecular size relative to the rock and surrounding terrain that stands before or under him, the experience of the earth's sheer mass is taken to another, profound and awe-inspiring level. Such moments are the origin and meaning of the word, 'breathtaking'. It's little

wonder that legions of mountaineers will put their limbs and lives at serious risk to attain such direct experiences of the planet's immensity and grandeur.

Strange it would then seem that when this same spectacular panorama, even wider in scope, is experienced from the air, it may be given nothing more than a curious glance between bites of lunch or pages of a magazine… "Oh yes, the Alps *are* magnificent, aren't they." Likewise, there is no photo- or video-graphic record that can begin to adequately convey the full sense of such extraordinary places… "You would have had to have been there." Clearly, the deep impression that is made upon those physically present to such terrain is not primarily founded upon the visual nor any other of the 'five' senses, though certainly they all (with the possible exception of taste) contribute to the profound affect. Rather, the sense that is most centrally and forcefully called into play at such moments is the distinctly human sense of balance – essentially, the sense of *gravity*.

Of course, a highly developed sense of balance, technically named 'equilibrioception' or 'vestibular sense', is not exclusive to human beings but is present across the entire spectrum of mammalian life with whom we share the planet. We all are creatures of gravity and must learn to adapt and respond to its omnipresent pull. What sets our species apart, however, is the distinct way in which the human being balances and bears itself into vertical rightness by virtue of this force. In its upright posture, the human body is essentially built upon the ambulant vector of gravity that extends itself radially and

uniformly, in all directions, from the center of the earth's imponderable, spherical mass.

In its scientific sense, what we call 'gravity' is the inherent, attractive force of this mass, simply 'as mass'. All mass has the property of gravity, though it only becomes noticeable or measurable in objects of sufficiently enormous density and size – primarily planets and stars. Modern physics has eloquently elaborated the measurable effects of gravity both on other massive objects as well as on mass-less phenomena such as light. The mathematical permutations that constitute the bending of 'spacetime' around massive celestial bodies has been worked out with the greatest accuracy by theoretical physics, allowing for reliable and exact predictions of how gravity 'works' at all levels and scales of mass – from the proverbial apple falling from the tree to the moon's orbit around the earth to the behavior of the most massive stars and black-holes in distant space. In terms of its measurable effects on the motion of objects relative to each other, the 'force' of gravity is indeed a 'known *quantity'* to the modern, scientific mind.

The question remains entirely open, however, as to *what* this ubiquitous but 'mysterious' force in essence **is**. For all the technical and theoretical ability of modern science to exactly measure and model its warping effects on the motion of objects in their passage through the continuum of 'spacetime', in neither the sum of these measurements nor the form of this model is there to be found an idea of what gravity substantially is… what 'particle' or underlying force of energy brings matter to be drawn to itself and coalesce into a relatively solid,

spherical planetary or stellar body that in turn finds itself attractive to and attracted by other such celestial bodies of mass. Similar to its final resort in defining *time* as, "what is measured by the clock", the scientific definition of gravity could be roughly formulated this way – "measured changes in the calculations of velocity, time, distance and direction that occur in the movement of objects in relation to their own mass, relative in turn to that of other, massive objects" – in other words, "It's anybody's guess". Well, with such a low bar of entry, it seems that even we ontologically minded non-scientists might be qualified to take a shot at it.

For a good idea of gravity, it would make sense to look first at those things that are most directly and certainly formed by the action of its force. We are rightly told that this force is exerted equally on all things of mass - all things to be found in the earthly world as well as the oddly-shaped asteroids, comets and cosmic dust that circulate endlessly in the vastness of space. And yet, there is certainly nowhere that the effect of gravity is more perfectly apparent or strongly felt than in the spherical enormity of the planets and stars. For the purpose of understanding this force, we consider ourselves perfectly situated to be here on one of them, our very selves and all things around us held in its powerful but gentle, yielding grip. In fact, it is indeed man himself, notwithstanding his relatively insignificant *quantity* of mass, that is the other 'thing' in the universe of massive matter that, by virtue of his tenuous but inherent verticality, could rightly be said to be formed, along with the planets and stars, primarily and essentially by the cosmic force of gravity. Given the

inborn relation to this force that is inherent in his upright posture and sense of rightness, the human being is made just as surely of stardust as from the dust of the earth. But first let's consider the more traditionally accepted 'feature' of gravity… the celestial spheres.

From the ontological perspective, the essence of the gravitational force can be recognized precisely in the *spherical shape* of massive, celestial bodies. Now, just as it was necessary, in the case of human uprightness, to overcome the natural aversion of thinking to assign essential significance to what at first seems absurdly obvious and simple, so would we expect this assertion to be met with some considerable, possibly even eye-rolling incredulity. "Now there's an idea worth thinking about – 'All the planets and stars are spheres.' Wow!" An understandable reaction when comparing this simple observation to the astounding facts that scientific thinking has revealed regarding the incredible size, number, composition and orbital motions of these spheres as they silently travel their given paths through the inconceivable vastness of space. Nonetheless, it's only in the disciplined and difficult thinking of the simplest and least 'interesting' aspect of a thing or phenomenon that its essence with its treasure of significance is to be found. Busy as it is with the calculations of relative *motion* by which it defines the gravitational influence on discreet, moving objects, the objective thinking of science remains oblivious to the obvious fact that by forcefully and relentlessly binding these disparate objects together in the shapes of massive spheres that are bound in turn to each other in circular orbits, the nature of gravity reveals itself

not essentially as a factor of interactive motion at all, but rather as a principle of relative ***stillness*** and ***singularity***. Simply, by the action of gravity, from a chaotic multiplicity of matter *One* is made that calms and consolidates this matter, capturing its force of motion and directing it uniformly toward a *single*, relatively *still* **center**.

In our solar system, the massive, spherical shapes of the planets follow concentric paths around the greater mass of the spherical sun which in turn courses on its own orbital track around the center of our galaxy. All of this perceivable, concentric motion, of unimaginable scale, along with the linear motion of the water that flows in the brook outside my window and that of my teacup as it falls and shatters on the floor, is ascribed by objective thinking to 'the force of gravity'. In matters great and small, celestial and mundane, the gentle, non-explosive and, in scientific terms, 'weak' force of gravity plays a role that could perhaps best be described as ***central***. Gravity works universally, uniformly and constantly from the *center…* of the planetary sphere, of the solar system, of the galaxy, of the… ? What force, however 'weak', could be more *essential* to the world of things – 'beings' in the ontological sense or even to the workings of 'the universe' in the scientific one? So basic and ubiquitous is its hold on things, that however one conceives of it, whether ontologically or scientifically, the force of gravity must be a central axis around which any understanding of the world must turn.

In fact however, the idea of gravity remains primarily, almost exclusively, a scientific concept. The

observations, measurements and theories of physics precisely elaborate the gravitational effect and even put it to use in engineering the propulsion and direction of spacecraft near and around the planets. Such ideas are indeed remarkable and fascinating to human beings whose destiny would seem to be cast toward at least the defiance if not the escape of gravity's easy but unrelenting grasp. However, for all the light that these empirical theories have shown on the intriguing and useful *how* of gravity's influence on the motion of relatively massive objects, the *what* much less the *why* (even in the scientific, 'causal' sense) of the gravitational property of mass remains a 'mystery' to scientific thinking. Just as with the idea of time, science has attained a near perfect understanding of the 'factor' of gravity when applied to the prediction and control of things in motion but has neither the time, interest nor theoretical competence to address its 'fact'… the what and perhaps even why, the possible reason, of its inherent presence in things. Be it a primarily scientific concept, science nevertheless and by its own admission has no idea what gravity is.

From an ontological perspective, however, we must be grateful to science for its elucidation of the force of gravity insofar as this physical property of mass, currently declared a 'mystery' to scientific thinking, does in fact, at its core, make perfect ontological sense. To begin this ontological elucidation, we first of all notice that what is commonly called the 'force' of gravity is not really a physical force at all in the sense of an externally applied action upon a thing that moves it in the way the

explosive force of hydrocarbons, for example, moves my car or propels a rocket. Rather, the gravity that is commonly perceived and conceived as a force acting upon massive things is in fact such an inherent property of mass that it could be said to be identical with mass… the very *essence* of mass. In other words, mass without gravity is impossible to conceive.

From the science of physics we learn that *all* massive things from the single grain of sand to the earth itself to the largest star in distant space are 'gravitational' in equal, direct and exact proportion to their mass. The asteroid that would seem to have escaped the force of gravity as it floats freely in an interstellar vacuum, can nevertheless not escape its *own* gravity – its innate tendency to attract and be attracted by other massive objects… or more correctly… to bend the measurable spacetime (however immeasurably) in its vicinity. Perhaps eons on its unhindered way, it may finally pass an object with a mass of sufficient planetary or stellar size (and gravitational field) such that its free trajectory will be significantly disturbed. At this point, it will begin to feel some 'weight' in relation to this second, relatively giant body of mass nearby. This now measurable 'quantity' of gravitational force that is evident in the newly acquired weight of the asteroid, is the factor of gravity that is familiar to science, that must be included in all calculations of relative velocity, time, distance and direction as the lesser object passes, orbits or collides with the greater. However, this quantitative factoring of relative motion that defines gravity in the scientific view is entirely secondary to understanding the imperceptible,

immeasurable principle of gravity… its *essence* as a universal and inherent property of mass, regardless of size. It's in this imperceptible essence that the force of gravity remains a 'mystery' to scientific thinking.

Ironically, the fascinating, precise and useful understanding of gravity that the science of physics has given us is based almost entirely on observations of its effect upon objects that are moving on a path that is relatively *free* of gravitational influence. The usual object of scientific study may have had an 'anti-gravitational', external force applied to it as with an artillery shell or a satellite that has been boosted into orbit. Of special interest to the science of gravity will be an asteroid plummeting freely through space until it finds its path of flight altered by its proximity to a planet or moon. Even the measured deflection of the path of light as it passes a massive star on its way to our eyes from a source many light-years away has been critical in shaping the modern conception of gravity and its power to influence the motion of things in mathematically predictable ways. The theoretical sum of such observations has ultimately given us the idea of gravity as a 'warping' in the fabric of spacetime such that both the motion of the studied object in space and the 'time that it takes' for this motion to occur are simultaneously altered when this object passes through the gravitational field of a planet, moon, star or black-hole.

While the amazing insights of such gravitational 'rocket science' must be appreciated for the light of understanding that they shed upon the phenomenon of gravity in all its mundane and celestial displays, it's also

clear that this way of thinking, for all its usefulness and power of control, remains virtually blind to the essence of gravity itself. The lack of scientific interest in this essence is hardly a surprise, given the fact that the force of gravity may well seem, in its bare essence, to be the most boring and useless phenomenon in the entire field of human experience – a *given* of that experience that seems there primarily to be overcome – by means of leverage, flotation, exercise, training and the development of wheels, motors, pulleys, airfoils and ultimately, rockets. As opposed to all these forces and devices that offer liberation from its leaden grasp in the form of free movement and free flight, gravity presents itself essentially as the grim force of weight and position, holding things in place in a state of relative stillness, unmoved and unchanged for perhaps countless eons of time. The desolate surfaces of our moon and the other terrestrial planets of our solar system bear stark witness to gravity's ultimate effect when it works with few countervailing geologic, atmospheric, volcanic or nuclear forces to balance the sheer, inert bleakness of its hold on things. Compared to the exciting and useful properties of electromagnetism, nuclear fusion and explosive chemistry, the power of gravity would seem indeed to be the most monotonous and easily overlooked of natural forces. Little wonder that science conceives of gravity as a 'warping' or 'deformation', creating as it does confusingly curved spheres and fields of force in a matrix of space and time that would be otherwise mathematically uniform. In the eyes of science, focused as they are on the horizontal motion of things, gravity is

essentially a bending, warping and distorting force. Can gravity do anything ***right***?

Well, most certainly it can. In fact, Rightness itself is made of gravity…

Essentially, all massive entities, whether conceived scientifically as 'objects' or ontologically as 'things', share a common essence – gravity – the *meaning* of which is revealed by the observable, measurable, physical force that it exerts on those objects-things. To speak of the 'meaning' of a 'force' may not be proper scientific terminology but the use of such language is meant to highlight the rare confluence of scientific and ontological thinking that the idea of gravity inspires. What better way to describe, for example, the case of the gravitational relation between an orbiting asteroid and the planet earth, where there is not one greater mass acting upon a smaller one in a forceful way (as if these 'objects' were essentially discreet) but rather a shared essence, that could be called 'mass' or 'gravity' interchangeably, that naturally brings (falls) these massive things together (with a 'force' relative to their respective mass) in a common destiny... to seek and signify, the *Stillness* and *Singularity* that is present at the **Center**... of the earth... of the solar system... of the galaxy... of the...? Defining the natural tendency of moving, disparate matter to come to rest in a state of unity and order (i.e., as a sphere), gravity can best be understood in its essence as the relative con***centr***ation of mass around a relatively still and singular point. Bleak and desolate as the surfaces of our lifeless, neighboring planets may be, yet we regard their stark beauty with wonder and awe simply for their naked display of the

power of gravity to form them in radiant spheres and hold them in the perpetual magnificence of their orbits.

How is it, then, that what we call the force of gravity, present as it is equally and inherently to every great and small thing in the visible universe, binding as it does these things together in perfect, spherical shapes of unimaginable grandeur, holding them in harmonious, concentric relations to each other… how is it that this force is not best understood as the manifest presence of Being? In evidence as in principle, gravity reveals itself as the primary force of Being, allowing as it does for the relative stillness, identity and singularity that is given to all things that are, that is logically necessary for beings to be.

As opposed to natural science that conceives of gravity entirely in terms of its effect on the motion of objects relative to each other, we find in this force a profound, ontological significance that is logically prior to any such effect, i.e., its power to hold and bind things in the relative stillness, identity and singularity that is necessary for these 'objects' (or for anything in the world) ***to be***. While modern physics has identified other 'fundamental forces' that bind matter at the atomic and molecular levels, gravity is the one force that exists in a way that could rightly be called 'universal', extending itself uniformly to *all* matter, regardless of scale but increasing in strength with increasing scale to the point of the unimaginable, cosmic holding-power that is exerted by the most massive stars and black-holes in distant space.

All things on and above the earth, from the beach-pebble to the orbiting moon, are drawn by gravity in the direction of the relatively still, distinct and singular point of mass at the center of the planet. While surely there is nothing remarkable about this iron core of mass that would set it substantially apart from the matter that surrounds it in any strictly physical sense, the gravitational force that *centers* it as a single point of reference from which the entire planet obtains its form and order as a relatively perfect sphere is indeed remarkable for its being inconceivable in any but *meta*physical terms. Metaphysical indeed is the spherical, concentric order that is naturally formed as everything in the world finds itself held 'in place' by virtue of its reference to this center, distinctly drawn and constantly pointed in its singular direction. And so this *one* force, with infinite variation, is at work in shaping and placing the many trillions of celestial bodies that occupy the vastness of space, along with all of the 'things' that find themselves on or near them. A more simple, universal, unifying force than that of gravity can hardly be conceived.

The 'direction' of gravity's pull, toward the center of the massive, spherical planet, is no ordinary one. We normally think of direction as defining the path of the movement of things in horizontal space, even as this space may be ultimately conceived in curvilinear terms to match the curvature of the earth or expanded to include the solar system as a whole. In an earthly frame of reference, my direction of travel is normally reckoned in terms of the magnetic poles and the relative course of

movement north, south, east or west that I must follow to reach my destination. Interplanetary travel is also conceived horizontally but in terms of a much wider frame of reference. On the way to Mars, for example, a sense of direction would be established based on the greater horizon of the solar system and calculated using the known paths of orbit of the earth and its neighbor within that horizon. The *direction* of Newton's apple, however, as it falls from its branch to the ground below – the direction of gravity – is quite a different thing.

The path that is followed by the apple on its way to the ground is **truly straight** in a way that no horizontal motion or trajectory, taking place under the influence of the earth's gravity and guided in part by its curvature, can be. The apple in its free-fall traces a path that defines, in one, simple stroke, both the *vertical dimension* and the *force of gravity* itself as the living relationship of infinitely numerous and various things to a single, relatively still point of reference. This *radiant*, vertical relationship to the singular **center** of the planet which projects its gentle, holding power out equally in *all* directions simply is, for all things earthly, the one possibility of their being straight, right or true, of their being still and lasting, of their being singular and identical, in short, the one possibility of their being themselves… of their **being**.

While the direction of travel of Newton's apple holds profound, ontological significance by defining this singular possibility of **true vertical**, there is yet another aspect to this famous gravitational event from which further extensive ontological meaning naturally develops.

Passing unnoticed in this tranquil, garden scene that inspires the scientific idea of gravity is the fact that its stage is set by a gravitational force at work in precisely the *opposite* direction to that of the apple's fall… that is, from the ground, ***up***. If only by coincidence, the massive object that is captured here by the force of gravity to trace its vertical path to the ground below, happens to be not a stone or ball of iron but an apple, a **living thing**, the fruit of a tree.

The relation of living things to the force of gravity is various indeed. Aquatic life is relatively free of its pull due to the buoyancy of the medium in which it lives. Likewise, birds and winged insects can scoff at gravity's rule, being relatively light and equipped with wings that easily lift and glide them through the air. Land animals and plants, on the other hand, need to take gravity very seriously. Most will acquiesce to its influence by remaining relatively land-hugging. A few, though, will grow vertically in a paradoxical relation to gravity that is at once defiant and magnificently expressive of its invisible, binding, coalescing force. The most massive among these – the giraffes, elephants, moose and horses of our time and the dinosaurs long past – uniquely demonstrate the amazing capacity of life to resist the pressure of gravity and grow to relatively great vertical heights, their immense body-weights either distributed evenly on four legs or, as with the bipedal dinosaurs, on just two with the help of the tripodal stability and counter-balancing effect of an enormous, muscular tail.

Of all living things, however, there are two that are most uniquely and exquisitely expressive of gravity's

power and both of these happen to have been present in this garden where the incipience of the *idea* of gravity took place – i.e., the **tree** from which the apple fell and the exceptional **human being**, Newton himself, who was able to rightly conceive, if only in natural scientific terms, the seminal significance of this simplest of natural events.

While fruit-bearing trees must remain relatively short and 'bushy' so as to minimize damage to their delicate issue in its plunge to the ground below, the majority of the trees that have covered the earth's surface for the last 300 million years grow to heights that range, in human terms, from impressive to inspiring to utterly phenomenal in their sheer, vertical reach. Even the shorter, fruit-bearing varieties must maintain a certain symmetry in the spread of their branches in order to keep themselves in upright balance. But with the many additional meters of height that are given to the taller pine, for example, there comes a greater need for growth that is strictly vertical and relatively free of the massive branches that, if not distributed with perfect symmetry, would put its towering venture in jeopardy. And of course this principle extends even more to the tallest species like the Coast Redwood and Douglas Fir, the growths of which maintain a balance of gravitational forces and adhere to true vertical more than any other living thing… (except, of course, for man). How ironic that the very thing that was to become the icon of the understanding of gravity, Newton's apple, contained in its essence exactly the 'seeds' of that order of beings whose genetic destiny is to overcome the gravitational force and raise themselves, against all seeming natural odds, to the sky.

However diminutive he may appear next to the towering pine or redwood, yet there is no living thing that embodies the force of gravity as the human being does. It could even be rightly said that the human person ***is*** the very incarnation and ultimate expression of this force, in whatever ontological or scientific sense it may be conceived. In his physical and moral sense of 'Right', whether it be carried through the multiple, twisting somersaults of the gymnast that bring her to land in proud and perfect alignment with the center of the earth, or through the relentless efforts of opposing attorneys as they sort through all that is wrong in a case to obtain the cor**rect ver**dict in a court of law, the human being naturally and in all things emulates the gravitational path of Newton's apple by seeking the radiant wellness, goodness, rightness and truth (**ver**itas) of perfect **ver**tical.

In clear and proud defiance of what would seem to be 'laws of physics', the human being is able, with an uncanny sense of balance, to hold his top-heavy frame poised in near-perfect vertical with minimal contact to the ground on the soles of feet that are proportionally tiny compared to the bulk of weight at shoulder height. And unlike the towering tree whose fantastic, vertical reach is founded upon an extensive root system that anchors it in place, man keeps this orientation in animate form, aligning himself with every step as a living, radiant vector that extends from the incredible density of the center of the earth outward to – the nothingness of endless space. In this, man is not, essentially, drawn by gravity as all *things* are, to the center of the earth. Rather, man, no-thing, is drawn in the opposite direction.

Standing, walking upright… thinking, speaking rightly, man is naturally, gravitationally poised between the dense, obdurate, immediate, earthly ***presence*** and the necessary, eternal ***absence*** – of Being.

9 - Thinking and Healing

Our goal in this writing is a good idea of man and, if the path to this goal has taken us on what seem to be long digressions into seemingly 'abstract' themes of ontology, knowledge, time, space and even the concept of gravity, it's only because these themes are not abstract at all but rather, bear directly and essentially on the ideas, beliefs and dis-beliefs that form both the person and, collectively, the world in which we live. The human being is in essence a thinker and how this thinking proceeds, whether rightly or wrongly, makes all the difference to the health and well-being of the personal soul as well as the soul of society.

When we use the term 'rightly or wrongly' here, it should be understood that right thinking has no interest whatsoever in a moralistic determination or prescription of good or bad behavior. To authentic thinking, no such judgements are possible, necessary or desired. While it may recognize the need for precise definitions of 'what is right' and 'what is wrong' to codify the most basic rules of social conduct, right thinking finds no sufficiency in these formulations, concerned as it is with understanding the ONE idea only in terms of which these opposed terms derive their meaning, the ONE idea only in terms of which any 'moral' judgment can be made. What idea?... all one and the same... the idea of God, the idea of Being, the idea of Rightness, the idea of man... poor, poor man but born and raised to the greatest of ideas.

Addressing the possibility of a scientifically conceived psychotherapy bringing healing to human beings whose ideas of themselves and the world have been shattered on rocks of trauma, disappointment, pride, addiction, neglect, obsession, anger, betrayal... we concluded chapter 6, *The Birth of the Person*, with this question:

"And we would ask here, how can a logic that recognizes only the push and pull of things in the world and insists on mere evidence as a basis for its ideas possibly understand the person, precisely No-thing, standing as he does in Rightness with Being… as the edge, the action and the sound of Being in the world, the condition for the possibility of there being things in the world at all? Such logic, that would pertain itself only to the thing-like inherences of personality while ignoring the essence, the core of Rightness to which these 'things' and 'states' and 'rights' inhere, however well-intended and marginally effective in its therapeutic application, is doomed to muddled inadequacy."

Indeed, the muddled inadequacy of the psycho-social 'sciences' to understand the human being is inevitable. How can a logic that, as we have seen, originates in a primordial need for nourishment and that measures its success in terms of its ability to subdue, predict and control the behavior of 'objects', possibly understand the inviolable free-agency of the human person? How can a way of thinking that methodically and meticulously excludes subjectivity from its data and its conclusions even begin to comprehend the power of speech that is given to Homo Sapiens- the knowing, thinking, sounding

subject? Especially when applied to human being, the prevailing methods of natural science that have achieved overwhelming ascendancy in the modern world are 'wrong thinking' at its worst.

There is no need to reiterate here at length what has been amply demonstrated in previous chapters. We've already shown in numerous contexts how the genius of scientific thinking consists in its ability to methodically dismantle and control things by means of a precise, mathematical delineation of **one** dimension of their being... i.e., '***how***' they are. We've also demonstrated the innate deficiency of this understanding insofar as it is achieved at the expense of the **right** of these things to be themselves... as fellow-subjects that can answer only for themselves as to '***what***' and '***why***' they may be. To the highly-focused scientific mind, these most profound dimensions of the being of things, their given wholeness, goodness and integrity, are denied validity or at best resigned to a category labeled *Speculation*, i.e... a form of 'knowledge' that is unsupported by evidence and therefore, ultimately meaningless and irrelevant. Thus, sadly, though understandably, given our compelling need to eat, desire to survive and lust for power, the bright mind of science sets itself at war with the being of things and ultimately, with Being itself. In its world of infinite complexity and multiplicity, there is no room for One.

Of course, in the churches, synagogues, temples and mosques of the world there *is* room for One. And yet, especially in the most developed regions of the modern world, where the religion of power and control is most ascendant, these rooms find themselves with fewer and

fewer occupants. In this progressively secular environment, it's the office of the psychotherapist that becomes the refuge of the troubled person from the painful clamoring of personal complexity as well as from the 'infinite complexity' of the scientifically conceived world. In the modern world, it's 'therapy' rather than prayer that is predominantly considered the path to mental and spiritual healing.

The first such efforts of Sigmund Freud in the late 19th century laid the groundwork for the institution of the 'therapeutic hour' which persists in its essential form through the many schools of thought that influence the professional decision as to *how* this hour should be spent, whether with the analysis of dreams, empathic listening on the part of the therapist or the restructuring of cognitive processes (learning to think differently). All three of these and other successful approaches are proven to be healing to the distressed person and it's not of interest here to debate their relative virtues. Rather, not surprisingly, our thinking here is toward understanding the institution of the healing, therapeutic hour *itself* in its essence... it's 'what' and its 'why', regardless of 'how' it may choose to proceed in practice.

An hour is a measure of time and indeed it is time itself, in its most rare and authentic form, that is experienced in the therapeutic hour and that makes it so precious to the person with an unquiet mind and so different from the other waking hours of his or her day or week. Time itself?... As opposed to the ordinary sense of time as a passing of the events of days, weeks, months and years, we've identified the foundation of time as the

relative *stillness* and *singularity* that is given to things (and, most of all, to persons) allowing them to ***be***, albeit in an imperfect, passing and temporary way, *what* (*who*) they are. This gift of time that is the relative stillness, wholeness and singularity of things... their ***being***... reflects the Oneness of Being itself and is the core, soul and sense of all poor and passing things that are... but most profoundly and perfectly... the core and soul and sense of the human being.

Whatever theoretical or 'scientific' rationale guides its conduct in practice, what sets the therapeutic hour apart from other, 'normal' waking hours is its constant and singular focus on the person at this very level of their soul and core... of their ***being***... ***who*** they are. And yet of course, this focus is, for the most part, implied rather than explicit. Overtly, the themes that the person brings to the therapeutic encounter are a collection of accounts, laid out in careful and intimate detail, of ***how*** they are... of the things that happened to them since their last session... of the unwelcome thoughts or feelings that disrupted their relations with family, friends or coworkers... of the unpleasant dreams, persistent memories or fears that disturbed their sleep... of some intrusive compulsion or habit that they were unable to control. These are the familiar themes and dynamics of 'pathology' that the therapist is trained to address. Depending on what theoretical orientation a given therapist may use as a guide, these problematic feelings, thoughts and behaviors may be taken as manifestations of repressed desires that can be clarified with psychoanalytic technique or as automatic responses to recurring situations that need to be

recognized, unlearned and replaced with more realistic and satisfying behavioral strategies by methods of cognitive therapy. This is to cite just two of the many proven approaches to healing that take place in the therapeutic hour.

Across all these heavily-researched, scientifically-conceived and relatively effective methods of therapy there is a common denominator of healing power that is conceivable only in *ontological* terms. From this it owes its reputation as a 'mystery' to scientific psychology. Essentially, the healing balm of therapy, any therapy, is mutual *understanding* which, precisely because it addresses the person as a *whole*, in the singularity, identity and oneness of their being, is inconceivable in any quantitative, scientific terms. As we have suggested, what sets the therapeutic chamber and hour apart from the rest of the busy, complex, multiplicitous world of things is that here, in this place and for this hour, there ***is*** room for One.

While the knowledge, expertise and experience of a well-schooled and well-trained therapist are necessary to recognize and make sense of the pathological traits that the client brings to the encounter, it is finally their skill in putting this knowledge *aside* in an understanding not of the 'personality' but the *person* that delivers the healing moment. This moment does not come easily. It may take hundreds of therapeutic hours and years of time and patient analysis to identify and unravel the tangled complex of pride, frustration, fear and hurt that constrict and stifle the person like a choking vine growing on a young tree.

At every step along this healing way, the skilled therapist, with more or less conscious awareness, maintains a carefully balanced duality of presence with the client. On the one hand, they bring to bear the full weight of their 'scientific' understanding of psychopathology and its analysis / remediation and on the other, they keep a profoundly respectful attitude toward the person of the client who, as a fellow human being, is beyond any such understanding. In practice, this attitude is manifested in the therapist's stated or implied question to the client in the face of the many manifestations of pathology that he or she may present... "Is *this* who you are?"... this addiction... this fear... this compulsion... this obsession?

Every negative answer to this question shows a welcome measure of progress in the process of freeing the person of the complex accretion of encumbrances that weigh upon the natural lightness and goodness of their being... that cloud its vision, shatter its tranquility and make unwarranted claim upon its inalienable rights. The 'mystery' of the therapeutic cure lies at the ontological level at which this question, whether it be posed explicitly or implicitly, is raised. With this question, not "How are you?" but "Who are you?", all therapists become existential therapists - naturally so of course, since they are ultimately charged with understanding not just patterns of emotional development, systems of psychological energy or cognitive processes, but rather, with understanding an afflicted fellow human *being*.

While the medical sciences are able to relieve the physical suffering of human beings with measures that

are conceived largely if not completely within the strict confines of objective, scientific thinking, the psychotherapist is in a unique position regarding the 'object' of their interest and care - no object at all - the human subject, the human *being*. To be effective in the therapeutic hour, they must 'think differently', balancing the comfortable certainty of their scientific, psychological 'knowledge' with an ontological understanding of the person who, among all the things in the wide world that are of scientific interest, is the only one to be called a ***'being'***. While the verb 'to be' is used ubiquitously to refer to things as *possessing* being... "This *is* a pen", "There *is* a raccoon", "That *is* the law"... there is only one thing that is referred to in specifically ontological terms as **'a being'** and that thing, no-thing, is a human being. Is it any wonder that we consider the concepts of human ontology that we've developed here to be essential to a good understanding of the human person - to a good idea of man? Clearly, the scientific thinking that ignores the ontological dimension of things... their being what they are for their own reasons, outside and beyond the purpose of prediction and control... has no hope of adequately understanding any thing that possesses being much less that one thing, no-thing, whose being, whose very essence ***is*** being.

What characterizes the 'different thinking' that goes on in the therapeutic hour? Its difference from the objective, scientific thinking that predominates the modern mind is that it approximates thinking itself... thinking as it is originally constituted and meant to be thought... thinking as understanding the *fellow-being* of

things, of oneself and of others. This is the thinking that is experienced, however thoughtlessly, in the everyday 'allrightness' of human beings... thinking that is healthy, respectful, well-disposed and easy in humor. While it may be as commonplace as the visible composure of the person passing on the street, it is generally taken for granted and disregarded 'in theory' when ideas of human behavior are formulated by the psychological sciences.

With more or less explicit intention, but out of necessity to effect a cure, therapeutic thinking tends to follow the method of ontological thinking (thinking as such) that we've set out in previous pages. Contrary to the comfortable, predictive certainty of objective reasoning, it does this by allowing for the dangerous but liberating possibility of understanding the person as a whole, at their core, at the level of their *being*- who, how and for the reason that they *are*. This 'different' thinking, unproductive as it may at first seem, is clearly the only way of thinking that is capable of a true and therefore healing understanding of a human *being* (or even, we would add, *any* being).

This thinking Rightly that points in the vertical dimension to the being of things and others by imperfectly but faithfully *under-standing* them is the natural state of human consciousness and requires no special talent or capacity of intellect. Far from it. Rather, it is the ordinary condition of 'allrightness' into which all human beings, given the power of speech and the power of understanding, are born. It indeed comes naturally to the person, whatever his or her 'mental capacities' may be and is only there to be forgotten, obscured, confused or, at

worst, denied under the influence of cruel experience and/or the proud 'knowledge' that enables the control of things and others without regard to *what* or *who* they *are* as fellow-beings.

Just as natural as the human capacity for understanding, however, is the anxiety that accompanies it. Inherent in the true understanding of Being and beings or of oneself as a subject of Being is an acceptance of being out of control. It's safe to say that this state of more or less complacent or anxious acceptance came more easily to man in the first three million years of his presence on earth than in the last three hundred. In the world before the 'enlightened', scientific mind held sway, much more was naturally left to chance, fate and the will of the gods... accepted for lack of an alternative, out of necessity. The given difficulty of life leaves little time for neuroses to develop or be treated. So it is no coincidence that the prevalance of the need for psychotherapy among human beings would arise directly in concert with the enhanced control of scientific thinking that has captured the trust of human consciousness in the 'developed', modern world.

In this context, the therapeutic hour was developed as a means of restoring the anxious person to their natural 'allrightness'... to a good and true understanding and acceptance of *who* they are as a subject of Being... as a child of God. What occurs in this healing hour is essentially nothing more than right-thinking in the ontological sense... a painstaking loosening and dismantling of the pathological system of controls that the person is ***not*** - the repressions, obsessions, defense-

mechanisms and addictions - that have thoughtlessly congealed around the soul to allay and forestall the anxiety that accompanies the acceptance of oneself as a wonderfully but dangerously *free* being in a world of beings beyond control.

Author notes

The Idea of Man is a work in progress. Book II, subtitled *Consequences of Human Ontology*, will address the implications for human being that naturally follow from the logic of 'Rightness' that has been developed so far in these pages. Implications for man's moral, sexual, psychological, economic and political life will be explored.

Author: ***Mark Aman***
-- B.A., Philosophy, Loyola College of Maryland, 1972
-- M.A., Clinical Psychology, Duquesne University, 1977
--All-but-dissertation completed for the Ph.D. in Clinical / Phenomenological Psychology, Duquesne University, 1980. Dissertation topic: 'The Lived Experience of Time' was suspended in 1982 and taken up again in the present work.

Contact:
mark.aman@verusbooks.com