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The Secular and the Sacred

Complementary and/or Conflictual?

Edited by
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The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Preface

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) annual seminar, held in Washington in the Fall of 2008, provoked such an ongoing debate that it was impossible to call it to an end. Thus, the topic, *The Secular and the Sacred: Complementary and/or Conflictual?* was carried over to the 2009 seminar. The discussion, indeed, debate, never ended. It is still raging. The seminars brought together over 35 scholars from different countries. This volume collects their papers.

Each seminar unfolded over a six week period and was framed by insights from Charles Taylor, John Rawls, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jurgen Habermas and in constant dialogue with different religious and cultural traditions. Nonetheless, the practical, political, and social implications of the issue were always, and sometimes dramatically and graphically, on the table. Discussions were often fierce but always friendly.

The editors express gratitude to Edward Alam, Notre Dame University, Lebanon, for his leadership of the seminars and to a number of eminent scholars who sat in on the discussions and greatly added to the quality of debate and the clarity of conclusions, Sef Donders, John Farrelly, Abdolkarim Soroush, Gholan Reza Aavani, John Kromkowski, and William McBride.

The editors also express thanks to Maura Donohue for her sage editorial work on some of the chapters.

John P. Hogan
Sayed Hassan Akhlaq

Introduction

The Secular and the Sacred: Hermeneutical Thread – Conflict or Complement?

JOHN P. HOGAN & SAYED HASSAN AKHLAQ

Introduction

About 25 years ago, while working in development in Africa, one of the editors attended a meeting of a community co-op and credit union. The large meeting involving the whole village took place in a remote area and was attended by a number of Northern European donors who were supporting the local effort. When the meeting was called to order, the local community leader, a middle-age woman, stepped to the front and began with a prayer. At the end of the meeting, one of the donors approached the woman and in a sincere, polite manner inquired, "Why would you begin a community meeting with a prayer?" The woman hesitated, and then in an equally sincere and polite manner responded, "How else would you begin a community meeting?" That memory sticks in consciousness as we reflect on the current relation between the secular and the sacred and the changes in that relation brought by globalization, mass communication, and pluralism. That moment reflects two very different worldviews and resonates well with Charles Taylor's three senses of secularity, especially his third sense. He states: "[T]he change I want to define and trace is one which takes us from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others" (*A Secular Age*, p.3).

The discussion around the sacred and secular, in relation or in opposition, has been the stormy background for debate, not only in Religious Studies and Theology, but also in Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology, Political Science and Legal Studies. Ever since Max Weber reinitiated the debate with his phrase borrowed from Schiller, "disenchantment of the world," a vast library on the debate has been spawned; some relatively recent Western modern classics stand out: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, and *The Sociology of Religion*; Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*; Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*; John

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice and Political Liberalism*; and Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*. The last, in particular, along with the hermeneutical perspectives of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jurgen Habermas with insights from the world's religions were the most proximate framers and dialogue partners for the papers collected here.

Indeed, the issue of secular vs. sacred can no longer be perceived as only theoretical or abstract; it has become fodder in our "culture wars." Viewpoints surrounding the debate, in recent years, have taken on vital political and even, at times, life-threatening dimensions. The deeper implications of the discussion can be perceived in many current global problems: cultural identity, multiculturalism and interculturalism, nationalism, economic inequality, race, terrorism, migration, hospitality, public education, climate change and even, in the U.S. at least, gun control.

Challenge: Conflict or Complement?

Today achievements in secular terms raise issues of meaning and fulfillment which point to the sacred horizons of human life. Yet if conceived in terms of opposition, sacred commitments can distract from, or even impede, the realization of essential secular concerns.

This makes it inadequate to compromise either the sacred or the secular in order to make room for the other, or simply to recognize the validity of each sphere in an alternating progression of both. It now becomes ever more urgent to discover the proper and complementary relation between the two so that both can be promoted through mutual collaboration. Within nations this becomes a condition for assuaging mutual suspicion and achieving social and political solidarity. It holds the possibility of mobilizing the full range of the sensibilities and capabilities of all citizens to confront human challenges. Can the secular and the sacred work together in this endeavor?

Moreover, if each great civilization is founded on a great religion then the possibilities of living together in peace depends on understanding how secular concerns are pervaded by the sacred and how this in turn can render more porous the boundaries set by the secular principles of self-interest. Can the horizons of unity and comity at the heart of the spiritual and religious dimension of humanity achieve peaceful interchange and cooperation between peoples in their daily lives?

In search of positive answers to these questions it is necessary to explore: (a) how the secular does not entail a closed secularism, but requires a legitimate – indeed essential – attention to proper human concerns, and (b) how the sacred with its absolute attention to Truth and Goodness opens rather than closes, minds and hearts to the concerns of all peoples and lays grounds for the principles by which diverse peoples can live together locally as well as globally.

Two main challenges appeared for a new paradigm of unity in diversity for our global times. The first danger lies on the secular side and is found in the present paradigm of a world of radically single individuals and peoples competing or even conflicting in terms of their separate self-interests. The second danger lies on the side of the religious and cultural heritages of the world when conceived exclusively as conflicting among themselves and with the secular.

The 2008 seminar noted that in recent times key thinkers have begun to find that this calls for a renewed participation of cultural and religious voices in public debate and planning. Jürgen Habermas notes the importance of the substantive and experienced truth content of such voices on for example, human dignity and solidarity. As resources for the creation of meaning and identity, these are keys to contemporary social development. A deeper complementary and enriching cooperation between secular and religious citizens may now be possible, and indeed urgently needed.

But as Gadamer noted, it is not possible to imagine a kind of “blank table” as a point of departure in the Lockean or Cartesian sense. Rather, all are born into their own culture and language which provide a basic world-view and a rich resource of fundamental values. In our global times these civilizations now meet one another in ways that only a few years ago were unimaginable. In turn, they encounter a secular age with its own proper and appropriate focus on human fulfillment. Thus, the challenge of developing a new paradigm for philosophizing that enables the sacred and the secular to be lived fully, creatively and cooperatively so as to build a viable global whole.

Response – Interwoven Process

The 2009 seminar built upon the above as well as on the Islamic seminar on “Living Faithfully in Changing Times.” Special attention was devoted to appreciating both the unique differences and the relatedness of the world’s religious cultures, their relation to the

achievement of secular goals, and vice versa, the positive contribution of secular concerns for living religion fully in this world. The search was for a paradigm that enables mutual understanding and communication in which peoples and cultures, both sacred and secular, can be positively complementary.

This requires attention to the triple threat that arises from conceiving the world's religious and secular cultures in abstract and exclusive ways: (a) isolating cultural and religious heritages from human experience and thus rendering them irrelevant to life in our times; (b) understanding the secular exclusively in ways that exclude the unique creativity and contribution of each culture to public discussion of the common good, and (c) seeing both the sacred and the secular as essentially in contrast and by implication, conflictual, and hence dangerous to the common good.

To respond to this threefold threat the 2009 seminar sought to open the way for a lived existential sharing of the many cultures, religious and secular. It explored how the world's great cultures and religions, lived fully and each in their unique manner, can develop resources of respect for other individuals, peoples and cultures. The search was for a mutual complementarity and enrichment of the sacred and secular traditions.

To do this, the gathered scholars explored the philosophical undergirdings of the cooperation of faith and reason in the search for the human dignity of each person. They also examined the respect due to their societies, cultures and civilizations, as well as to nature. Additionally, they took up the challenge of Habermas to find ways in which this can be brought to bear on public discussion of the common good, so that secular and religious persons might find areas of deep cooperation. In this they sought to respect the genuine concerns of secular thought while bringing to the table meanings rooted in cultures and religions that deepen, enrich and extend mutual concerns.

In dialogue with Taylor's *A Secular Age*, participants set out to articulate and describe a new paradigm for philosophizing that enables the sacred and the secular to be lived fully, creatively, and cooperatively in order to construct a more viable global whole. They sought to better understand and meet the major threats to such an understanding which can, and often do, emerge from either the secular realm or the sacred realm. They suggested ways of

overcoming these dangers so that a new paradigm of unity in diversity could emerge bringing the sacred and the secular into a more positive interrelation.

In this effort, it is important to note both the distinction and complementarity between Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" and Habermas' insistence on cultivating a special concern for achieving public consensus. The positions are not the same but they may be complementary. Even with Gadamer's "fusion of horizons," there is a need to constantly plumb the depths of metaphysical resources in cultures and civilizations to avoid a "leveling out or a secularization of the sacred."

Outline of Chapters

The volume is organized in seven parts, moving from philosophical foundations to cultural applications, with clarifying hermeneutical reflections in between. Part I, 'Foundations,' begins with Anna Drabarek's insightful use of Charles Taylor to ferret out a 'new sacred,' based on fundamental values and the 'revival of an intuitive cognition of goodness.' Chapter 2, by Dursun Ali Aykit, unfolds the rather unique role of Philo of Alexandria (336-323 B.C.) and how he, as a Jew, managed and reacted to the political, social, and cultural environment of the great diaspora. Chapter 3, on Maximus the Confessor by Keith Lemma, mines the Patristic period to reawaken the sense of the "Cosmos" in Christian thought. Maximus' cosmic vision offers deep insight into the sacredness of the secular as well as practical ecumenical and inter-faith suggestions. In Chapter 4, Armando Riyanto unpacks Hobbes' *Leviathan* to get to the nature of human nature. He acknowledges the lack of any spiritual aspects in Hobbes but responds to this by drawing him into dialogue with Taylor. Chapter 5, by Peter Collins, follows through on the "I and Thou" of the great Jewish thinker Martin Buber. Collins examines his texts, especially on Hasidism and dialogue, to highlight the positive interrelation Buber developed between the sacred and secular. In Chapter 6, on politics and personal freedom, Mamuka Doldze presents a phenomenology of political philosophy revealed in art, literature, and science. He draws on Plato, Merleau-Ponty, and Leo Strauss to defend a process of "individuality of being that leads to the unity of the world."

Part II “Sacred and Secular: Complement or Conflict?” moves to the current not-so-smooth relation in our pluralistic and globalized world. Chapter 7 by Tadeusz Buksinski takes on the rapidly evolving situation in Eastern Europe. The author describes the Communist sanctification of the secular-profane and subsequent societies’ profanation of the sacred and their negative effects on society. When artists seek to ‘naturalize God,’ the outcome for humans is ‘drastic and a ‘bitter sign of our time.’ In Chapter 8, John Farrelly seeks to lay out a coherent approach to Christian humanism in our time, analyzing some of the scriptural, historical and philosophical tensions. Indicting both the positive and negative in some aspects of humanism today, he concludes by showing how Christian faith and hope integrate and fulfill human history, ‘without being reduced to history.’ Chapter 9 by Edwin George looks at the thorny question of secularism from the perspectives of American philosopher Fred Dallmayr and Indian theologian Raymond Panikkar. Can religion respond to the juggernaut of secularism, without getting ground-up in political power battles? Both thinkers help articulate a response, which is link to a ‘dialogic-power-kenosis’ model close to that of Gandhi. John Farina, in Chapter 10, discusses the problems a liberal democracy faces when dealing with religion. Framed by the 2005 debate between Jurgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, Farina seeks to unpack some of what goes into an honest dialogue between liberalism and religion. He illustrates his post secular perspective with reference to two contentious Supreme Court cases involving the display of religious symbols on public land. Chapter 11 by Richard Khuri brings the reader into an intense conversation about time. From the Greeks, especially Epicurus and Heraclitus, through Proust, and down to Kierkegaard and Marcel, we are called beyond the ‘banality of the clock.’ We can come to grasp the inner nature of time, the sacredness of time as an experience pointing ‘somewhere deep within ourselves...to the Beginning.” Chapter 12 by Jonathan Bowman analyzes “Religion as Friend or Foe?” by comparing the E.U. and the U.S. With Charles Taylor as guide, the author looks at different applications of secularity. How could the two major centers of liberal democracy be so different in dealing with religion in public life? The author aligns himself with the position of José Casanova that American pluralism provides a ‘nova effect’ and is better at incorporating the world ‘s religions because it does so in the way it

incorporated the religions of its old immigrants. America's religious diaspora is a catalyst for the transformation of religions. Chapter 13 by Gian Luigi Brena takes up the volume's central theme, secular-sacred, from conflict to complement. He outlines the approach used by Taylor in *A Secular Age* and points the way toward a new way of doing philosophy, less conflictual and more open, where Western science and philosophy become able 'to understand the living sense of other traditions.' In Chapter 14, Plamen Makariev discusses what a self-consistent liberal viewpoint vis-à-vis religious believers should look like in a free democracy. Fair and open interaction can only be peacefully attained and lived out when co-existence is defined in a procedural manner, and not through a substantive approach. 'The only unity of worldviews which is necessary in order to develop a sustainable just social order is the one of reasonability.'

Part III "Hermeneutics" seeks to find the hermeneutical thread in this complex carpet and present the theoretical foundations for an interpretive framework for understanding and giving due validity to both secular processes and institutions and to sacred processes and institutions. The objective and challenge of this philosophical search is finding the clarification allowing for a unity in diversity. Chapter 15 by Arifa Farid explores the hermeneutical thinking of Heidegger, Gadamer and Apel. The author sees Heidegger's triad of Being-Dasein-Time as opening the way to possibilities for interpretation. Temporality, drawn from *dasein*, as filtered through Dilthey, Apel and Gadamer, becomes the key for closing the gap of distance between Western humans and tradition. In Chapter 16, Agnieszka Lenartowicz calls for a new hermeneutical reading of the "sacrum" in our day. The opposition between sacrum and rationality is heralded in our world. But, need it be so? The author claims that in our current 'crisis,' we need both – myth and sacrum *and* rational and secular in order to bridge the "poles of opposition." Chapter 17 by Alois A. Nugroho takes on the problem of intercultural communication in our pluralistic age. Building on Taylor, Gadamer and Rawls, he moves beyond the notion of 'clash' between the sacred and the secular, and carefully tries to carve out space for Gadamer's "center" of "understanding and harmony." In Chapter 18, Sayed Hassan Akhlaq outlines a creative and critical approach to grasping the deeper meaning of Shariah Law in our global age. He skillfully aligns the secular with the rational but stresses the often-overlooked rationality of Shariah and the need to

join this rationality to modern hermeneutical understandings. Chapter 19 by Augustin Domingo Moratalla opens with the “careful conversation” between Jurgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger and their attempt to bring us back to a dialogue between faith and reason and sacred and secular. He leads the reader through Habermas, Taylor and Ricoeur to recover the need for a deeper translation that ‘puts us in the hermeneutical age of morality.’ Chapter 20 by Robert Badillo returns to the Habermas – Ratzinger dialogue and pushes further toward a “World Ethos” buoyed by the genetic metaphysics of Fernando Rielo and his conception of an ontology of relation between the “Absolute and human persons.”

Part IV “African Traditions” brings the discussion to and from the African environment. In Chapter 21, Workineh Kelbessa explores the relationship between tolerance, religious pluralism, and public culture in Africa. The paper highlights the impact of pluralism and intolerance on politics and community life and calls for the need to accommodate religious and cultural diversity and to reexamine the role Religion might play in public life. Chapter 22 by Maduabuchi Dukor, discusses the “interplay of free will and determinism... and...Africa’s attempt to emancipate itself technically.” What role does tradition play? The author clearly sees the need for a religious perspective in riding the waves of science, technology, and globalization. In Chapter 23, Hippolyte Ngimbi Nseka continues the debate with a direct question to Africans: “Which Sacred Can Save Us?” He examines the diversity of expression of the sacred in African cultures and the impact on communal life – both positive and negative. He concludes by expressing the need to “achieve or re-achieve a central focus...” That “unique necessary” being is “revealed to be love.”

Part V moves to some South Asian traditions. Chapter 24 by Abdul Wahab Suri, takes on deontological liberalism, with its “priority of right over Good,” as expounded by John Rawls. The author rejects this approach to justice as an “attempt to impose an abstract system of rights which has been derived from a culturally specific and historically determined conception of Good.” In Chapter 25, Suri continues his argument with an emphasis on the “rights-Good” debate in human rights and its impact on the nation-state. He decries what he understands as a Western-liberal imposition “which reflects the moral intuition of a particular community.” Chapter 26 by Indra

Nath Choudhuri advocates for a position that builds on the Indian “Advaita Vedanta” which allows for a valid autonomy for the secular but still knows, sees, and feels the presence of God in all of reality. Sacred and secular are not in opposition to each other but rather, intimately intertwined. In Chapter 27, Saral Jhingran unpacks the radical division between the sacred and the secular that has grown up since the Enlightenment and the Protestant Reformation. The author’s claim is that only in Western Christianity has the dichotomy taken root. After surveying Hinduism, Christianity and Islam, Jhingran makes constructive suggestions as to the need and role of religion in our current global, technical world.

Part VI “Chinese Traditions,” moves from ancient Chinese thought down to the present to assess relations between the sacred and secular and the role of religion in society. Chapter 28 by Yan Xin traces the influence of the Confucian tradition on the historical relation between the sacred and secular in Chinese society. He pursues the tradition down to the present and discusses the need for new ideas given globalization, the growth of religion and the influence of different cultures on modern China. In Chapter 29 by Jia Limin the sacred-secular relation is compared to the notion of harmony between *Tian* (heaven) and humans in Confucian thought. The author describes a dependency of the secular on a “spirit world” that acts as a ‘guidepost.” Chapter 30, by Hsien-Chung Lee, advances the discussion to the current global era. Lee begins by noting that the causes of secularity in the East and West are very different. Nonetheless, sacred and secular are “two sides of the same coin.” This is illustrated by turning to the relation of *Yin/Yang* and tracing that relation through various Chinese schools, especially Daoism. Humans in our global world need a wholistic understanding of self and that may be found in a complementary grasp of *Yin/Yang* and sacred/secular.

Part VII “Islamic Traditions” raises important questions that touch virtually every aspect of modern life for believing Muslims. In Chapter 31, Burhan Ssebayingga provides a detailed overview of the meaning of secularity in an Arabic context – particularly within Egyptian intellectual circles. Ssebayingga highlights the intellectual and political challenges faced by secular scholars encountering Islamic thought and belief. In Chapter 32, Abdul Rahim Afaki examines Ricoeur’s notion of appropriation of a text as an

autonomous structure and compares it with the Indian exegete Farahi's view of the autonomy of Qur'anic discourse under the *Nazm al-Qur'an* approach. Chapter 33 is by Saeed Anvari. This brief paper emphasizes the different roles played by teleology and epistemology in examining the sacred and the secular in the context of Islamic orthodoxy. Anvari allows only limited space to secular concerns. In Chapter 34, Sayed Hassan Akhlaq articulates a different perspective. He studies the common and multiple meanings of rationality in the Islamic primary sources by examining fundamental doctrines, the Qur'an, and the Sunnah. Akhlaq's research opens considerable space for the rational/secular in Islamic scholarship. From there, he explores a path for a modern dialogue between the sacred and the secular.

Conclusion

Life today calls for a paradigm and metaphysics of the "whole" to enable mutual understanding and communication among and between cultures, religions and races. It is now all the more urgent to appreciate not only essential differences, but also the similarities and relatedness of the world's cultures and peoples. How the secular and the sacred interact is key for such a mutual understanding – one might even say, the needle pulling the hermeneutical thread. Realizing the interwoven process of the sacred and the secular allows for a mutual appreciation of cultures and enables their most basic and characteristic pursuits to meet in a conscious convergence, echoing Gadamer's "fusion of horizons." We need that meeting – but how should we call it to order? It is this needed convergence, communication and cooperation which the papers collected below seek to illustrate.

Part I
Foundations

1.

Revival of the Sacred Founded on the Intuitive Cognition of Goodness

ANNA DRABAREK

Introduction

Do we live in an epoch characterized by a lack of heroism, philosophy, piety and morality? For the great work of the human mind, automated machines produce things that man finds indispensable, including those for communication. Yet, people start to feel more and more a need to restore the disappearing social bonds, for in order to exist, humans requires self-identification, bonds with others, and roots and symbols of belonging to a community. A centuries-old desire maximally to rationalize reality, and hence to subordinate it in order to demythologize and disenchant it, has not produced the expected satisfactory results.

When we move from the holistic optics to concrete cases, to the investigation of a story of a given person, the history of the human world appears to be meaningless, depressive and distrustful. For 'I' – a human – am left alone with my existence oriented towards individualization and egoism.

I shan't meet Antigone in front of a shop window
I shan't come across Electra on a green square
Somebody else who is not featured in any mythology
Looks straight into my eyes and passes by...
I open memory with a key of mockery
As a star, the well of an abyss...
A great discovery of unknown biophysical compounds
is awaiting us
The one poets have not dreamed about
Do you want trash?
Yes, we do! But in a style¹

In his book *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*² Charles Taylor analyses the problem of the instrumentalization of culture,

¹ A. Ważyk, "Silva rerum," in *Poezja naszego wieku* (Warszawa, 1989), pp.190-191.

² Ch. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Harvard University Press, 1989).

which is targeted mainly at the utilitarian approach to reality. As a consequence of such understanding of culture, our attitude to life becomes non-heroic, non-philosophical, impious and immoral. For when commercial institutions, that is temples of trade, profit and bureaucracy, become most important, life is deprived of its depth and essence.

The instrumentalization of culture leads to the popularization of ideas concerning human life which are deprived of existential content regarding freedom, self-determination, responsibility for what we do, dignity and respect for others as independent beings, all of which is forced out by instrumental attitudes primarily focused on consumption. Apart from the fact that it deprives us of our inner richness, depth and sense, this instrumental model of life destroys such traditional communities as families, while deprecating less selfish ways of functioning in the world. As a result of the expansiveness, models are destroyed which provide useful paradigms of how to function in this world. Other negative consequences Taylor sees in this state of affairs are first of all that an instrumental approach eliminates the sources of meaning from life. Moreover, one man, who approaches life egoistically and cynically and does not perform any disinterested and altruistic deeds, undergoes inner disintegration and is deprived of a chance to be happy. Finally, this egoism and self-indulgence leads to the disintegration and atomization of community.

Another consequence of the instrumentalization and consumerism of the modern world is its secularization. The Christian world has come to an end as a result of the decline of spirituality and transcendence that used to render human existence meaningful. In one of his lectures published in Polish in *Tygodnik Powszechny*³ he writes:

Five hundred years ago all nations of Western Europe were Christian and they had their state Churches: each event which was important for those nations – coronation, king's funeral etc. – had to have a special religious setting which took on a sacral form. Nowadays we experience separation of Church from state; secular

³ Ch. Taylor, *The End of Christendom: Loss or Recovery?* (*Tygodnik Powszechny*. Katolickie) Pismo Społeczno-Kulturalne, www.tygodnik.-com.pl.

republics where there is often no religion in the public sphere. Hence, in this sense secularization means to remove religion from public space, an eminent consequence of modernism.⁴

Is there a chance for a new sacredness, thanks to which we shall rediscover our need to aspire after nobleness and generosity and, as a result, begin to aspire after moral perfection?

Renaissance of the Sacred in the Philosophy of Newman and Maritain

In order to be able to present the problem of need for the new sacred it is worth referring to J. H. Newman, a university preacher based in Oxford, who in the 30s and 40s of the 19th century wanted to liberate the Anglican Church from individualism and vagueness, and strengthen the role of authority, including the Church. His sermons had more readers than Scott's novels. However, he abandoned the Anglican Church and converted to Catholicism.⁵ As a result of this conversion he became a simple priest in the Catholic Church and only after Leon XIII became Pope was he named a Cardinal.

What inspirations can we find in Newman's views? He stated: "No truth, even the holiest one, will survive the attack of reason: for reason always turns towards a lack of faith and gathers difficulties... If not for the voice which resounds distinctly in my heart and conscience, the look of this world would make me an atheist, pantheist or polytheist."⁶

Newman is a skeptic in the way he recognizes the world; however, his skepticism surrenders to a conviction – faith. You may say that the sense of a danger set to religion by reason and the ideology of rationalism leads Newman to the fundamental question about the essence of faith. How is it possible and what kind of certainty can be attributed to it? He referred in his arguments in favour of the supremacy of faith over rational cognition to inner experience, from which draws conscience which is considered to be the foundation of human moral behaviour.

Newman's approach to the problem of faith and of religious revival can be treated as an announcement of the coming crisis, which

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁵ W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, t.3, (Warszawa, 1968), p.58.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

in the 19th century was not so symptomatic and widespread as at the turn of the 20th century. Like a sensitive barometer, Newman registered the coming storm, for he noticed clearly the crisis of a traditional religious attitude accompanied by growing skepticism and indifference towards religion.

The questions asked by Newman concerned the essence of being a Christian, principles of participation in the Christian community, and also attitudes towards the Christian tradition. It also generated a problem of the development of Christian doctrine that has led to consideration of the need for a “new sacred.”

Newman’s conception presents Christianity as a group phenomenon that needs the authority of the Church as a guarantee of truth. However, at the same time its new situation requires another relation with the secularizing reality.

In discussing a need of the new sacred it is worth referring to J. Maritain, a French philosopher who advocated a theocentric approach to interpreting the sacred as superior to the anthropocentric world. Maritain sees a new phase of the development of civilization in a new faith in God and subordination of a private sphere of our life to this faith. As a point of reference for the contemporary world he uses the unique heroic epoch of the Middle Ages which was for him the most perfect manifestation of the humanist idea.⁷

Opposing the common belief, Maritain states the Renaissance was the beginning of humanism which ended with a catastrophic explosion of evil in the 20th century. The pathology of humanism was an increasing parallel to the growth of anthropocentric tendencies in culture.⁸ Withdrawing from believing in God and replacing it with belief in man caused a civilizational crisis.

The absence of religion turned out to be a cause of evil and moral collapse of the world. However, it is interesting that in spite of the fact that non-religious man lost his ability for a fully conscious experience of religion he preserved its memory deep inside. Hence, Maritain hopes that man has still a need to rediscover the traces of God and this provides him with the foundations on which he builds an elaborate edifice of the revival of our civilization. Condemning culture based on anthropocentrism, he blames three reformers: Luther, Descartes and J.

⁷ J. Maritain, *Humanizm integralny* (London, 1960), pp.10-19.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

J. Rousseau.⁹ They led people astray towards nihilism and created ideas which torture us and lead towards evil. The acknowledgement of one's own, human consciousness as the only source of cognition and scientism, as well as the secularization of various spheres of life are considered by Maritain to be the devil's wisdom which degenerated the modern world and plunged it into chaos. As reality without faith generates evil, is imperfect, and cannot develop further, therefore returning to religion and faith is the only way to solve our existential crisis.

Humans, as an element of society, become engaged in its political life, but he should not be an element of society under every respect for he does not enter the public space as its constituent with all that he is and has. As an element of political society he is subordinated to the whole, however, as a person he goes beyond political society. Hence, every man or woman, as a person in the sphere of his supernatural desire for faith and aspiration for salvation, should dominate over society. The material, economic and political existence of humans requires from him/her subordination to the political community for his good and is the good of a part which is less divine than the common good of society.

Here a problem emerges which constitutes a universal question of our times – how should society be organized so as to guarantee each person conditions conducive to the development of spirituality and allow the realization of aspirations to transcendence. Modern society that wants to realize the principle of the common good, called by Maritain the righteousness of life and by the ancient philosophers *bonum honestum*, should promote a model of the honest life which leads to unity, order and social peace. However, this social unity assumes (in Maritain's conception) a hierarchical differentiation, for social and individual inequalities do not exclude the basic equality of people manifested in our kinship as brothers and sisters in Adam and in Christ.

Hence, the essential good of man as a human being goes beyond the good of earthly society. However, in spite of the awareness of the superiority of the individual over the social good man has to be able to surrender to God as the supreme and eternal Good, for we can achieve the ultimate freedom and independence only through the

⁹ J. Maritain, "Trzej reformatorzy," in *Pisma filozoficzne* (Kraków, 1988).

realization of spiritual dependence, as the Church points out man's duties in relation to God. We are doubly dependent, on God and the Church which is "The Mystical Body of Christ."

The problem of this dependence is one of the most important problems of the Christian concept of man. However, it can be perceived differently depending on how the relations between man's spiritual, political and social order are approached. To treat them instrumentally questions the autonomy of the earthly problems when recognized only as a function of spiritual matters. Here the Church shapes and influences social life in an essential way.

Maritain considers this approach to the Church-society relationship to be an achronism. It is true that he refers to the example of the ardent medieval faith as the perfect manifestation of humanism, but he also states that it is very dangerous for modern faith in relation to the earthly order to connect it with the dead forms, which from our modern point of view are impossible to accept. Therefore the Church cannot claim to regain the position it occupied in the Middle Ages. It is necessary to accept the Biblical differentiation between the divine and human. According to Thomism, of which Maritain is a follower, man is a universe of a spiritual nature and therefore, as a person, is superior to the material universe by possessing the attribute of independence in acting, which is also considered a sign of man's dignity. In spite of free will, which allows humans to control their deeds and be responsible for them; we are dependent on God without whom we could not do or make anything good.

At the same time, as beings equipped with physical bodies we are fragments of matter, part of the universe, points in the great network of physical, cosmic, vegetal, animal, ethnic, atavistic, economic and historical influences. As part of matter we are subjected to the stars, while as spiritual beings we rule over them.

The disorganization of the order of goods, *ordo amoris*, disorganization of the concept of a person and its materiality has become a source of disaster in the human world, and its collective concepts, namely totalitarianism and individualism. Totalitarianism sacrifices an individual to society by treating humans as part of the totally subordinated whole; individualism reduces the person to an individual to whom is given the possibility to vote, equal rights, freedom of opinion, and the possibility of unlimited consumption. All

these subject an individual to the destructive operation of forces that endanger its spirituality because they secularize most aspects of life.

Mobilizing Role of the New Sacred according to Charles Taylor

The situation of man in the world is recognized in a similar way by Charles Taylor¹⁰ when he talks about the world without faith, the conclusions he arrives at when he advocates a need for new sacredness are so original that they impress us as a new kind of intellectual provocation. Contemporary philosophy, sociology and widely approached humanities call our times secularized modernism. Why is this so? Perhaps the phenomenon of secularization is a consequence of modernity, which does not need to accept religion in public sphere. One can also refer to a gradual extinction of religion through the decrease of a number of believers. The reasons for it are discerned in the growing modernization and democratization of life, as well as the development of science stimulating the development of technology and industrialization. Equality and freedom advocated by democracy liberate a craving for success, increase creativity and mobility, and make people move from the country to towns where they have greater possibilities.

However, according to Taylor,¹¹ the modern situation is not entirely determinative since religion has had its ups and downs that were not necessarily related to the level of modernism, and it is possible to state the opposite. We often observe the development of civilization which does not weaken faith and hence does not lead to secularization. Following Taylor we can give an example of religious revival in 17th century England when Evangelical churches were being built, or Europe during World War 1 and World War II when a number of believers grew along with a need for faith. Finally, we should also remember the special phenomenon of a rapid growth of the ardent Catholic faith in Poland during partition and the anti-communist Solidarity movement.

Taylor realizes that imposing a uniform Catholicism globally on all cultures is impossible; the idea of medieval crusades is unrealistic. However, it is possible to look for an inspiration for the new sacredness in the words "go and teach all nations" when we start to

¹⁰ Ch. Taylor, *The End of the Christian World*, p.2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

interpret the word *katholou* as an attempt to universally reconcile opposites.

Analysing the phenomenon of Christianity, Taylor notes that it will drift aground if we want to return to the traditionally conceived relation man-society-Church. The times in which politics and culture were organized around a sacred vision and were strongly linked with forms of a collective Christian life, the Church and Pope, which influenced the political life of Europe and the world, belong to the past. The Christian world of that construction ended and was subjected to a process of secularization. Taylor finds it interesting that sociological theories did not notice that the first stages of modernization did not weaken the impact of the Christian world basically, but, first of all, changed radically the way society was organized around the Christian faith. The times have passed when the political community had a sacramental form and when the presence of a *sacrum* was a binding factor for society.¹²

However another form of social order based on belief in God originates. Taylor writes:

I mean the United States, which is a republic that was born as a result of revolution in 1776-1787. Although it is a very Protestant culture from which all sacramental elements got removed we can find there a very strong reference to God. In the Declaration of Independence it is stated clearly: our rebellion results also from the fact that God created people equal and gave them certain inalienable rights. We find there a following idea: God has a certain plan for people: they are to live in a way which respects the ideal of equality and inalienable rights of every human being and his freedom. We can say that it is a vision of providence; Americans acknowledged it openly, and some of them still admit that America has a historical mission to fulfill: there God's plan is to be fully realized for the first time. We can find there an idea of God's plan for humanity: our task is to put it in practice. Forming a new republic we realize God's plan. We deal with a very clear presence of God: *we are one people under God; In God we trust* – we read on American money.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.3.

Originally it was almost a theocentric culture, although there was a separation between the Church and state, the guarantee of religious Freedom resulted in an incredible expansion of various denominations. All of it was considered to be the realization of God's plan.¹³

Taylor's interesting idea is to treat the new sacred as a specific phenomenon of social mobilization. Of course, we cannot ignore the fact that in the 19th and 20th centuries European thinkers were convinced that the Europeans, contrary to the rest of the world, introduced rational order which eliminated the need for faith, and hence they removed a theological context as archaic and useless for modern society. However, apart from this dominating tendency of secularization there were examples of new forms of the sacred and piety which according to Taylor exemplify social mobilization. Such examples are provided by the construction of Sacre Coeur Church in Paris after the war with Prussia which ended just before an outbreak of World War 1 or the activity of French organizations "...activating Catholic royalist forces during the whole period of the Third Republic until Vichy, it will turn out that their aim is to mobilize society in order to realize their own plan, their own vision of France opposing the vision of atheists and republicans...there emerges a modern form of religious identity, even if its representatives declare faith in the former system of sacramental monarchy."¹⁴

Taylor refers also to the Irish, French Canadians and Poles for whom strong links between religious and political identity resulted from the fact that their enemies belonged to different denominations, Protestant or Orthodox Churches. Hence, he notices a strong connection between political mobilization and religious identity such that the adherence to nation is very strongly connected with a sense of the adherence to the Church. Thus Weber's disenchantment with the world, which assumed that modernity and Catholicism exclude each other, is not completely true.

Taylor is convinced that modern Catholicism has to be closely connected with liberalism, but one that has a religious dimension. Therefore a Catholic does not have to be afraid of modernity, and

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.5.

modernity does not have to be afraid of Catholicism because the greatest achievement of European civilization – Human Rights – considers the Christian postulate of respect for human dignity to be their supreme objective. Due to the absolute command of respecting dignity and freedom of an individual, the true fruit of the Gospels has been invited to the cultural table of Europe and the world. They have been invited but can they be consumed everywhere?

Let us have a closer look at the proper sense of the assurance formulated in 30 articles in the UN Declaration on Human Rights. Comparing them with the American Declaration of Independence that contains only three rights (life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness) we can definitely state that they are important because a guarantor of their execution is the Creator who made each of us a vehicle for these rights. Whereas in the United Nations Declaration it is not mentioned that God gave us these rights.

What does right to dignity or freedom mean there? It is an acknowledgement of a certain duty, but is not a metaphysical statement. Human Rights without the power of divine decree are deprived of an absolute order and therefore in many cases are questioned and their application leads to many problems and controversies.

The postulates of freedom and respect of human dignity should have, according to Taylor, a religious dimension. The suppression of spirituality or eliminating it in many areas makes us lose bonds with our ancestral past, the ability to perceive ourselves as a continuum of time and culture, so that often we are unable to find reasons for the genesis of conflicts, especially those pertaining to values.

Attempting to explain the problems related to modern man's subjectivity we come across three types of narration which, at the same time, organize and disorganize the space of understanding reality. Some are immersed in the narration dominated by the presence of God, which theistic order generates traditional attitudes. Others assumed a style of thinking which does not accept any metaphysical reflection and therefore accepts the laws of nature and evolution as the real determinants of human existence. Finally, some follow a narration concentrated on an expressive and romantic conception of subjectivity. However, according to Taylor, these theistic, naturalistic and subjective planes of social interactions do not constitute a compatible whole, but are mutually antagonistic.

Excluding one another paradoxically, they co-create 'modern identity.'

Yet, there is a common denominator for these three narrations, namely good will.¹⁵ Even if the values in discussion are in conflict, the awareness that they are values strongly connected with moral duties and, at the same time, are morally justified makes their realization a consequence of metaphysical and ethical perfectionism. God and nature are values that can be in a conflict, but the existence of one of them does not prove that the existence of others is false. Founded on the basis of free will, the consensus results from understanding that these three values are a consequence of the acknowledgement of basic moral principles, that is human freedom and dignity. Therefore they are the main reason for discussion and negotiation between an individual and community, reason and heart, the desire to belong and the desire for autonomy.

Taylor believes that the 1960s of the 20th were a turning point, among other reasons because of the mass accessibility of a style of life which used to be available for elites only, as liberal democracy contributed to the rise of a welfare society, first in the United States, and then in Europe.

A consumption approach, as Taylor terms it, primarily consists in the fact that the boundary of what one finds indispensable to live keeps moving up, because more and more of our needs, not necessarily the basic ones, can be satisfied. At the same time, the boundary of a possibility to have access to luxurious goods, which have been always a domain of the elites, keeps moving down. The eternal fate of average people who from generation to generation lived on the level that hardly allowed them to survive, has changed radically; they have access to goods which were considered luxuries, like cars, TVs, computers, telephones. Perhaps Taylor does not state it openly but the Christian religion was related to a standard of living; but the poor people needed faith much more.

It will suffice to think about a Catholic parish where everyday work was related to religious rituals, where forms of mutual help existed, etc. In some cases also the ones who left for towns because of industrialization also created their forms of

¹⁵ See: A. Bielik-Robson, "Filozof wspólnoty," in Tygodnik Powszechny. Katolickie Pismo Społeczno-Kulturalne, Tygodnik Powszechny Online, www.tygodnik.com.pl, p.4.

Christian life, like the Methodists in England in the early 19th century.¹⁶

Another aspect of the phenomenon that in Taylor's opinion began in the 60s is individualism, which can be best described by "Do your own thing." This individualism used to be a domain of the elites and artistic bohemia. The originality, egocentrism, promoting one's own style of life, lack of belief in authorities and search for one's own spiritual path created an insubordinate, self-centered mentality, unable to enter into a dialogue and cooperation. It leads to the relativity of the concept of the good and the elimination of the good as an aim, replacing it with commodities. The fundamental problem of morality gets deformed because now the major question on a moral level pertains to effective conduct that results in success and being content with one's life. This has replaced the question of what is valuable and what is objective and the absolute good.

Here Taylor presents an important problem: the lack of an ability to differentiate between moral and other values, for instance, the aesthetic, economic and vital values represented by modern individualists. This results in an aversion to moral perfectionism and a lack of restraint in satisfying one's needs. Moral values differ essentially from other values because they demand realization. An attribute of what is moral is the now forgotten virtue of 'nobleness.'¹⁷ Therefore to each positive moral value one can attribute nobleness, as its determinant, from which results its specific transformative influence on humans. When man's conduct is noble and moral he undergoes an inner metamorphosis. A noble act leads to inner peace; whereas the one which is not noble disorganizes and destroys man's inner structure. Noble acts constitute a sense of man's moral fulfillment.

As Taylor points out in his book *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* an orientation towards good can be understood as advocating this nobleness which is missing in most choices we make in life. However, he believes that we cannot afford the luxury of moral ignorance, a negative consequence of which is a lack of ability to be

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.6

¹⁷ A. Drabarek, "Czy można zaufać sobie i innym", in: *Spór o Ingardena, Lubelskie Odczyty Filozoficzne* (Lublin 1994), p.141.

orientated in relation to the good. Everybody has to define his/her place in relation to a moral value called goodness because this fact determines our life and defines our identity, while influencing our relationships with other people. Therefore a *sine qua non* for man's proper functioning is to recognize the goodness of which we are capable, thanks to our intuition that influences our moral choices and actions. Hence, Taylor is an intuitionist who postulates the unity of moral experience, reaction, recognition and justification, as in one's intuitive act something can appear attractive or repulsive, right or wrong, vital or unimportant. Therefore the certainty of intuitive cognition becomes a guarantee of our moral reactions being proper, and in turn, can contribute to the revival of our spirituality and will begin slowly to eliminate moral anomaly.

Intuitive Recognition of Goodness by a Method Aspiring After Axiological Certainty

Here I would like to attempt an analysis of the intuitive recognition of goodness. I shall start from a reference to the poet Paul Valery who claims that man is a source and parent of riddles because there is neither object nor being that we are capable of penetrating entirely. There is no experience we are able to explain in an absolute way. When a human thought wants to come closer to its object, trying to get to things themselves, and not just signs that define only the superficial idea of things, it seems to get separated from the whole of conventional language. We feel that words are missing and nature is not obliged to provide us with only those objects of cognition that can be defined in simple forms that can be communicated.

Already ancient philosophers paid special attention to cognition that was reduced to the analysis of an impression made by an object existing outside us on a cognitive subject. In modern times we moved away from this principle. The attention of thinkers is often concentrated on the imagination and creative intuition. Hence objects of our cognition do not enter our consciousness from outside; it is our imagination which brings them to life. Therefore Leibniz reduces reality to a monad the existence of which consists only in a spontaneous ability to present, Kant's system oscillates around

imagination, Goethe claims that the universe is ruled by fantasy, and young Nietzsche calls the world a theatrical joke of a bored God.¹⁸

Is it true that any act of cognition and creation is of an essentially intuitive character? It is claimed that a scientific discovery consists of four stages: preparation, maturation, illumination – that is a solution of a given problem – and finally passing the results to others.¹⁹ Out of these four stages only two, preparation and passing the results to others, are done under strict control of consciousness. What is most essential in a creative process is subjected, as if, to another kind of thinking than the one we need in order to communicate with people. Communicative thinking requires organized and strict system of signs and symbols whereas creative, intuitive thinking is elastic, adopting language of images and very often does not require words.

Perhaps the "*cogito ergo sum*" of Descartes made philosophy, and hence all spheres of human activity, pay special attention to avoiding mistakes. The certainty of truth and the absence of mistakes are the aims of science and all rational practice. However, there have been periods in the history of thinking when the theoretical approach and the consideration of all human problems through a prism of the ability to justify them, ceased to be enough. It is this crisis of rationality to which Taylor refers. Rejecting rational reasons in favour of often risky, but hugely attractive, intuitive reasons then becomes a reaction to a boring analytical order.

In dictionaries and lexicons we read that intuition is premonition, a process of direct acquisition of knowledge, certainty in any case without reasoning. The word intuition in Latin, *intuito*, means an insight, originating from *intuitus*, *intueri* – that is, to stare intensely, to contemplate.²⁰

In a philosophical sense intuition is conceived of as this kind of cognition which consists in grasping truth without reasoning or practical activity. Whereas talking about it in the context of psychology, we say that intuition is a self-imposed conviction, which cannot be fully justified because it originates as a result of the

¹⁸ J. Ortega y Gasset, *Dehumanizacja sztuki* (Warszawa, 1980), pp.236.

¹⁹ A. Drabarek, "Konflikt między myśleniem racjonalnym a intuicyjnym," in *Konflikt i walka* (Lublin, 1996), p.105.

²⁰ Wł. Kopaliński, *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych*, (Warszawa, 1989); *Słownik wyrazów obcych* (Warszawa: PWN, 1980).

unconscious transposition of attitudes formed in relation to similar situations, or results from the operation of very weak stimuli.

We can also call intuition an instant understanding or premonition of what is important, essential, or divine. Such a way of communication is extraordinary and therefore considered to be unusual, and often mystical. Through a concept with many meanings, thanks to intuition we can create new knowledge that is missing in the notions of reason and cause. Often, we are unaware of this in spite of our capabilities to create and understand the terms and definitions; it is knowledge which is absent in justification and everyday thinking.

Basically as there is no idea of how to define intuition in a general sense, it is better to explain it in the context of specific cases lest a lack of precision give rise to doubts. It is difficult to establish the significance of intuition in the process of cognition in a univocal way, especially in the process of cognition of the good. Therefore the problem of intuition is considered to be one of the essential philosophical controversies.

There are several basic meanings of intuition. Firstly, intuition can be approached as an unjustified conviction which is not preceded by reasoning. In this sense intuition can form a specific parabola that it is not strictly philosophical understanding, but only indirect understanding, a metaphor. Secondly, intuition can be approached as direct instant recognition of truth when in a direct and instant way something comes to your mind without previous reasoning. A judgment on reality founded on intuition conceived of in this way is often an intriguing and embarrassing puzzle. The person, who experiences it has to realize a truth directly as obvious and convincing and does not require justification. Thirdly, direct and instant cognition can be termed intuitive when it is complete and adequate in defining a certain notion. However, this aspect of approaching intuition shows that the results of this cognition are not always identical with true knowledge because they can be misleading or turn out to be only a proposition to get an access to truth. Hence, intuition is a specific perception and ability to observe reality and formulate statements on the essence of things or phenomena. Sometimes it allows one to ignore details and factors like a choice of the right moment, which turns out to be indispensable and laudable as conditions of successful cognition. Apart from such an approach to intuition we often encounter so-called mystical intuition. Thanks to it we do not create possible knowledge,

but as if authorized intuitively, inexpressible truth, which is convincing as belief just like a mystical intuition of God. Perhaps Taylor has this type of intuition in mind when he writes about the unity of moral feeling, recognition and justification in an act of intuitive perception of goodness. For when we know transcendental conditions which constitute our identity we have also intuitive certainty of what is good.

The complex approach to the problem of intuition in philosophy brings about many difficulties. For it is not possible to put what philosophers have called intuition into any systematic and methodical frame. However, taking a risk of certain methodological inconsequence, we can construct a very general and incomplete list of philosophers who have used intuitive cognition.

Already in Socrates' philosophy we encounter intuitive knowledge of what is good. It constitutes a starting point for ethical considerations and tests of rightness of his reasoning. His disciple, Plato, distinguishes two kinds of thinking: discursive and intuitive. Discursive thinking was the first stage and intuitive the second stage in the differentiation of cognitive power. He considered discursive thinking indirect cognition because we reach truth by reasoning, while intuition was considered by Plato as direct cognition. Hence, intuition was a kind of intellectual approach, a point of contact of thought with its object. Plato treated intuition as an act of mind operating independently. In this context intuition can be seen as equal to self-knowledge. The state of ecstasy or mystical elevation where the mind enters ecstatically into communion with god was alien to Plato. Intuition was located on top of his hierarchy, above rational, sensual and discursive cognition. He considered intuition the most perfect and ultimate form of direct cognition of truth.²¹

For Philo and Plotinus intuition was not an intellectual act because a human mind in its imperfection cannot reach its essence. Only ecstasy and enchantment can give man a possibility to become one with the absolute. Imperfect instruments by means of which man tries to describe what cannot be verbalized do not create truth.²² Ecstasy does not constitute exclusively a cognitive activity but is rather a

²¹ Platon, List 7. 342-343e.

²² L. Kołakowski, *Główne nurty marksizmu* (Londyn, 1988), p.21.

moral act. Therefore as such it does not require study, but rather the exercise of spirit and purification.

Whereas for Philo and Plotinus intuition was a kind of wordless ecstasy, for St Augustine it meant the intensification of thought.²³ Both claimed that intuitive looking at God is possible by unification with him, St. Augustine thought that we get to know God through enlightenment that is the intensification of the cognitive powers. A theory of illumination where God gives man, or rather his soul, knowledge through illumination is a fundamental form of cognition of what is perfect and infinite. In this case mental cognition is of an intuitive character; mind gets to know truth directly without reasoning thanks to direct intuition, contemplation. Philo and Plotinus believed that seeing God was a result of an inborn process: mind recognizes God because it is part of God. Augustine conceives of an illumination of mind as a supernatural act, as a result and work of grace. That moment of supernaturalism and grace constitutes the foundation of Christian thought about intuition. If we assume that ecstasy means going beyond oneself to communion with God, then Neo-Platonist intuition is conditioned ecstasy. In a Christian approach intuition does not require ecstasy. God gives the grace of enlightenment to those who are good. Exercising the mind and purification of heart are preparations for illumination. St Augustine's mysticism differs from what neo-Platonists propose in this respect that he places a special emphasis on enlightenment that is the intensification of inborn powers and grace. For him mystical cognition is the crowning of rational cognition.

The problem of intuition was approached differently by Duns Scotus.²⁴ He claimed that abstract cognition has always to be preceded by intuitive cognition. Only through intuition, and not abstract reasoning, can the existence and presence of things be recognized. Duns Scotus did not conceive of intuition in a mystical way, but treated it as an act of direct cognition of an existing object. He believed that intuition leads us to individual cognition of what exists. However, cognition of this kind has characteristics of randomness, because absolute cognition is not accessible to people as mortal creatures.

²³ A. Kasia, *Św. Augustyn* (Warszawa, 1960).

²⁴ E. Gilson, *Duns Szkot*, 1952.

Among the supporters of intuitive cognition there were also skeptics, including William of Ockham, who saw in this way an indirect cognition, but often inefficient, method of approaching reality.²⁵ He believed that intuition could be generated in a natural way through the operation of things, but also in a supernatural way through the direct interference of God. However, it may happen that the omnipotent God will instigate intuition of non-existing things in our mind. Therefore, according to Ockham, although intuition constitutes a basis of knowledge it is not its final form. It always has to be followed by abstract elaboration because certain and necessary knowledge will never originate out of intuition itself. Intuitive cognition depends on casual experience that does not constitute knowledge in the proper meaning of this word.

The conception of inborn ideas featured in Descartes can be reduced in the most general way to the acknowledgement of the fact that in every human mind there is an inborn disposition and ability to certain representations. Inborn ideas are characterized by stability and infallibility. They were installed into our minds by God and are accompanied by natural light proving their truthfulness. Descartes' theory of inborn ideas was similar to St. Augustine's theory of illumination.

Reid associated the notion of intuition with obvious truths. Obvious truths can be accessed thanks to direct intuition. These truths are known to everybody, not only to people especially disposed to it, that is scientists. He believes that obvious truths are the domain of common sense and they are direct premises of thinking. Therefore no reasoning about reality can do without obvious truths. Common sense, which is given to every man, aims at truth and finds it through an unexplained and irresistible drive. Reid²⁶ was convinced that it is enough to juxtapose the principles of common sense that function in order to get a set of obvious truths. Therefore he put special trust in this unexplained and irresistible drive

In this brief outline signaling certain ways intuitive cognition functions, more place should be devoted to the category of moral sense which emerged at the turn of the 17th century in England. This

²⁵ A. Korcik, "Nieznane podobizny Dunsza Szkota i W. Ockhama," *Przegląd Filozoficzny*, 39, 1936r.

²⁶ T. Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, 1941.

occurred in the discussion of the recognition of good, reason and specific feelings. Ethicists-rationalists like Cudworth, Clarke, and Pirce did not differentiate between theoretical and practical reasons, for them ethics was identified with mathematics; thus, the cognition of goodness was not any different from the cognition of mathematical truth. Shaftesbury and Hutcheson questioned that approach, both were sentimentalists for whom intuitive moral sense was a source of the cognition of goodness and its experience was identified with emotions.

A question was formulated on whether the evaluation or differentiation between good and evil and true from false is a work of reason or only an emotional experience. Attributing to reason exclusivity in theoretical thinking caused other areas of human awareness to be considered irrational. Therefore these concepts that recognized differences between theoretical thinking and evaluation led to approaching ethics, and especially the very process of evaluation in ethics as alien to reason. Hume saw the most intense difference between reason and evaluation. He identified reason only with theoretical reason that have nothing to do with the sphere of values. Kant introduced to philosophy a notion of practical reason, that is non-theoretical, expanding the category of reason to include, not only thoughts, but also will as pure will as well as empirical will. His ethical rationalism differed from that proposed by the Cambridge rationalists who claimed that only reason can be the source of moral experience, and goodness is independent from consciousness, eternal and unchangeable. Cognition of this goodness was by reason, which determined our moral conduct. Moral consciousness was for them the work of reason recognizing absolute values.

In his ethical views Shaftesbury introduced the notion of a moral sense separate from other mental powers. He recognized a need for a special differentiation of moral experience wanting, according to Cassirer,²⁷ to liberate himself from the 17th century belief that man's intellectual power is divided into senses and reason. Therefore, he introduced, as a third mental ability, the so-called intellectual intuition. The basic property of this intuition is its active and spontaneous character without which one can reach neither truth nor beauty or goodness. This intuition transcends the frames of

²⁷ E. Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (Tübingen, 1932), chapter VII, p. 4.

intellectual cognition, which binds us to the passive reception of data only. It also transcends the frames of discursive reason which is limited to mechanistic and arithmetical operations. Hence, he considers intuition a separate and independent act in relation to sensual and rational cognition due to its spontaneous and creative character.

Shaftesbury attributes to intuition simultaneously the two characteristics of intellectual intuition and feeling, that is, emotional experience. His notion of intuition is a specific intellectual observation with a tint of feeling but not a pure emotional experience separated completely from reason. Shaftesbury was the first philosopher of morality who assumed very clearly that psychological experience constitutes foundations for ethics.²⁸ This approach originated from the specific climate of philosophy in the 17th century where research concerning human nature was directed at the psyche as the starting point to account for many phenomena. Therefore considering the problems of moral philosophy Shaftesbury asked, first of all, how morality was possible and if its foundations could be found in human nature. Contrary to Hobbes, he claimed that morality was an order imposed by a contract to which human nature and man's spontaneous behavior are external. Shaftesbury believed that the source and foundations of morality are inherent in our nature. Hence, it was very important to show that in man's psyche there are respective forces which constitute a source of morality. But due to the fact that the notion of morality was not precisely defined, the psychic power that was to constitute its foundation was a set of different elements.

As to whether we recognise goodness thanks to a moral sense or reason, J. Butler claimed that probably both views were right. Here a close connection with a theory of the moral sense is visible.²⁹ This was introduced to ethics by Shaftesbury and transformed by Butler into the notion of conscience as a specific sense of shame defining our moral nature. This is not a univocal conception however, for we do not know: if it has a reflexive character, or is a direct perception of goodness, making conscience infallible as providing us with unquestionable or direct data.³⁰ It was important to Butler to define

²⁸ H. Sidgwick, *Outlines of History of Ethics* (London, 1949), p.190.

²⁹ A.D. Raphael, *The Moral Sense* (London, 1947), chapter 2.

³⁰ J. Butler, "Dissertation upon Virtue," in *British Moralists*, vol.I, p.244.

precisely whether conscience was of an emotional or reflective character, a specific and separate moral ability, but not whether it was termed moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason.

Conscience recognizes the moral value of a deed, which is a basis for an approval of a deed. This approval does not constitute goodness, but accompanies its discovery. Here conscience fulfills a cognitive function and the approval of goodness is not subjectively voluntary, but depends on the earlier recognition of goodness. Hence, thanks to conscience we recognize goodness, approve of it, but this conscience also has power over man's behavior and determines his deeds. Therefore Butler can be termed a moral intuitionist since cognition of goodness is related to a separate and specific mental power as recognition of the moral value of goodness assumes that it is prior to an act of cognition.

Hume is classified as a representative of a theory of "moral sense." He advocated the thesis that feelings, not reason, constitute the foundations and source of moral values and deeds. Hume claimed that the moral sense is a separate and special mental power which provides specific emotional intuition of moral values. Both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson treated the moral sense as a source of special intuition, special cognition which was essentially different from the perception of mind and perception external senses. This intuition was characterized by its emotional character. However, this type of intuition contained its emotional character, but did not exclude cognitive value. So feeling had a cognitive function and was directed at a specific object – the intention of a deed. Hume claimed that reason has no influence on man's conduct and that is why there is no way it could be considered the foundations of morality since the essence of morality is to determine behavior. What differentiates moral good from evil is recognized by means of the moral sense.³¹ We do not recognize goodness; we experience it in our feelings. It is a matter of taste, not knowledge, and hence, morality refers to feelings and not judgment.³² These feelings are given directly; they are impressions of senses.

The fundamental characteristic of feeling which differentiates it from reason is that it is purely inner experience, incapable of

³¹ D. Hume, *Traktat o naturze ludzkiej* (Warszawa, 1975).

³² *Ibid.*, p.196.

presenting anything external, so it has no object and it is not directed at anything. Feeling is an inner state that everybody can observe in retrospect. Moral differentiation which originates thanks to the moral sense is an experience of approval or disapproval. Approval or condemnation is a work not of judgment but of the heart. Hence, it is not, according to Hume a speculative statement or declaration, but an active feeling or experience. However, in Hume's conception reason helps in judgments because it provides actual knowledge that describes facts. For Hume the boundary between reason and value cannot be transgressed or questioned.

Apart from emotional experience there is the so-called conscious emotional experience. F. Brentano performed specific 'rationalization' of feelings, subordinating them to formal axioms, defining the conditions of legitimacy of experiencing love. Husserl and Scheler went further and endowed emotional experience of value with concrete, rational meaning.

For Husserl, intuition constituted the foundations for formulating principles, because it turned out to be the first and irreplaceable source of cognition, for proper reasoning cannot be performed if intuition does not concern its premises. Thanks to intuition reason absorbs and receives what the world shows: the essence of cognition consists in it. Competent and adequate cognition does not consist in developing by mind its own forms and subjecting the world to them, as was the case for Kant. Cognition is not an active, but a passive act of mind, whereas according to Kant in cognition, intuition was nothing, while conceptual construction was everything. Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, opposed this conception. The problem of intuition in phenomenology shows that certain general truths are expressed equally directly as individual objects.³³ Also for Scheler intuition became a direct method for the recognition of values, for experience can neither confirm nor reject our a priori statements on value.

A review of the approaches to intuitive cognition of goodness and the need to refer to them in considering Taylor's sense of a new identity and a need of the sacred must include Bergson's concept of intuition. In his philosophy intuition becomes a problem of absolute cognition and, at the same time, has potential for a metaphysics. For if science is something within the boundaries of which intellectual

³³ R. Ingarden, *Z badań nad współczesną filozofią* (Warszawa, 1963).

cognition reigns, and philosophy as science would like to offer finite and absolute cognition of the world, then the problem of the potential of science and philosophy and the boundaries of their penetration is related to the issue of intuitive and intellectual cognition.³⁴

Bergson³⁵ assumes that there are two kinds of cognition, intellectual and intuitive: the first concerns mostly everyday life oriented towards operating in the material world, whereas intuitive cognition is pure, disinterested cognition for cognition's sake. We use forms of intellectual cognition when we act and produce objects necessary for life. Human activity that is not targeted at utility, but springs from the bottom of the human soul, is closely connected with the problem of free will. Where intellect allows us to recognize only matter, intuition transcends what is static and allows grasping the so-called pure duration. This sublime unity of duration is so strongly emphasized that the infinite multiplicity of forms of being become veiled and are powerless in relation to this unity. The existence of reality that does not adapt to intellectual forms means that the intellect is not exclusive in the process of cognition. While capable of grasping what is static, the intellect is not capable of grasping life in a natural way. How is it that intuitions are always transient and ephemeral, and do not lend themselves to clear and apparent cognition?

For this, Bergson introduces the so-called evolutionary theory of intuition.³⁶ While it seems to us that all that is of 'an intellectual nature' is clear and apparent, in every man, as in every living creature, there are manifested symptoms of still another form of perception. This is instinct, which is 'the blurry ring surrounding the brightly radiating mass of an intellect.' Defining instinct in this way, Bergson claimed that it is a kind of empathy or sympathy adapted to life, and can also provide some cognitive information. Contrary to intellect, where each cognition requires direct contact of a subject with the object of cognition, instinct does not have to smell or touch everything, because it is so-called cognition from a distance.³⁷ "Instinct is like a blink of an eye awakening the memory of certain tendencies of another being referring to this moment in which all tendencies were still in a

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.27.

³⁵ H. Bergson, *Essai sur les donnees immediates de la conscience* (Paris, 1889).

³⁶ R. Ingarden, "Intuicja i intelekt u Bergsona," in: *Z badań nad współczesną filozofią*, p.114.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.116.

germinal state still in one uniform whole. Thanks to this original melting tendencies distributed among individuals can hide in themselves unconsciously the knowledge of these tendencies. When this unconscious knowledge starts functioning we have to do with instinct."³⁸ Thanks to instinct all living creatures are connected with one another by a thread of empathy that leads to discovering the deepest secrets of life. However, instinct is predominantly in a dormant and unconscious state. If man, who has both an intellect and instinct can rise beyond practical activity and liberate intellect then he can make instinct conscious. Bergson believed that intuition is such a liberated and conscious instinct. This claim explains why intuition is the cognition of life and why it is possible thanks to the intensified tension of our consciousness. The connection between intuition and instinct explains also the fact that intuition is direct cognition which does not require proving since it is in this context of empathy with everything that is alive. Instinctive roots of intuition are also responsible for imperfection and a certain cognitive 'awkwardness' that is a lack of clarity and transience of intuitive cognition. Man is capable of remembering the origins he shared with other living creatures only when he overcomes his intellectual approach to the world. He acquires this intuition of community for such a short time, for a blink of an eye, that he sometimes is neither capable of feeling precisely nor of understanding.

The world of moral truth, the world of values intuitively recognized by means of a specific kind of experience, is the world in which these truths are perceived as essential not only due to our activity here and now, but also due to a belief that the same truth is equally important everywhere, that is absolute and objective, universal. We can claim that in ethical intuitionism two controversial views are advocated. The first concerns the fact of the existence of moral truths which are cognizable, and the other explains the path to cognition. Intuitionists do not doubt that moral truths exist as well as facts concerning moral matters whose cognition is available for us. But how are we to define these facts? Do they have their place in the world described by academic discourse?

An attempt to identify moral facts with facts occurring in nature leads to naturalism according to which all moral judgments which are

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.117.

statements describing the real world can be either false or true. For a naturalist morality is not an illusion or fiction or part of knowledge or just a piece of information. Naturalism can be called specific reductionism because moral statements and moral truths exist, but there are no specific truths and special moral facts and properties. There exist only facts and properties which are described also in non-moral language. So this approach differs from Moore's as well as Tatarkiewicz's intuitionism. Both formulate an ontological thesis, which is in principle a metaphysical one, when they say that the goodness of a thing consists in the fact that it has properties of goodness that is an elementary characteristic of reality which can be neither analyzed nor explained any further. Intuitionists reject naturalism because they prefer a pluralistic approach to reductionism. For if we think that there are many different things which are significant to our conduct and, what's more, that these things are not precisely ordered we can come to a conclusion that our activities have to be either right or wrong, in many possible ways, none of which is better than the others. However, if we would like to compare all these approaches to rightness then we would see that there is no natural resemblance among them. Whether a given conduct is considered right is determined by a common moral characteristic. Hence, the foundation of moral facts does not result from their natural form, because we do not observe any common natural characteristic from which we could derive the notion of rightness.

Intuitionists show critics of their theory that although moral facts are not identified with natural facts they are not so much different. If we assume that the world described by the language of physics and economy is this world, where is the place for moral facts? Moral facts refer to human deeds and their elements, that is, to something which exists in an obvious way although the language of physics and economy does not take it into account. Obviously, there exists a connection between moral and non-moral facts. There are not two completely separate worlds because it is possible to say that moral facts exist because non-moral facts exist. We say, for example, that a given conduct is good or right because it is connected with the generosity and responsibility of a given person. It is an example of the existence of a moral fact which results from certain non-moral facts. Therefore the world described by the language of physics and sciences related to physics is not a complete description for there exist facts,

including moral facts, related to the facts of physics which caused them.

Hence, one should not always identify what is ideal with what is unreal. But philosophy of value cannot liberate itself from dualism, and especially dualism of facts and values as well as being and duty, the essence of which is included in the division of reality into the axiological and the non-axiological. Naturalistic trends in ethics reduce what is intentional in values to what is physical (extensional), and hence, approaches moral judgments as statements describing the real world which can be true or false. Naturalism is a cognitivism, and therefore it stands in opposition to non-cognitivism and emotivism, that is, meta-ethical directions for which moral judgments are expressions and psychological stimuli that are quasi-orders. According to naturalism each value has a subjective and objective aspect which is dependent upon the empirical characteristics of an object. The claim of the need to base ethics on statements resulting from psychology and sociology originates from general axiological assumptions. Apart from that, naturalism assumes that meanings and functions of evaluating statements should be investigated in the context of the rules of word usage in a given language. According to naturalists the multi-functionality of ethical terms consists in the fact that they inform us about something, and at the same time prescribe or order something (prescriptive function).

Non-naturalist directions, for example intuitionism, oppose reduction of what is intentional to what is physical. It is true that non-naturalists agree with naturalists with respect to the claim that ethical statements are in a way similar to scientific propositions because they are propositions about moral facts and these propositions can be either true or false, depending on whether they describe facts aptly or not. Still non-naturalists disagree with the naturalist interpretation of meaning of ethical propositions. They do not accept the naturalists' thesis on the ability to verify these propositions through observation. According to non-naturalists we learn about the truth of ethical propositions not through observation, but by a special way of cognition called intuition.

Contrary to non-naturalism, non-cognitivism claims that ethical knowledge cannot be acquired through intuition. Non-cognitivists, like naturalists, consider this way of cognition in ethics to be mysterious, mystical and hardly probable. For according to non-

cognitivism, in order to understand an ethical discourse we should realize that ethical propositions are not used in order to derive conclusions about facts. Rather, they are propositions similar to questions or wishes. As to why we use ethical propositions, no one answer is given by non-cognitivists. They can be used to express a certain moral attitude (emotivism), or to declare subjective principles of conduct, or they may have a prescriptive meaning, prescribing a principle of conduct or ordering it.

The fundamental question, in consequence of Taylor's thinking on the need for new forms of the sacred in modern times, is for an ethicist the question of whether moral values manifest a certain ontic dissimilarity which results in a specific theory of their cognition. If we negate the existence of these values then we shall support only sensual and empirical penetration of what exists and, what is worse, eliminate issues related to the existence of values as useless and meaningless. Such an approach leads to reistic conceptions that result in the extreme materialism and relativity described by Taylor.

A peculiar paradox in this context seems to be an approach assumed by Kotarbiński who, in spite of the acknowledgement of extreme importance of the problem of values and the fact that he devoted a lot of time to ethical considerations, in his ontology negated its relevance. This specific dissonance between Kotarbinski's ontology and epistemology and his ethical intuitionism is not an isolated case. It was quite common among the philosophers of the Lvov-Warsaw school, for example in K. Ajdukiewicz's conventionalism.

If only things exist that have a characteristics of concreteness, things that are perceived by senses then values which are not things and are not perceived by senses cannot exist. Kotarbiński claims that all that appears in statements and concepts but does not have an ontological status verified by senses does not exist. However, such a claim does not deter the stubborn searchers for values, as it did not frighten away Kotarbiński himself and resulted in a contradiction in his philosophy.

In the philosophical tradition there functions two modes of existence, real and ideal. The real one is attributed to things, that is, to material objects. The category of real existence was attributed to ideas by Plato, for example, and by Christian philosophers to God. This real mode of existence is in opposition to the unreal one, that is, an idea that is treated subjectively, that is internally or consciously.

Throughout its history philosophy has generated also other conceptions concerning the modes of existence of moral values. A perfect example is provided by phenomenology of Husserl and Scheler. For the ideal status of existence was attributed to ideas conceived of as “pure possibilities;” and also as values. How does a phenomenologist characterize ideal beings? They are original, self-contained, existentially independent, and also permanent and non-temporal. So they are completely different from real things which are changeable and exist in a definite time.

When a theory of the intentionality of experience, which is also the intentionality of the objects of mental acts (Brentano, Twardowski), was formulated, to exist ideally started to mean to exist in consciousness, in the image of an object. In this case it is justifiable to say that such notions as ideality and mentality became equal, although both Brentano and Twardowski fought against psychologism in philosophy.

The formulation of the conception of the so-called ‘pure intentionality’ by Ingarden created a new ontic situation for values. Ingarden can be considered to be the philosopher who succeeded in dealing with psychologism and subjectivism, because he introduced the purely intentional mode of existence. This mode of existence belongs to works of literature, and more broadly to works of art which have ethical and moral values. Ingarden considers this *modus existentiae* as the third, the first and second being real and ideal. However, following Husserl and Scheler, Ingarden accepts the need for an ideal mode of existence; therefore he accepts its theoretical necessity. He attributes such ontological status to universals (mathematics) and values.

Conclusion

Returning to the question about the mode of the existence of values, we can say that they exist as objects of intentional subjective experience, so they are derived from a subject. Value is brought to life only when a subject through a subjective act discerns in an object of cognition its value. Hence, value does not exist independently, for the basis of its existence is not inherent in it as such, but in the subjective evaluation of a given object. This mode of existence can be termed ideal, but it is a mode which is related to Ingarden’s pure intentionality. For values exist only when there exists such a kind of

real objects (people) who are capable of creating this specific sphere of ideality. The world of values exists only when there exists human reality, which is a guarantee of the existence of the world of values.

Creating norms which require a certain way of conduct is a form of man's axiological activity. Values constitute criteria for these norms. We formulate these norms so that their perception allows people to increase a number of positive values. The fact of expressing norms in a given language can be called, after Ingarden, pure intentionality. In this situation norms are autonomous intentional beings. Due to the fact that in moral norms the conditions of their application are neither specified nor the ambiguity and complexity in which they are to function assumed, it is possible to say that they are not entirely defined. Therefore a concrete application of a given norm requires from the person who applies it great axiological sensitivity, or – using Taylor's language – the new sacred which tunes man to do what is noble and good. However, it is much easier to create general principles of conduct than to apply them in life. This maladjustment of norms to life creates conflicts. Therefore in many ethical conceptions it is stated that situations and coincidences created by life are usually axiologically ambiguous.

What do we do then, to avoid a threat of axiological illusion? Perhaps this current goodness and the one we look for in our life should be considered to be our ever-expanding field of feeling and getting to know the world. Perhaps therefore what is universal does not negate what is individual, but tries to coexist with it.

Therefore in formulating moral judgments we do not talk about perceived facts but rather perceived reasons. For intuitionists whose views I have presented briefly, such reasons exist and are recognizable. It depends upon our attention whether we discern or miss them. So moral truth and moral knowledge are within the range of our cognitive possibilities. Intuitionists think that in order to recognize what is good there are other than casual ways.

Among the important justifications of a need to discuss a new spirituality forming man's identity in the modern world is an idea of the authentic cognition of goodness based on the idea of unconditional and necessary truth. This truth has to be translated into questions on conditions and methods of its achievement. Ambitions and tasks of the humanities, including ethics, have to concern man's deepest problems and dilemmas related to cognition and doing good. The

range of these problems in confrontation with the ambivalence of an individual and social life often shows that actions and moral choices go beyond the premises that can be justified. Therefore the skepticism criticized by intuitionists turns out nevertheless to be one of the factors which make us incline towards a cognitive approach which leads to liberation from addiction, inertia, routine, falseness and fanaticism.

We are confronted with a question about the fundamental values which can organize our life in such a way that we would turn away from it in despair or repulsion, and there is no way to ignore it. There exists a deep need for moral knowledge and constructive dialogue about it. The issues discussed in this article may help to consider the new sacred, the need of hope and faith.

According to Taylor³⁹ hope is indispensable; we cannot think, plan and act without it. He states that for a long time our civilization was feeding on hope connected with progress, but that turned out to be impossible to fulfill; similarly, the utopian visions of arranging the ideal society, either, totalitarian, democratic or neo-liberal, did not work.

(...) there is another point of view, equally important in Western culture. There emerged an idea that it is possible to escape the transition of hope-hopelessness, because it is possible that really strong people can live without hope. This is a very influential way of thinking represented by a Nietzsche or Camus. Such is an interpretation of the Nietzschean "idea of eternal return" – if one can get reconciled with returns, constant transformations of hope-hopelessness, then an ideal of humanity is realized. If we assume this point of view what do we have to lose? Hope is one of three theological virtues. Is there anything essential in constant subordination to the endless cycle of hope-hopelessness. I think that we conceive of hope in a different way – as something creative, which allows us to realize what is new and important.⁴⁰

³⁹ Debata o nadziei. W "Jaskini Filozofów" rozmawiają K. Michalski, B. Skarga, W. Stróżewski, Ch. Taylor. W Tygodnik Powszechny. Katolickie Pismo Społeczno-Kulturalne, WWW.tygodnik.com.pl., p.3.

⁴⁰ Ch. Taylor, tamże, s.4.

The metaphysical dimension of hope helps in the uphill tasks of man forced to create ontological, epistemological and social order, which is to be a counterweight to the meanness, craziness and misery featured in the history of mankind. Therefore the notion of God, as an example to follow and of law – are notions indispensable in every approach to the world equipped with values as well as in every sensible approach to history.

Philo of Alexandria on “Living Together”

DURSUN ALI AYKIT*

The Hellenistic invasion by Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.) from Persia to India had inevitable effects on the history of both the homeland and diaspora Jews. The Jews had to live under the political, social, and cultural power of the Greeks. Their reaction to this invasion differed according to time, place, and groupings. Some chose to rebel, while others opened a way to be absorbed into Greek culture. Yet another response to this invasion came from some of the precursors of Philo of Alexandria. The goal of this paper is to examine how Philo of Alexandria, a Jew born in Alexandria, Egypt, reacted to his political, social and cultural environment in the diaspora. The paper will first present an outline of his life and environment, and then attempt a clarification of his complimentary approach to living together with the other culture.

As reported in the *Letter of Aristeas*, Jews who lived in Alexandria had forgotten their ancestral language, Hebrew, and they needed a translation of the Five Books of Moses into Greek.¹ This translation, called *The Septuagint* (LXX), became the primary book of Scriptures for the diaspora Jews. From the date of the translation (250 BC), we can deduce the “Hellenization” of the Jews, and indeed, many Jews at the time had Greek names such as Alexander, Titus, Jason, etc., even in the homeland of Judaism.² When confronted with Hellenism, some Jews chose to assimilate themselves into the new culture for the better opportunities this offered, as well as for a variety of other reasons. Others, however, resisted this invasion through military action on account of their nationalism or piety. We know that some Jews

* I want to thank my teacher Prof. Dr. Kursad Demirci who introduced me to Philo of Alexandria for research purposes.

¹ Letter of Aristeas, 1-51, 301-322; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XII, ii-1-15, pp. 245-251, Mos., II, 25-44.

² For further information about the status of the Jews under the Greeks, see Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*, I, transl., John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), pp. 32-57, 60-61.

actually left their ancestral customs and converted to the Hellenistic life style.

In addition to the two responses of total assimilation or active resistance, there was another option that tried to reconcile the two systems, namely, their ancestral Jewish tradition with the “other” Hellenistic tradition. Philo reports in his writings³ about the Jews, who were in favor of total assimilation,

Some Jews who cherished a dislike of the institutions of their fathers and made it their constant concerns to denounce and decry the Laws were saying: “Can you still

³ I will use the abbreviations below for texts of Philo, which can be found here: *Texts of Philo with an English Translation* by F.H. Colson and Rev. G.H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958-1962).

Abr.: Abraham

Agr.: On Husbandry

Cher.: On the Cherubim

Confl.: The Confusion of Tongues

Congr.: On the Preliminary Studies

Decal.: The Decalogue

Det.: The Worse Attacks the Better

Ebr.: On Drunkenness

Fug.: On Flight and Finding

Gig.: On the Giants

Jos.: Joseph

Leg.: On the Embassy to Gaius

Leg. All.: Allegorical Interpretation

Mig.: The Migration of Abraham

Mos.: Moses

Mut.: Change of Names

Opl.: On the Creation

Plant.: Noah's Work as a Planter

Post.: The Posterity and Exile of Cain

Prov.: On Providence

Quaest. In Gn.: Questions and Answers on Genesis

Quis Her.: The Heir of Divine Things

Quod Deus.: The Unchangeableness of God

Quod omn. Prob.: That Every Good Man is Free

Sac.: The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain

Spec. Leg.: On Special Laws

Som.: On Dreams

Virt.: On the Virtues

Vit. Cont.: On the Contemplative Life or Suppliants

speak gravely of the ordinances as containing the canons of absolute truth? For see, your so-called holy books contain also myths, which you regularly deride when you hear them related by others."⁴

This example highlights a prominent feature of the milieu during the time of Philo and gives rise to the question concerning the nature of the response of the third group which tried to reconcile the two systems.

This third response to Hellenistic culture traveled an intellectual-apologetic route. It tried to defend the ancestral tradition, while at the same time introducing a new kind of path in order to bring these two cultures together. This can be seen in similarities with Greek texts found in a number of Jewish texts:

- *Qoheleth* (third century BC) is similar to the Socratic dialogues.
- *The Wisdom of Ben Sirach* (180s BC) is similar to Stoic philosophy.
- *The Wisdom of Solomon* (first century BC) deals with Platonic themes, such as the relation of body and soul, from the perspective of the Hellenistic – Jewish wisdom tradition.
- *The Fourth Book of Maccabees* (probably first century AD) is a discourse about the theme of the mastery of religious reason over the emotions.
- *The Letter of Aristeas* (Second Century BC or 63 AD) shows a digression from the main theme of the text into a discussion on how the high priest tried to rationalize the Law.
- *Aristobulus* can be judged a precursor to Philo because of his well-known efforts to reconcile the Law with reason.⁵

Philo Judaeus of Alexandria reports, "I myself, who was accounted to be possessed of superior prudence, both on account of my age and

⁴ Confl., 2.

⁵ David Winston, "Hellenistic Jewish Philosophy," *History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed., D.H. Frank-O. Leaman (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 38-50; Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, I, III, ed. H.W. Attridge, Society of Biblical Literature (California: Scholars Press, 1983), pp. 51-54; Nikolaus Walter, "Jewish-Greek Literature of the Greek Period," eds. W.D. Davies and Louis Finkelstein, *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989), pp. 387-388.

my education, and general information, was less sanguine in respect of the matters at which the others were so greatly delighted.”⁶ This sentence comes after the delegation⁷ to Rome in 40 AD when Philo was the leader of the Jewish community. We can infer from this that he might have been born in 25 or 20 BC and that he died between 42 and 45 AD. His lifetime concurred with the Rabbinic Sage Hillel, with Jesus and with St. Paul. His native country was Alexandria, which was established by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C., and consequently he was a diaspora Jew. In addition to being an exegete, philosopher and statesman, Philo was also a mystic.

When Philo gives us the background of his education, his basic intention was “first excited by the stimulus of philosophy to feel a desire for it.” Philo, then, received a Hellenistic education through grammar, poetry, geometry, music, and so forth.⁸ Eusebius describes him thus,

[He] became known; a man most celebrated not only among many of our own, but also among many scholars outside the Church. He was a Hebrew by birth, but was inferior to none of those who held high dignities in Alexandria. How exceedingly he labored in the Scriptures and in the studies of his nation is plain to all from the work which he has done. How familiar he was with philosophy and with the liberal studies of foreign nations, it is not necessary to say, since he is reported to have surpassed all his contemporaries in the study of Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy, to which he particularly devoted his attentio⁹...the chief of the Jewish

⁶ Leg., 182, 370.

⁷ The reason for this delegation was a terrible commotion which had arisen between the Jews and Greeks in Alexandria and continued for more than one year. When the situation began to worsen, the Greeks dispatched a delegation to the emperor. Then the Jews sent a commission for their defense, and Philo was the leader of that delegation.

⁸ Congr., 74-76; Spec. Leg., II, 229-230.

⁹ Eusebius, *The History of the Church* (ed. P.Schaff-H.Wace), I, second edition, chap, IV (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), p. 108. Whereas Eusebius describes him as “Platonic and Pythagorean,” Clement mentions that he was a “Pythagorean” and Jerome affirms his “Platonic” ideas. See, Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, ed. A.Roberts-J.Donalds, I, 15; II, 19 (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994), p. 316, 369; Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men*,

embassy, a man celebrated in every respect, a brother of Alexander the Alabarch, and not unskilled in philosophy.¹⁰

Philo was intelligent and rich enough to concentrate on philosophy and the Scriptures. He also gave us occasional insights into his life style; for example, he attended the Greek theater, chariot races and dances.¹¹

As Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria describe him, he was well-educated in Greek thought and in his writings gives detailed descriptions with great respect for the thought of Plato and some Pythagorean philosophers.¹² Jerome mentions Philo in his book, *The Lives of Illustrious Men* in which the lives of many illustrious Christian sages are recorded, even though Philo was not a Christian. Jerome claims that Philo was a member of a "priestly class," that he spoke with the apostle Peter and enjoyed his friendship, and that "concerning him there is a proverb among the Greeks that 'either Plato philonized, or Philo platonized,' that is, either Plato followed Philo, or Philo, Plato, so great is the similarity of ideas and language."¹³

His writings are mainly divided into four categories:

1. Historical¹⁴
2. Questions and Answers on *Genesis* and *Exodus*¹⁵
3. Allegory of the Laws¹⁶

ed. P.Schaff-H.Wace, III, Second Series, chap. XI, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1994), p. 365. About his identity in these philosophical schools see: David T. Runia, "Why Does Clement of Alexandria Call Philo 'The Pythagorean?'," *Philo and the Church Fathers* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), pp. 54-76.

¹⁰ Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, chpt., V, p. 108.

¹¹ Prov., II, 58; Ebr., 177.

¹² Quod omn. Prob., 2, 13.

¹³ Jerome, *Lives of Illustrious Men*, chap. XI, p. 365.

¹⁴ The historical or "non-biblical" books of Philo are: *Hypothetica*, *That Every Good Man is Free*, *On the Contemplative Life or Suppliants*, *Against Flaccus*, and *On the Embassy to Gaius*.

¹⁵ This category consists of two books which were called *Questions and Answers on Genesis* and *Questions and Answers on Exodus*.

¹⁶ The treatises in this category are: *Allegorical Interpretation I-III*, *On the Cherubim*, *The Sacrifices of Abel and Cain*, *The Worse Attacks the Better*, *The Posterity and Exile of Cain*, *On the Giants*, *The Unchangeableness of God*, *On Husbandry*, *Noah's Work as a Planter*, *On Drunkenness*, *On Sobriety*, *The Confusion of Tongues*, *The*

4. Exposition of the Laws¹⁷

Beyond the categorizing of his works, the following important questions arise: Who is Philo's intended audience? Did he speak to elite Jews, Gentiles or God-fearers?¹⁸ Why are Philo's books preserved by Church Fathers, but not by Rabbis? These questions are important for understanding his ideas. Philo taught that Jewish ethics was built upon what God had revealed to them, and that Greek ethics was a result of rational inquiry into the foundations of the universe.

We can now turn to his doctrine concerning the interpretation of the Torah, the Law and mysticism. This will enable us to trace his ideas concerning multicultural life.

I prefer to mention first his methodology concerning the interpretation of the Torah. Philo divides the Old Testament in general terms between:

1. the Law
2. Oracles delivered through the mouths of the prophets
3. Psalms and the other books.¹⁹

Most important is the *Pentateuch*, which is the *nomos*, and for this reason Philo concentrates on the interpretation of the *Pentateuch*. In mentioning the *Therapeutae*, a mystic group in the time of Philo, he reports that,

Migration of Abraham, The Heir of Divine Things, On the Preliminary Studies, On Flight and Finding, Change of Names, and On Dreams.

¹⁷ The books in this category are: *On the Creation, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, The Decalogue, On Special Laws I – IV, On the Virtues, On Providence, and Rewards and Punishments*. For further information, see Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, pp. 119-122; David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature A Survey* (Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum an Novum Testamentum, III) (Netherland, 1993), p. 27; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, ed. G.Vermes-F.Millar-M.Goodman, III/2, New English Edition (Edinburgh, 1997), pp. 819-825; David T. Runia, *Confronting the Augean Stables: Royse's Fragmenta Spuria Philonica, Philo and the Church Fathers* (Leiden, 1995), p. 219.

¹⁸ The God-Fearers frequent the services of the synagogue, are monotheists in the Biblical sense, and participate in some of the ceremonial requirements of the Law, but they have not moved to full conversion to Judaism through circumcision. See A. T. Kraabel, "The Disappearance of the 'God-Fearers'," *Numen*, 28.2 (Dec. 1981), p. 113.

¹⁹ Vit. Cont., 25.

[T]hey read the Holy Scriptures and seek wisdom from their ancestral philosophy by taking it as an *allegory*, since they think that the words of the literal text are symbols of something whose hidden nature is revealed by studying the underlying meaning.²⁰

This detail gives us Philo's understanding of interpretation and his approach to the text. The holy books that "may never be convicted of false witness"²¹ are not like other texts, since they are revealed by God, and have deep meaning behind the literal form. According to him the author of the books is God and you find there no myth or fiction, but "truth's inexorable rules."²²

Holy Scripture is God's word. But, how can we understand the text? Before giving his view concerning the exegesis of the text, Philo refers to two kinds of approaches: the literal and the allegorical. Even though Philo is optimistic concerning the literal approach in his book *On Rewards and Punishment*, when we look at *Questions and Answers on Genesis* and *Questions and Answers on Exodus*, he stands on the side of the allegorical.

But it is in *The Allegorical Interpretation* where we find Philo's main approach to textual exegesis, and here he clearly reviles the literalists. These three approaches can be understood according to the various intended audiences of Philo: his optimism about literalism together with his positive regard for the allegorical were directed to the Gentiles, while his approach in *The Allegorical Interpretation*, where he reviles the literalists, was directed to the Jews.²³ In *On Dreams*, Philo describes the literalists as "men of *narrow* citizenship who suppose that the lawgiver delivers this very full discourse about digging wells" and "those who are citizens of a *greater* country and men of higher thought and feeling" will know the real meaning from the text.²⁴ But not all literalists are condemned, because some of them are ignorant and conservative, and they can be excused, but some of them are

²⁰ Vit. Cont., 28.

²¹ Abr., 258.

²² Det., 125.

²³ Montgomery J. Shroyer, "Alexandrian Jewish Literalists," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 55.4 (Dec.) 1936, p. 263-264.

²⁴ Som., I, 39.

impious men who utilize some figurative texts in service of their impiety.²⁵

Philo's basic intent in exegesis is to adopt an allegorical approach as the Stoics used it when they were interpreting Homer and *The Iliad*. According to Philo, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, Isaac and Abraham were figurative patterns, even though they were at the same time historical people. Hagar represents "preliminary studies" and therefore, when Abraham, who represents "mind," was not at the level of understanding "wisdom," represented by Sarah, he decided to marry Hagar.²⁶ Ishmael means "the hearing of God,"²⁷ and Isaac implies "laughter of soul, delight, and joy."²⁸ According to Barclay, "this move from history to philosophy represents a change from the particular to the universal; to *dehistoricize* is to *deJudaize*."²⁹ These deep meanings do not appear in plain and explicit language, and most people cannot observe them.³⁰ To understand these meanings, one must live in the soul rather than the body,³¹ which enables one to see the text allegorically,³² to be initiated into allegory and thus into the nature which loves to hide itself.³³ Philo's chief aim in allegorical interpretation is to continually bind himself to the text which is sacred and also to the troubles arising from it. Therefore, allegory was his principal way of meeting the difficulties he confronted.

The allegorical method can be seen very clearly in his understanding of the world. According to Philo, there are two worlds: The visible world (*kosmos aesthetikos*) and the invisible world (*kosmos noetos*).³⁴ Whereas, the former is understood by the senses, the latter is observed only by the intellect. If we ask Philo "how can we understand the invisible world and the inner meaning of the text" in a general way, his answer is twofold:

²⁵ Leg. All., I, 91; Som., II, 300-302; Confl., 2, 142.

²⁶ Congr., 1 ff.

²⁷ Fug., 208.

²⁸ Leg. All., III, 87.

²⁹ J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE-117 CE)* (Edinburgh: University of California Press, 1996), p. 170.

³⁰ Abr., 200.

³¹ Abr., 236; 147.

³² Plant., 36.

³³ Fug., 179.

³⁴ Opl., 16.

1. There are some people, such as the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), to whom God gave special grace, enabling them to observe and grasp the world and the text through the intellect.

2. If one has not received this grace (most cases), one should follow the way of the Patriarchs and try to be like them. Ordinary people, according to this approach, have to follow the path of the Patriarchs in the understanding of the world and the text. Such people have to "seek God" in a "contemplative" way and in time they may receive grace.

Philo relates his own experience concerning the understanding of a text or subject:

I feel no shame in recording my own experience, a thing I know from its having happened to me a *thousand times*. On some occasions, after making up my mind to follow the usual course of writing on philosophical tenets, and knowing definitely the substance of what I was to set down, I have found my understanding incapable of giving birth to a single idea, and have given it up without accomplishing anything, reviling my understanding for its self-conceit, and filled with amazement at the might of Him that is to Whom is due the opening and closing of the soul-wombs. On other occasions, I have approached my work empty and suddenly become full, the ideas falling in a shower from above and being sown invisibly, so that under the influence of the Divine possession I have been filled with corybantic frenzy and been unconscious of anything, place, persons present, myself, words spoken, lines written. For I obtained language, ideas, an enjoyment of light, keenest vision, pellucid distinctness of objects, such as might be received through the eyes as the result of the clearest showing.³⁵

Just as he is conscious of the "literalists," he is also aware of the "extreme allegorists." There are, as mentioned earlier, two kinds of interpretations: literal and allegorical. The best way to interpret the text is allegorically, but it has the inconvenient tendency towards

³⁵ Mig., 34-35.

literalism in the hands of people who are not capable of understanding the reality at hand. Philo develops his criticism of the “extreme allegorists” thus,

Some of those appear to be living alone by themselves in a wilderness, or as though they had become disembodied souls, and knew neither city nor village nor household nor any company of human beings at all, overlooking all that the mass of men regard, they explore reality in its naked absoluteness. These men are taught by the sacred word to have thought for good repute, and to let go nothing that is part of the customs fixed by divinely empowered men greater than those of our time.³⁶

In this way, “extreme allegorists” abrogate the Jewish Laws which are established.

A text resembles a human who is formed of body and soul. Therefore, not only the inner meaning (soul) of the text should be taken into account, but also the abode of the text (body) must be carefully considered.³⁷ From these points, it is clear that Philo is also aware of the “extreme allegorists.”

After mentioning his methodology of interpretation, we can proceed to Philo’s conception of God. As a pious man, Philo believed in God and identified atheism as the beginning of all wickedness,³⁸ but his construct of God contains some nuances. First of all, the God of Philo is transcendent. He describes God as “*To On*” or “*To Ontos On*,”³⁹ in the manner of Greek philosophy. God can not be defined and known according to His nature and the human mind might just refer to Him as “truly existing.” The reason God refers to Himself in Exodus as “*ego eyimi ho on*”⁴⁰ is precisely because He is indefinable, that is “nameless.” Even though we have some titles in Scripture such as “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” these are solely for the purpose of enabling men to address prayers to Him. Therefore, instead of describing God as “He is justice,” one should refer to Him as “He is not unjust.” We can see traces of “negative theology” in

³⁶ Mig., 90.

³⁷ Mig., 93.

³⁸ Decal., 91.

³⁹ Quod Deus., 11; Quis Her., 187; Gig., 52; Post., 28; Mut., 27, Congr., 51.

⁴⁰ Exodus, 3:14.

Philo's attitude. "All places are filled at once by God, Who surrounds them all and is not surrounded by any of them, to whom alone it is possible to be everywhere and also nowhere." He is in nowhere "because He himself created place and space at the same time that He created bodies..." and "He is everywhere, because, having extended His powers so as to make them pervade earth, and water, and air, and heaven, He has left no portion of the world desolate."⁴¹ Philo's attitude towards God shows us his openness to the "other," that is, to Greek philosophy. He uses the philosophical terms for God and His attributes. God is "the light,"⁴² "the most ancient of all fountains,"⁴³ "eternal,"⁴⁴ "unchangeable,"⁴⁵ and at the same time He "may not be named nor spoken of, and who is in every way incomprehensible."⁴⁶ God is no longer God just for the "chosen people," but "God is Father of all, Ruler of all and Savior of all humanity."⁴⁷ He opens a way to a "universalistic God" through these kinds of "epithets."

If someone admires the world rather than God, and represents the world as "eternal" or existing without any "maker," that one has not understood "nature" with clear vision. Moses "who reached the very summit of philosophy" gave us *nature's* essential feature, namely "in all existing things there is an active cause and a passive subject."⁴⁸ Philo's description of Moses as "a philosopher" and his explanation of "nature" in a manner which is very similar to Platonic and Stoic philosophy is not warranted. However, since he is using Biblical notions, he interprets the issues in a philosophical manner.

When we come to a crossroad between the transcendent God and the creation of the world, Philo holds a moderate view between the Judaic notion and philosophy. God is transcendent, but at the same time He is immanent through "His powers" in this world. He has "two supreme and primary powers: goodness and authority; and by his goodness He had created every thing, and by his authority He

⁴¹ Confl., 136.

⁴² Som., I, 75; Mut., 6-7; Ebr., 44.

⁴³ Fug., 198.

⁴⁴ Opl., 12; Virt., 65.

⁴⁵ Cher., 19, Leg. All., I, 51; II, 33.

⁴⁶ Som., I, 67.

⁴⁷ Opl., 72, 78, 169.

⁴⁸ Opl., 7-8.

governed all that He had created."⁴⁹ Philo mentions this unity in the allegorical interpretation of Abraham's guests:

The central place is held by the Father of the Universe, Who in the sacred scriptures is called 'He' that is as His proper name, while on either side of Him are the senior potencies, the nearest to Him, the creative and the kingly. The title of the former is God, since it made and ordered the All; the title of the latter is Lord, since it is the fundamental right of the maker to rule and control what he has brought into being. So the central Being with each of His potencies as His squire presents to the mind which has vision of the appearance sometimes of one, sometimes of three: of one, when that mind is highly purified and, passing beyond not merely the multiplicity of other numbers, but even the dyad which is next to the unit, presses on to the ideal form which is free from mixture and complexity, and being self-contained needs nothing more; of the three, when, as yet uninitiated into the highest mysteries, it is still a votary only of the minor rites and unable to apprehend the 'Existent' alone by Itself and apart from all else, but only through Its actions, as either creative or ruling.⁵⁰

This passage implies that God is transcendent and that He has powers. Those with a purified soul and intellect will not see any separation among them, but to those not purified, this situation will be seen as "three." Philo's explanation of the transcendence and immanence of God helps him to find a way to reconcile the two basic tenets. He thus eliminated the "pantheistic" view through the transcendence of God, and at the same time was able to develop a theodicy.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Cher., 27-28.

⁵⁰ Abr., 120-121 and Sac., 59-60.

⁵¹ In his treatises, Philo does not develop a worked out and explicit theodicy, namely, a theory to defend God in the face of evil, but he does show explicit concern about evil in this world and its relation to the justice of God. His book entitled, *Rewards and Punishments* expresses his belief in the justice of God and the responsibility of the humankind.

It will be legitimate to say that the most difficult issue for Philo was Law. He was a follower of a "revealed" religion, yet at the same time insisted that what was revealed to the Jews was appropriate for all. He therefore had to deal with "nature" (*physis*) and law (*nomos*). Before Philo, there were basically three kinds of law (*nomos* in Greek thought): i) *agraphos nomos* (the unwritten law), ii) *nomos physeos* (the law of nature), and iii) *nomos empsychos* (the living law). *Physis* and *nomos* were considered "somewhat" opposed to each other.⁵²

I will concentrate on the Law of Nature, because this concept makes it easy to reconcile the Torah with the other laws. There was a "natural law theory" before Philo, and we can trace it to such early Greek philosophers as Anaximander, Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, and so forth.⁵³ In Stoic philosophy we find more clear formulations of natural law: Nature, or God, is for the Stoics a perfect being, and all value derives from it. Ethical values are clearly deduced from the first principles of nature governing all animal life.⁵⁴

Philo claims that "this world is the Megapolis and it has a single polity and a single law, and this is the word or *reason of nature*, commanding what should be done and forbidding what should not be done."⁵⁵ In his effort to define the law of nature, Philo provides examples that constitute deviations from nature: e.g., to touch a woman during her period,⁵⁶ and homosexuality which ignores the currency of nature. Furthermore, what the Patriarchs had followed was the law of nature⁵⁷ which they did not receive through tradition or teaching. Similarly, Abraham, by following the law of nature,

⁵² Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria an Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 120.

⁵³ For further information, see Glenn R. Morrow, "Plato and the Law of Nature," *Essays in Political Theory Presented to George H. Sabine*, ed. M.R. Konvitz-A.E. Murphy, Ithaca, 1948; H.A. Wolfson, *Philo Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, II (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp., 165-180.

⁵⁴ David Winston, "Philo's Ethical Theory," *ANRW*, II, 21.1, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983), p. 384; R.A. Horsley, "The Law of Nature in Philo and Cicero," *Harvard Theological Review*, 71.1-2, 1978, pp. 35-59.

⁵⁵ Jos., 29.

⁵⁶ Spec. Leg., III, 32.

⁵⁷ Abr., 5-6.

became a *nomos autos* (a law unto himself) and *thesmos agraphos* (an unwritten statute).⁵⁸

According to Philo, natural law precedes Moses' law, because it produces the order essential for the functioning and beauty of the created world⁵⁹ and his legislated order is grounded in the design of Divine Reason.⁶⁰ In this treatment, we can see that the *nomos* of Moses is an extension into the human realm of *physis*, which operates in the higher realm; in another sense, *nomos* is the opposite of *physis* and inferior to it. In relegating the literal *nomos* of Moses to an imitation of or substitute for *physis*, Philo seems on the verge of denigrating the *nomos* of Moses. He escapes from doing so by terming the *nomos* of Moses *the best possible imitation of physis*,⁶¹ contrasting the *nomos* of Moses with the *nomos* of the Greek city-states.⁶² Moses extolled the life of the Patriarchs for two reasons: First of all, he wanted to show that the enacted ordinances are not inconsistent with nature; and secondly, one might properly say that the enacted laws are nothing else than memorials of the life of the ancients, preserving for later generations their actual words and deeds.⁶³ Considering the *nomos* of Moses as "an imitation of the law of nature," albeit "the best one," paves the way for him to open to the Gentile world and makes it easy to use their thought in his ideas. Therefore, one of his great achievements is to regard the law of nature and the Law of Moses in harmony,⁶⁴ because both of them come from God through giving the concluding power to God.

One of the great struggles for the Jews in the time of Philo was circumcision. His approach to this issue makes clear his understanding of the law of Nature and the Law of Moses. First of all, according to Philo, the principal reasons for circumcision are four: it cures malady of the prepuce called anthrax or carbuncle; it promotes the cleanliness of the whole body as befits the consecrated order; it assimilates the circumcised to the heart; and the most vital reason is

⁵⁸ Abr., 276.

⁵⁹ Opl., 28.

⁶⁰ Opl., 20.

⁶¹ Mos., II, 11, 127; Quis Her., 112-113.

⁶² Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria*, p. 121.

⁶³ Abr., 4-5.

⁶⁴ Opl., 2-3.

its adaptation to give fertility of offspring.⁶⁵ These are the traditional explanations of Philo, but he adds two further reasons; first, the excision of pleasures which bewitch the mind, and second, a man should know himself and banish from the soul the grievous malady of conceit.⁶⁶ When we regard his book which is entitled *Questions and Answers*, he asks the question, "what is the meaning of the words there shall be circumcised every male of you, and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin?" The answer is "there are two circumcisions in this, one of the male, and the other of the flesh; that of the flesh is by way of the genitals, while that of the male is by way of the reason." Because naturally male in us is the mind whose superfluous growth it is necessary to cut off and throw away in order that it may become pure and naked of every evil and passion.⁶⁷ As a conclusion, he has two attitudes toward circumcision, namely, i) he hands down what he had from his ancestral tradition and respects it through encouraging the people to be circumcised, ii) he gives an allegorical explanation to make it "more reasonable" to people.

The scholars who say that Philo in the first place was a spiritual leader and a "mystic" agree that he did affect a pretense of mysticism, but was a sincerely religious person. Philo divides life into three kinds: the contemplative, the active, and the pleasurable. According to Philo, "great and excellent is contemplative life."⁶⁸ "The pleasurable is slight and unbeautiful; the active is on the one hand small and on the other not so. It is small by reason of the fact that it is a close neighbor to pleasure; but it is great because of its nearness and also kinship to contemplation."⁶⁹ In this passage, the Alexandrian gives us an archetype of humankind's topology which we can use to identify contemporary people, for instance as those who follow religious, secular or pleasurable ways of life – depending on how we define religion and secularism. The secular person is one who is not against religion, but for whom, despite the fact that he gets more achievement from the world, life is experienced as a vacuum. A secular person "searching for meaning," on the other hand, can be situated in a middle position. And so, the secular person can fall into the

⁶⁵ Spec. Leg., I, 4-7.

⁶⁶ Spec. Leg., I, 8-10.

⁶⁷ Quaest. In Gn., III, 46.

⁶⁸ Quaest. In Gn., IV, 47.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

pleasurable way of life if he follows his desires; whereas he can access the contemplative life if he looks for and pursues the meaning of life.

The basic aim of life is – according to Philo – not “to hear, but to *see* God.” Therefore, he interprets Israel as “the emblem of seeing, and Jacob as that of hearing.”⁷⁰ When the “children of Israel were called hearers of God, it was according to the second level of the closeness to “seeing God,” because it is next after the sense of sight.”

When we ask Philo about the contemplative life, he describes his own experience as follows:

There was a time when I had leisure for philosophy and for the contemplation of the universe and its contents, when I made its spirit my own in all its beauty and loveliness and true blessedness, when my constant companions were divine themes and verities, wherein I rejoiced with a joy that never cloyed or sated. I had no base or abject thoughts nor groveled in search of reputation or of wealth or bodily comforts, but seemed always to be borne aloft into the heights with a soul possessed by some God-sent inspiration, a fellow-traveler with the sun and moon and the whole heaven and universe. Ah, then I gazed down from the upper air, and straining the mind’s eye beheld, as from some commanding peak, the multitudinous worldwide spectacles of earthly things, and blessed my lot in that I had escaped by main force from the plagues of mortal life.⁷¹

As can be seen in this passage, Philo was not just a philosopher or exegete. He lived simultaneously a contemplative life, considering the universe and its contents. At the same time, his understanding of mysticism is not the life of a recluse, as participating in social functions, attending the theater, races, and gymnastics⁷² are part of his personality.

⁷⁰ Confl., 56, 72, 148; Mig., 39; Quis Her., 78; Congr., 51.

⁷¹ Spec. Leg., III, 1-3.

⁷² Leg. All., III, 155-156; Fug., 28-29; Spec. Leg., IV, 74-75.

Conclusion

Following national and religious traditions on the one hand, and participating eagerly in all aspects of Hellenistic life, on the other, Philo of Alexandria tried vigorously to find a complementary path between the two.

As a person who encountered challenges from within (from the Jews), and from without (from the Hellenistic invasion), Philo of Alexandria made an effort to maintain a balance between these two extremes. In the case of the inner conflict, he followed a middle course; that is, he kept the literal meaning, but at the same time looked for deeper meaning, and in this preserved himself from the extremism of both the literalists and allegorists. In the case of the external conflict, namely the Hellenistic invasion, in his apologetic writing he made an effort to show that whatever Hellenistic culture had developed, the Jews had developed earlier. Besides his intellectual effort, he went to Rome as a leader of the Jewish delegation to defend the rights of the Alexandrian Jews. He acted responsibly and reasonably and tried to smooth tensions between the Hellenistic governor and his own Jewish people. Philo sought to reconcile the elements, terms, phrases and categories of Greek thought with Judaism. It can be said that, in general terms, his basic aim was to recall that philosophy and religion have the same concerns, that is, happiness and a meaningful life.

He situated "seeing God" on the uppermost side of anything, "with hearing God" next. Philo maintains his position on the issue not only of "openness" to the other, but he also explains the Torah as "the best imitation of *physis*." Therefore, no one is perfect, even if he or she is an Israelite; still the Israelites are the closest to "seeing God" because God gave them a book and He hears them. If any Israelite wants to attain to "seeing God," he or she might seek the truth through an allegorical method.

Philo of Alexandria, as a sincere follower of revealed/text-based religion, could not oppose the text without mentioning its literal meaning. Therefore, he chose a delicate way; that is, an allegorical interpretation of the text. When he struggled with anthropomorphic verses and their contradictory explanations, and with the so-called mythical stories, he applied the figurative method. There are at least three kinds of risks in this method of Philo. First, people can allegorize the text beyond its limits; secondly, politicians, as is usual in the history of humanity, will want to manipulate religion according to

their own agenda; finally, if a major incident such as war happens, even if it has a somewhat a positive result (for example, for the two groups to see and to know each other in the case of the Crusades), the aspiration for mutual respect and living together will not be fulfilled and the gap between two sides will grow deeper and wider.

The Cosmos and the Sacred in the Theological Vision of Maximus the Confessor

KEITH LEMNA

Introduction

An enduring question in the modern age pertaining to the relationship of the sacred to the secular is whether or not the de-sacralization of physical nature carried out in the name of modern, scientific inquiry is irreversible. The mainstream of Western theology in much of the modern age tended to assume that it is so, leaving the cosmic dimension of Christian thought undeveloped. Such an a-cosmic attitude to theology was expressed, for instance, by Cardinal Newman in his famous statement that he could conceive of the ultimate importance of “two and only two beings, absolute and luminously evident in themselves: myself and my creator.”¹ It would violate the spirit of Newman’s wider thought to interpret this passage as a validation of a-cosmism in theology. Nevertheless, the passage does seem to capture an attitude prevalent among many modern Western theologians who reduced the sphere of theological concern to the relationship of God to the individual human soul.

A-cosmism is no longer a monolithic feature of Western theology, as several influential trends of thought have arisen in the last several decades attempting to reintegrate theology with cosmology. One such trend of thought was the Neopatristic *ressourcement* of mid-century, which counted in its loosely associated ranks several eminent theologians from Western and Eastern Christian lands.² A common

¹ John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (New York: Longman’s, Green and Company, 1908), p. 4.

² For a brief description of the advent of Neopatristic theology in the West see Brian Daley, “Translator’s Foreword,” Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. by Brian Daley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), pp. 11-14. For a wider treatment of the various strands of thought and research projects comprising the Neopatristic movement in Roman Catholic theology see Étienne Fouilloux, *La Collection “Sources chrétiennes”* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1995).

attribute of many of the theologians who shared in the Neopatristic revival was a sense that the de-sacralization of physical nature carried out in the name of rational inquiry is a result of the promulgation of a superficial, constricting rationality. The cosmos is, in the view of these theologians, no mere grid for quantitative dissection and technological manipulation. Rather, it is enfolded within the drama of human history and reveals the very purpose and beauty of the creator. In the shared view of many of these Neopatristic theologians, all of created reality is interpenetrating and is intellectually grasped only in an endlessly approaching manner, when seen in its intimate connection with God's immanent presence to it and purpose for it. Modern cosmology cannot, therefore, do without a theological perspective. Nor, alternatively, can the cosmic dimension of Christian theology be dismissed as inessential to it, for God's plan for the eschatological deification of the created order includes all of its dimensions.³

One of the most important achievements of the Neopatristic movement was the recovery by some of the scholars involved with it of a sense of the true scope and depth of the exemplary cosmic vision of the sixth century monk and theologian Saint Maximus the Confessor. The Confessor had been, before the advent of Neopatristic thought, regularly understood in the West as a marginal figure in the history of Christian theology, a compiler of previous traditions rather than a profound and original thinker.⁴ In the twentieth century the uniquely integrative, synthetic and cosmological character of his theology was brought to light. Maximus, it was now seen, summarized and synthesized much of the early tradition of Christian reflection in a powerful liturgical vision of the relationship of God to humanity and the cosmos, and scholarly acknowledgment of this fact

³ Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Herrlichkeit* (in English, *The Glory of the Lord*, Joseph Fessio, SJ and John Riches, eds. (various translators) Edinburgh: T&T Clark. 1982) for instance, bears the stamp of both the Neopatristic revival and the concern to bring the whole cosmos into the domain of theological reflection. See also the particular works of Louis Bouyer and Dumitru Staniloae referenced below (note 5).

⁴ See Daley, "Translator's Foreword," *Cosmic Liturgy*, pp. 14-15. Balthasar's work, referenced here, first published in German in 1941, was of immense significance in transforming the estimation of the larger theological community in regard to the Confessor's work.

won for him several eminent twentieth century disciples. Indeed, the Confessor's unified "theoanthropocosmic" vision of the universe inspired some of the boldest works of theological reflection of the twentieth century.⁵ In the midst of an intellectual culture that was predominantly secular, a-religious, or even downright anti-religious, theologians who were yet expert in modern thought and sympathetic to its progress heard in the Confessor's voice someone who could speak to the modern age even in regard to the vexing question of cosmology. These theologians recognized that the Confessor's work has much to teach us about the presence of the sacred in the cosmos. It is in the spirit of these eminent, modern disciples of the Confessor that I wish to explore, in this study, aspects of the Confessor's theological cosmology, particularly as these pertain to the question concerning how we can think in terms of a harmonious relationship between the sacred and the secular in our day.

I shall proceed in four sections. In the first section, I shall expound important dimensions of the Confessor's theological understanding of physical nature. I shall first of all explore briefly the interconnection of theology, anthropology and cosmology in his thought, bringing out his understanding of physical process as drama and of man's vocation to bring the drama of creation to its denouement. I shall extend this exposition by bringing out two of its aspects. First, I shall explore briefly the Confessor's theology of movement in creation, especially in regard to his valuation of finitude and the movement of all finite beings toward the Good. Second, I shall briefly bring out his valuation of the creative capacity of human nature.

⁵ Balthasar's influential work of theological synthesis was greatly indebted to the inspiration of the Confessor, on whom he did his last historical study dedicated to a Patristic theologian. See in this regard Daley, "Translator's Foreword," *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 16. I would also like to draw attention to two other eminent and creative theological synthesizers who drew heavily on the Confessor, Fr. Louis Bouyer and Fr. Dumitru Staniloae. Each of these great theologians, one Roman Catholic and the other Romanian Orthodox, composed multivolume syntheses of Christian doctrine at the heart of which is reflected the theological vision of the Confessor. See especially Louis Bouyer, *Cosmos: The World and the Glory of God*, trans. by Pierre De Fontnouvelle (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1988); Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, Volume II: The World: Creation and Deification*, trans. by Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000).

In the second section, I shall focus on appropriating in the present day the Confessor's theological vision. Can theology and cosmology coexist in our day in any sense that approaches the Confessor's theological cosmology? I shall answer this question in the affirmative by drawing on insights found in the writings of Alfred North Whitehead. This second section, therefore, will involve a brief exposition of pertinent aspects of Whitehead's thought. Whitehead is, of course, the source of contemporary "process theology," whose exponents, like the Neopatristic theologians, have made cosmology a central concern. The process theologians have opened up domains of inquiry that bear dialogue with the insights of the Neopatristic theologians. I shall focus on one aspect of Whitehead's thinking in suggesting a domain for such a dialogue: his doctrine of the experiential character of all worldly actualities. The Confessor's theological cosmology is dramatic, teleological through and through. Whitehead's doctrine of the experientialism of nature can open up a path to appropriating anew such a cosmological vision. My exposition of Whitehead will lead me, in the third section of this study, to make some direct comparisons and contrasts of the Confessor's theology with Whitehead's panexperientialism.

In the fourth and concluding section, I shall turn again specifically to the Confessor's thought in drawing out the implications of his theological cosmology for articulating the relationship of the sacred to the secular. I shall argue here, first of all, that Maximus's theology, especially as brought out in conjunction with the experientialist philosophy of Whitehead, enables us to appreciate anew the cosmos as theater for the sacred. On the other hand, I shall argue briefly that a modern appropriation of the Confessor's theological vision enables as well a vision of the sacred and the secular as involved in a respectful, mutually enhancing relationship. This is so, I shall argue, because the Confessor's Chalcedonian Christology moves him to see all created things in the full dignity of their own natures and ends. This is not to say that the Confessor sees the secular as having an absolutely autonomous subsistence. His thinking puts the whole of reality in a sacral perspective. But, given his respect for the integrity of finite natures, his theological vision does not annihilate the secular. Moreover, I shall conclude that though his theological vision is Christological through and through, it is not closed to ecumenical dialogue. His thinking is inherently ordered to dialogue with all

theists who, as the Islamic philosopher Seyyed Hosein Nasr has put it, hold that relative reality has no meaning if it is not understood in the context of knowledge of the Absolute.⁶

Maximus the Confessor's Cosmological Vision

I shall expound aspects of the Confessor's cosmology in this section, stressing its "dramatic" character. I draw this word as applied to cosmology from Alfred North Whitehead. At the beginning of his lectures, later published as *Science and the Modern World*, Whitehead asserted that all of Greek cosmology "conceived nature as articulated in the way of a work of dramatic art."⁷ By this he meant that nature was differentiated by the Greeks into spheres, species or kinds of things, each with its proper end. Physical nature was conceived to be constituted by the draw of terrestrial things either to the center of the universe, if they are heavy, or, if they are light, toward the celestial spheres. The Greek spirit, Whitehead argued, evinced little concern for the origins of things, but only for their ends. Whitehead held that this imaginative way of seeing nature "damped down" historical inquiry, which seeks for the origins of things, and was rightly rejected in its extreme forms by the historical spirit of both the Reformation and modern science.⁸ Whitehead makes this criticism of the Greek vision of the universe even though, as we shall see in the next section, his own metaphysical system is, in large part, an attempt to recover the teleological and affective spirit of Greek cosmology.

One could say that the Confessor's cosmology is typically Greek, inasmuch as he adopts the teleological understanding of the material or sensible universe. Certainly, he sees all of creation as ordered toward ends that preserve the distinctness of finite natures. But one cannot say of Maximus's cosmological vision that it is a-historical, or unconcerned with origins. Indeed, he understands the end and the beginning of all finite natures as united in one and the same Logos of God.⁹ This means that in order to understand the ends of things one

⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr: The Library of Living Philosophers Volume XXVIII*, ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn, Randall E. Auxier and Lucian W. Stone, Jr. (Chicago: Open Court, 2001), pp. 161-62.

⁷ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 8.

⁸ Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 8.

⁹ See especially his *Ambiguum* 7.

has to understand their beginnings in the creative reason of God. However, what is even more striking in regard to the historical spirit of the theology of the Confessor is that he sees the entire physical universe as involved in the drama of salvation, as teleologically ordered to consummation in the historical destiny of the human race.¹⁰ History, in the humanist sense of the term, involves an interconnection with the advancement of the human species, and Maximus's cosmology is certainly historically oriented in this regard. This specific aspect of the historical character of the Confessor's cosmology is perhaps the best entrée into his dramatic cosmology as a whole. Maximus understands the world as "macro-anthropos," or as called to constitute, in all of its dimensions, an embodiment of human subjectivity.¹¹ Maximus sees the world and humanity as potentially united in a most intimate union in and through the rational activity of *anthropos* in humanizing physical nature. It is humanity's task to uplift nature, and it is the will of God to uplift humanity – and physical nature in and through humanity – in the Incarnation of Christ.¹²

The term "macro-anthropos" was employed by the Confessor in the context of his development of the traditional Greek doctrine that the human person constitutes a microcosm. To say that man is a microcosm most prevalently meant for the Greeks that each human being constitutes a world in miniature.¹³ According to this doctrine, all of the strands and dimensions of physical nature are included within the physical makeup of the human person. Certainly, this basic understanding of the doctrine of microcosmism is present in the Confessor's cosmological vision. But Maximus says something much more than is implied in the traditional doctrine. Maximus holds that it is not quite adequate to the dignity of human nature to see the

¹⁰ See especially his *Ambiguum* 41 and *The Church's Mystagogy*, chapters 5 and 7.

¹¹ *The Church's Mystagogy*, chapter 7.

¹² *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91 1084D-1085A.

¹³ See Rudolf Allers, *Microkosmos, From Anaximandres to Paracelsus* in J. Quasten and S. Kuttner, ed., *Traditio*, vol. II (New York: Fordham University Press, 1944), pp. 319-407. See also, Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator. The Theological Anthropology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*, Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis XXV (Copenhagen, C.W.K. Gleerup, Lund and Einar Munksgaard, 1965), pp. 140-52. Thunberg gives a thorough account in these pages of Maximus's thought in the context of the wider doctrine of Greek microcosmism.

human person as an image of the physical world. It is not enough to say that the human person is a world in miniature, or a microcosm, because human consciousness or knowledge is the irreducible center of the world. Human subjectivity is the dimension of created being in which all of the fields of nature can have their meaning unveiled and can be brought to completion. Physical creation is ordered to a consummating revelation of its inner principles in the contemplative and liturgical activities of the human community. The Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Staniloae, one of the twentieth century's foremost commentators on the Confessor, explains the expression "macro-anthropos":

The term [macro-anthropos] conveys the fact that, in the strictest sense, the world is called to be humanized entirely, that is, to bear the entire stamp of the human, to become pan-human, making real through that stamp a need which is implicit in the world's own meaning: to become, in its entirety, a humanized cosmos, in a way that the human being is not called to become, nor can ever fully become, even at the farthest limit of his attachment to the world where he is completely identified with it, a "cosmicized" man. The destiny of the cosmos is found in man, not man's destiny in the cosmos. This is shown not only by the fact that the cosmos is the object of human consciousness and knowledge (not the reverse), but also by the fact that the entire cosmos serves human existence in practical ways.¹⁴

The human person, then, is by nature a workshop for creation, a priest or bond of the entire cosmos. As Staniloae so well brings out in extending the Confessor's anthropology, humanity's religious,

¹⁴ Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: The Experience of God, Vol. I. Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God*, trans. and ed. by Ioan Ioanita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodoxy Press, 1998) pp. 4-5. I am indebted to a recent article by Andrew Louth for bringing my attention to this quotation. See Andrew Louth, "The Cosmic Vision of Saint Maximus the Confessor," *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), p. 186.

philosophical, artistic and scientific work is meant to bring about the fulfillment of created being.

Maximus sets this macro-anthropocentric vision of creation in the context of the Christian story of salvation and thus puts his vision of the dramatic character of the physical or sensible dimensions of the world into one of the most striking cosmological portraits of the ancient world. Especially in his early writing, *Ambiguum 41*, we see how the physical or sensible dimensions of creation are ordered to ends essentially connected to the innate vocation of humanity to reconcile the various divisions of created being, a vocation consummated in Christ. Maximus delineates five divisions in the created order that it is the essential task of humanity to keep in harmonious relationship: uncreated being and created being, intellectual being and sensible being, heaven and earth, paradise and the inhabited world, and male and female.¹⁵ Human nature, defined by its unity without confusion of intellectual and sensible characteristics, is uniquely suited to carry out mediation of these divisions within creation, and of all creation with God. All of the divisions of nature would tend toward separation and enmity if humanity were to fall from its reconciling vocation, which, in fact, did happen with the fall of Adam. Maximus understands the purpose of the historical incarnation of Christ in the context of the failure of Adam to carry out in obedience to the will of God his mediatory vocation. The first Adam failed in his mediatory vocation, but the second and definitive Adam, Christ himself, recapitulated the vocation of humanity. Christ became man, the Confessor says in following his great Cappadocian forebear, Gregory Nazianzen, and “instituted created natures afresh.”¹⁶

There are two essential aspects of Maximus’s concept of the dramatic character of the universe that I wish to draw out further here. First, there is recognition of the essential movement of all intellectual and sensible beings and a positive valuation of this movement. Second, there is implied in the Confessor’s understanding of the cosmic story of salvation a high valuation of human creativity.

Regarding the first point, Maximus does not attribute finite becoming to any sort of primordial fall. His understanding of creation

¹⁵ *Ambiguum 41*, PG 91 1304D-1305D.

¹⁶ *Ambiguum 41*, PG 91 1304D. The expression is taken by Maximus from Gregory of Nazianzen, *Sermon 31:13*, “On the Feast of Lights,” PG 36 348D.

goes beyond any Greek or mythical concept of the origin of finite things that equates finitude with sin, and salvation with the annihilation of finitude. Maximus reads the Genesis accounts of creation as affirming God's good will in bringing into being finite creatures, intellectual and sensible. Maximus rejects, therefore, the Origenist position that holds that sensible bodies and their characteristic movements were created as a punishment for the fall of intellectual creatures from their original dwelling place in God.¹⁷

As Maximus argues in his *Ambiguum 7*, each thing, intellectual or sensible, has a *logos*, an eternal principle or meaning for its existence, and this *logos* or meaning is rooted ultimately in the eternal Logos of God. There is a threefold dynamic to the nature and existence of any finite being: 1. its very coming to be; 2. its movement to realize its principle or meaning; 3. its eventual coming to rest in the eternal Logos.¹⁸ This dynamic orientation of created beings shows forth the natural structure of created ontology. It is not inevitable that any created thing should attain to its perfection or eternal meaning, and this is why the fall was possible – although not an iron-clad necessity of emanation from the One. There is no ontological dualism in Maximus. The finitude and movement of creaturely beings is not brought about by any inherent moral failing. The goodness that Maximus sees in finitude extends to sensible nature itself, as it too was positively willed into existence from out of the perfect Goodness of the Father. And the interior dynamism of the goal-directed movement of created beings extends to sensible beings as well as to intellectual beings.¹⁹

All of creation is marked by passion, or by a desire to move toward perfection: there is nothing “that has come into being free of passions.”²⁰ All creatures desire union with their *logoi* in the Logos. This is not to say that eternal, separate forms constitute the true reality of finite beings. Maximus's writings do not imply that the *logoi* in God have a real, separate existence that annihilates the being of creatures who have found their rest in God. The *logoi* are better understood as the ideal perfection of created beings, the goal of perfection that each creaturely being senses from within its own being. “No creature,”

¹⁷ *Ambiguum 7*, PG 91 1069A-1077B.

¹⁸ *Ambiguum 7*, PG 91 1069C-1072C.

¹⁹ *Ambiguum 41*, PG 91 1077C-1081B.

²⁰ *Ambiguum 7*, PG 91 1072C.

Maximus says, “has ever ceased using the inherent power that directs it towards its end, nor has it ceased using the natural activity that impels it towards its end....”²¹ The movement of creation, the desire that fills it, has a specifying character inherent to the power of each finite being, and when each being reaches its rest in God its power is fully consecrated, not eliminated. Otherwise, deification would imply a union of natures that entails their confusion.

It is Maximus’s development of the Christological doctrine of Chalcedon that led him to emphasize the full integrity of created natures, with their inherent finite powers and movements toward their logoi. According to the Confessor’s decisive interpretation of the fourth ecumenical council, Christ must be recognized as possessing two complete “energies,” divine and human.²² The council stresses that the natures of Christ are perfectly united, yet without confusion or change. Maximus extends this Christological respect for the unity without confusion of natures to the whole of creation, recognizing that all finite beings have their own specific activity, their own power, their own energy. The movement that impels finite beings is indicative of a love for the Good present within all things, intellectual and sensible, according to their own capacities. All of created nature, even in its physicality, is implanted with what one might call a “quasi-personal” character, an individualized, impulsive openness and movement toward its final realization in God – though, ultimately, in and through the summative work of humanity.²³

There is no excessive intellectualism in the Confessor causing him to devalue the material dimension of finite being, or to depersonalize in a mechanistic way sensible creatures at any level. As Hans Urs von Balthasar characterizes the Confessor’s cosmology, dynamic polarities, such as object and subject and intellect and matter, are held in balance by his thinking. Though the widest currents of Greek philosophy would tend to value object over subject and intellect over matter the Confessor places an equal value on all of these. He is able to do so, Balthasar argues, because, following Pseudo-Dionysius, he

²¹ *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91 1073B.

²² See Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of Saint Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), pp. 51-69. Thunberg summarizes here the Chalcedonian respect of natures as taken up and extended by the Confessor.

²³ See Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 137.

understands that God's transcendence to created being implies a similar distance between God and all of the principles of created being. Balthasar quotes the Confessor: God "is inaccessible to all of creation, visible as well as invisible, in the same degree."²⁴

Regarding subject and object, this equal distance from God, and hence equal value on the horizontal plane of creation, implies that there is a reciprocal directedness and affinity of subject and object for each other, an essential directedness that is of the very essence of creation. Balthasar explains that for Maximus the relatedness of subject and object "has its roots in the spatial 'distance'...and 'extension'...of created being, bound together like poles in tension."²⁵ Regarding intellect and matter, there is also an essential relatedness, indeed, a "...complete correspondence and mutual orientation of 'content' and 'image,' of 'meaning' and 'appearance,' of noumenal and phenomenal realms."²⁶ The fundamental ontological meaning of the material world for Maximus "is exhaustively expressed in the fact that it is the likeness and the phenomenal mode of appearance of the world of the intellect, while the intellectual realm has the tendency to reveal its essence in this mirror, which is in no way provisional but has ultimate meaning."²⁷

When we take these two particular polarities together in expounding what we are calling the Confessor's "dramatic" cosmology, we see that the material universe is essentially symbolic in character, albeit in no way provisional. Though the expression may be overused in contemporary theology as it relates to cosmology, the Confessor's cosmological vision is truly sacramental. Physical nature is a consciously willed expression, meant to be grasped and further articulated through and in finite subjectivities. It is first of all the expression of the eternal Logos, whose utterances are secondarily refracted through the angelic intelligences, and, finally, it is grasped on its own level and brought to new expression through human subjectivity.²⁸ The material dimension of being, physical being, does not stand alone, mechanically, self-sufficient and unrelated. It reflects

²⁴ Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 172.

²⁵ Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 166.

²⁶ Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 172.

²⁷ Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 172.

²⁸ Louis Bouyer has poignantly developed this aspect of the Confessor's vision, which Maximus shares with Pseudo-Dionysius. See Bouyer, pp. 194-205.

the eternal intellect in and through whom it was generated, as well as the infinite array of finite intellects to which it stands in essential relation. It even bears, as I have implied in this exposition, the stamp of experience within itself, inasmuch as it reflects the creator's love and desires its own "portion" of the Good in its movement toward perfection.²⁹

This brings us to the second point that I wish to expound, regarding Maximus's valuation of human creativity. Maximus places his dramatic cosmology in the ultimate context of Christ's redemptive work, which is completed through and in his mystical body, the Church. But the divine work of Christ through which the "recapitulation" or summing up of creation is achieved is a theandric work. It involves the full cooperation of divinity and humanity.³⁰ This, again, draws on Maximus's Chalcedonian Christology: Christ's human nature must have been a full human nature, or else the cooperation between God and man that brings creation to its fulfillment would not have been complete. Given that the work of redemption is a theandric accomplishment, it involves the full use of humanity's inherent powers.³¹

Maximus holds that the human person bears by its natural constitution a cooperative responsibility for the uplifting of nature. Human persons, as agencies of reason and will, have the capacity to discern the meaning of creation and even to confer meaning upon it. The human participation in the divine Logos, among all creaturely manners of participation in the divine, is therefore of a special character. The human person bears the image of God in the profoundest way, a possession of the Logos that marks him as both highest servant of God and reconciler of the created order. The first Adam may have failed in his priestly vocation, but the new Adam restored this innate capacity of human personhood. The Logos of God truly and fully becomes human in Christ; he penetrates humanity interiorly, though without mixing human nature with his own divine nature. As the Patristics scholar Andrew Louth has put it in expounding the Confessor's theandric vision, Christ "lives through human existence from within, renewing it in the course of his life,

²⁹ *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91 1086C.

³⁰ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, pp. 71-91.

³¹ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, pp. 71-91.

finally confronting the ultimate meaninglessness of death, and giving it meaning in the resurrection.”³² This restorative work of the redeemer has to be appropriated by all who share in his baptismal Spirit and who participate in the sacramental life of the Church. Through the grace of Christ, the baptized faithful engage in ascetic struggle against the temptation of sin so that they might live out their vocation to reconcile all of creation, to stand as the rightful interpreters of the meaning of the whole of the universe. This requires that they see all things in terms of their deepest principles, their *logoi*. They are called to see all things as God has eternally seen them and willed them to be. They can do this only by turning their hearts and minds to the will of the Logos made flesh. Nevertheless, the salvific work of the God-man must become truly the work of the faithful if it is to be concretely realized in its total fruition.³³

Staniloae, in discussing the solidarity of man with physical nature, has brought out the implications for human creativity of the Confessor’s theandric anthropology. Physical nature, Staniloae argues, is an essential condition of man’s existence and integral development, as human nature is inconceivable apart from its intimate connection with the cosmos. Conversely, physical nature is essentially bound to the development of human nature. Through his use of physical nature, either by aligning himself to its inner principles or by degrading it for exploitative purposes, the human person can either uplift or degrade the whole race of humanity. Staniloae argues that physical nature is the domain for human moral intention and interaction: “Nature is interposed, fully visible, within the beneficial or destructive dialogue that goes on among human beings, a dialogue outside of which no individual human being, nor the human community itself, can exist.”³⁴

Both physical nature and the human race are finite, limited beings, interdependent in terms of their shared origin and destiny in God. The human race has a responsibility for the deification of the entire created realm. To achieve this deification of physical nature, whereby Christ’s Taboric light is spread universally, humanity must understand and work within the alignment of the implicit meaning of created things. God’s purpose for all things must be understood and followed. But

³² Louth, p. 189.

³³ Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos*, pp. 93-112.

³⁴ Staniloae, *The Experience of God: Volume II*, p. 2.

this, Staniloae argues, does not mean that humanity is lacking in a salutary creative and transformative capacity. God has created nature in such a manner that physical nature must yield its beneficial fruits for human development through the transformative work of humanity. "Only the animal," Staniloae argues, "takes its place fully within the framework of what nature invariably sets for it."³⁵

Through human work and imaginative endeavor, physical nature is revealed as a malleable, contingent potentiality for formation. Staniloae argues that man spiritualizes himself and physical nature through his ceaseless endeavors. On the one hand, the tiring and ascetical struggle of work makes humanity more open to the intelligible meaning of creation. On the other hand, physical nature is itself made, by human work, transparent to the glory of the One whose purpose is hidden within the very structures of its being. This extolling by Staniloae of the importance of human creativity and of the inspired work that flows from it is in perfect accord with the Confessor's understanding of man as workshop.

The most important work of all that man can carry out, for both the Confessor and for Staniloae, is the work of praise, centered on and nourished by sacramental participation in the Divine Liturgy.³⁶ All of creation is willed by God to be taken up, through human mediation, into the precincts of the Church's sacred cult, from which derives the inspiration that nourishes a worthy culture, a truly beautiful expression of human creativity. The Confessor's vision of the relationship of God, cosmos, and anthropos is a liturgical vision. His is a vision of "cosmic liturgy," in which the world as a whole, its sensible dimensions as well as its intellectual dimensions, is called to become a locus of praise to the Father of all things, divine and human.³⁷

Whitehead's Panexperientialism as Modern Retrieval

In an influential and controversial article published in the middle of the twentieth century, the French theologian Jean Daniélou argued in behalf of the Neopatristic revival that the Church Fathers were a

³⁵ Staniloae, *The Experience of God: Volume II*, p. 4.

³⁶ See especially the Confessor's *The Church's Mystagogy*.

³⁷ The liturgical vision of Maximus is brought out especially clearly in Balthasar's *Cosmic Liturgy*.

more valuable resource for contemporary theology than the Scholastic theologians because, unlike the Scholastic theologians, the Fathers were open to the categories of history and subjectivity:

...[Scholastic theology] gives no place to history. And moreover locating reality as it does more in essences than in subjects it ignores the dramatic world of persons, of universal concretes transcending all essence and only distinguished by their existence – that is, no longer distinct from one another by intelligibility and intellection but by value and love – or hate.³⁸

Writing in the heyday of existentialist philosophy, Daniélou recommended a return to the earliest sources of the Church's theological tradition because an inspiring tradition of theological reflection is to be found there that connects to the intellectual milieu opened up by the modern "turn to the subject."

In line with Daniélou's assertion in this regard, one can see in the theology of the Confessor a valuation of human subjectivity that can be naturally turned, given the inner essence of his train of thought, to critical dialogue with subjectivism in modern philosophy. Balthasar's study of the Confessor is arguably centrally motivated by a desire to carry out this dialogue. Indeed, he suggests that German Idealism has its remote origins in the theology of the Confessor, inasmuch as the Confessor's theological vision inspired the later theological synthesis of John Scotus Eriugena, whose work was in turn influential to the Rhineland mystics. This makes the Confessor's work remarkably suitable for theological rapprochement with modernity.³⁹

I shall suggest in this section, somewhat in the spirit of Daniélou, that one modern philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, in an aspect of his critical appropriation of the modern "subjectivist bias," can enable a living recovery of the dramatic character of Maximus the Confessor's theological cosmology.⁴⁰ The aspect of Whitehead's

³⁸ Jean Daniélou, "Les orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse," *Études* 249 (1946): p. 17. Quoted in Aidan Nichols, "Thomism and the Nouvelle Théologie," *The Thomist* 64 (2000): pp. 1-19.

³⁹ Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, p. 117.

⁴⁰ In utilizing the work of Whitehead to appropriate the cosmic dimension of Maximus's theology, I am indebted to the interpretation of Whitehead's work by James W. Felt, who has carried out a rapprochement of Whitehead's thought with

thought that I shall explore is what some have referred to as his “panpsychism” or others his “panexperientialism.” Taking the starting point for his philosophy of organism in the experiential subject, Whitehead argues that physical nature is itself experiential in all of its dimensions. It is precisely the conformal feelings of the experiencing human subject that ensure the objective validity of its conscious perceptions of the world. These primary, conformal feelings are objective and “conformal” precisely because experience is a reality attributable to all worldly actualities. Human experience should be generalized to the whole universe.⁴¹

Whitehead’s “panexperientialist” ontology of the physical world is obviously a rejection of the ontology of mechanistic materialism that has dominated Western thought since the seventeenth century. One of the most important and enduring aspects of Whitehead’s philosophical work is his concise description and undermining of the mechanist concept of physical nature. Whitehead uncovers three philosophical presuppositions inherent to the mechanistic account of physical causality that he argues cannot bear scrutiny. The first is that all causality is “from behind,” or efficient. The second is that causality is confined to the interaction of contiguous events. The third is that all causal relations are external in character. Mechanism, given its account of causality, sees the ontology of physical being in terms of what Whitehead calls “vacuous actualities.” The ultimate units of physical nature, in this ontological perspective, have no inner dimension, no ability to exert self-determination toward ends. They are not motivated by final purpose. They cannot be moved by what is not contiguously connected to them, nor do they have any ability to receive the influence of other actualities into themselves.⁴²

the metaphysics of Saint Thomas. Felt shows that a more traditionally Christian interpretation of the divine nature and of the ontology of creation can be opened to a constructive dialogue with process thought. This, it seems to me, is a great achievement, because mutual suspicion too often obtains between so-called “classical” theists, whether Neoplatonic or Scholastic, and process theologians. See James W. Felt, S.J., *Coming to Be: Toward a Thomistic-Whiteheadian Metaphysics of Becoming* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

⁴¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: The Free Press, 1978), pp. 157-67.

⁴² See, on this whole paragraph, David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 97.

Whitehead develops several constructive refutations of the doctrine of vacuous actualities. His epistemological doctrine, rooted in this work of constructive refutation, is of special significance for our purposes. Whitehead argues that the so-called “sensationalist doctrine of perception,” a doctrine shared implicitly or explicitly by all classical modern philosophers, inevitably follows from mechanistic materialism, with dire consequences for any philosophical attempt to achieve a coherent account of human perception and cognition.⁴³ Whitehead saw that few modern philosophers faced squarely the dilemma that mechanistic materialism poses for epistemology. Hume and Kant hold a special place in the history of modern thought for Whitehead because they are brilliant exceptions to this general characterization. Each man attempted to account for human perception while self-consciously embracing the consequences of mechanistic materialism.

Whitehead’s critical reading of Hume is eminently instructive. Hume accepted implicitly the idea that nature is constituted by vacuous actualities. He was led inevitably to propose an epistemological “solipsism of the present moment.”⁴⁴ Hume argued that all perception is mediated through the sensory organs of the body, “such as eyes, palates, noses, ears, and the diffused bodily organization furnishing touches, aches, and other bodily sensations.”⁴⁵ All of our perceptual data are for Hume but “ideas of reflection” derived from these more fundamental “impressions of sensation.” The latter are produced entirely by the interaction of the bodily organs with the vacuous actualities of the mechanistic universe. The former are mental products derivative from impressions of sensation but not referent to the actualities of physical nature. Hume recognized that mechanistic materialism entails skepticism about the validity of many of the aspects of our experience that we normally take for granted. Impressions of reflection do not point us in the direction of the objective world, only in the direction of our discrete sensations.⁴⁶ So, for instance, one has to reject the

⁴³ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 157.

⁴⁴ This expression comes from George Santayana. See Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (New York: Dover, 1955), pp. 14-15. This book was greatly influential in the development of Whitehead’s thinking.

⁴⁵ Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1933), p. 127.

⁴⁶ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 159.

objective existence of secondary qualities, such as colors, or sounds, or smells. One has to reject, moreover, the objectivity of our experience of the uniformity of causal influence between objects congruent with consecutive sensory impressions. One has to reject, even, the objective validity of our experience of the external world as such. Neither causality nor the external world can be objectively derived from the discrete sensations impressed upon our bodily organs by the vacuous actualities of nature.⁴⁷

Clearly, in a world that is deprived of secondary qualities, or even of real causal influence, or of any objective correlation to human perception except in and through vacuous actualities, any idea of the physical cosmos as teleological drama can only be a subjective illusion. Ancient cosmologies akin to Maximus the Confessor's are routinely criticized in this materialist milieu of thought as hopelessly "anthropomorphic." Whitehead saw through the muddled thinking that props up the facile charge of "anthropomorphism" and brought this out into the open in its absurd conclusions. If mechanism is true, he demonstrated, there can be no objective validity to the cognitive accomplishments of poets and artists, whose work bespeaks a world fitted for human perception and oriented towards objective ends with dramatic impact:

...[according to mechanists] bodies are perceived as with qualities which in reality do not belong to them, qualities which in fact are purely the offspring of the mind. Thus nature gets credit which should in truth be reserved for ourselves: the rose for its scent: the nightingale for his song: and the sun for his radiance. The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves, and should turn them into odes of self-congratulation on the excellency of the human mind. Nature is a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless; merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly.⁴⁸

The philosophy of organism that Whitehead develops overcomes the epistemological muddle of mechanistic materialism, so self-consciously accepted by Hume, by orienting our understanding of the

⁴⁷ Griffin, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁸ Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 54.

universe in terms of the subjective turn, although interpreted differently than it had been in modern philosophy since Descartes. Whitehead argues, in common with most modern philosophers, that the experiencing human subject should be the starting point for metaphysics. But he makes a bold reform of this “subjectivist bias.”⁴⁹ Whitehead argues that it is not by denying the objective validity of our perceptual experience that we fully honor the subjective turn. Rather, we fully appropriate the subjectivist bias of modern thought when we recognize that the actualities of experience bear what one might call an inner analogy to the experiencing subject.⁵⁰

Hume held that the ‘qualia’ of conscious experience are attributable entirely to the perceiving subject. Whitehead argues, to the contrary, that the qualia of conscious experience are “objective data.” They result from the integration “of a certain physical feeling, belonging to a derivative type in a late phase of concrecence.”⁵¹ This is to say that the qualia of perception are not attributable entirely to the perceiving mind, but to the actual entities of experience that participate, by causal ingression of an emotional tonality, in the constitution of the perceiving mind.⁵² This is Whitehead’s well-known doctrine of “prehension.” Weprehend, Whitehead argues, the actualities of the world through conformal experience, at a first level, and then consciously *ap*-prehend them in perception at a derivative level of experience. Consciousness is a secondary reality of subjective experience, but the data of consciousness are not for this reason simply attributes of the perceiving mind.⁵³

Whitehead understands so-called “secondary qualities” to be objective realities. One cannot say of the scent of the rose, or of the song of the nightingale, or of the radiance of the sun that it is merely a mental fiction; nor are these merely relative realities. They are not purely and simply the world as it is for us. All existence and experience is relational for Whitehead, yet his doctrine of “prehension” or “panexperientialism” means to say something more. The radiance of the sun that we experience as beautiful, or perhaps as

⁴⁹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 159, 166.

⁵⁰ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 130-67. The expression “inner analogy” is my own, not Whitehead’s.

⁵¹ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 160.

⁵² Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 29.

⁵³ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 160-62.

nourishing, or threatening, speaks of the very nature of the sun: subjective passion is not wholly absent even from stars, or birds, or flowers.⁵⁴

The whole universe is held together, according to Whitehead, by a primordial, experiential, mutual sympathy of actual entities, always in movement toward or away from one another. Physical nature is characterized by “vector feeling,” and even the transmission of energy and mass are expressive of value and desire.⁵⁵ The “radiance” of the sun that is so often experienced by us in emotional terms is not simply a poetic fiction but the very expression of the being of the star that gives life to our planet. Whitehead holds that all of physical nature is characterized by emotional, experiential interaction of a teleological character. Physical process has a greater resonance with human experience than the a priori philosophy of mechanistic materialism will allow its proponents to accept.⁵⁶

But all that I have expounded in this section would surely continue, in our day, to elicit cries of anthropomorphism. Given the quantitatively vast scope of seemingly valueless time, and valueless space, is Whitehead’s cosmology not a willful supposition that does not correspond to the hard experience of modern science? Such an objection would, in fact, fail to recognize that it is Whitehead’s philosophy of organism, and not mechanistic materialism, whose epistemological implications are truer to experience. Whitehead is able to integrate subject and object, whereas mechanistic materialism posits an abstract objectivity that is forgetful of the subjectivities whose experience alone advances the scientific enterprise. If it is true that modern materialism must do away with the objectivity of the perceptual experience that gives rise to art and poetry, it is also true that it does away with the objectivity of the perceptual experience that enables science. Not even Hume and Kant understood this point as clearly as Whitehead. Mechanistic materialism is philosophically problematic because it prescind so extremely from the experiencing subject. Only forgetfulness of the role of the subject in all achievements of experience and cognition can lead to the assertion of

⁵⁴ Thus Whitehead can say of Wordsworth’s poetry, in attributing passionate expression to nature, that it captures the “brooding presence” of things. See *Science and the Modern World*, p. 83.

⁵⁵ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 163.

⁵⁶ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 110-29.

a universe absent of experience and value. The assertion of a valueless universe, implying a blotting out of the experiential human subject, is an assertion of high abstraction. Is it not more cogent and concrete to extend, with Whitehead, the attribution of experience to the very bounds of the universe than to collapse it to the status of a rare and inexplicable epiphenomenon?

Points of Comparison and Contrast

Given the exposition of the previous two sections, a comparative note needs to be sounded. How do the Confessor's cosmology and Whitehead's relate to one another? Whitehead's philosophy of organism, I have suggested, opens up a path to the recovery of the Confessor's cosmic theology, and to dramatic cosmologies as such, in that he restores a sense of the inner, experiential dimension of all physical actualities and of their impulsive attractions. Of course, he is not the only twentieth century philosopher to have conceived of physical actualities in terms of an inner dimension and an outer dimension. He stands in the line of Bergson in this regard. But his work has a uniquely systematic character, and it continues to constitute an important theological program, particularly in the Anglophone world, so it is particularly suited to the dialogue that I have suggested in this article.

Whitehead and the Confessor have vastly different pictures of things. There are three aspects in this regard that I wish to mention briefly. First, Whitehead's cosmology is evolutionary, and the Confessor's is not. The Confessor values movement and humanity's creative reason. But he obviously does not think in the terms of the transformation of species. He is a representative of the ancient world, and Whitehead is a representative of the modern world. It is not inconceivable that the Confessor's cosmology could be placed in the context of an evolutionary schema, but it would be obviously anachronistic to think of the Confessor's theology as a precursor to modern evolutionary theory.

Second, Whitehead's cosmology takes consciousness to be a secondary, derivative reality, a position that is not, at first glance at least, easily compatible with the Confessor's emphasis on the primordial reality of Logos in bringing all things into being. The Confessor does not attribute cognitive consciousness to purely sensible beings, but he does hold, more explicitly than Whitehead, that

cognitive consciousness is the origin of all finite beings, intellectual or sensible.

Third, the Logos is, for the Confessor, transcendent to the world. The Logos is the One in whom all things eventually come to rest. For Whitehead, the world continuously moves forward in its immanent, creative, evolutionary advancement: there is no transcendent resting place of finite actualities, except inasmuch as they subsist by causal participation in all other present and future actualities, or even in the primordial actuality, God.

But in spite of these major differences, the sense of an inner dimension to the beings or actualities of physical nature is present in both the Confessor and Whitehead and provides a fruitful terrain for comparative reflection. Whitehead speaks the language of energy fields, and mass-energy, and subatomic particles. He knows, perhaps more expertly than any other modern philosopher, the extent to which science can master nature and the limitations of its claims to unveil the mystery of matter. Whitehead can help one to discover, from within the perspective of modernity's deepest philosophical penetration of the scientific mindset, that the universe is, in all of its dimensions, characterized by sympathy and by inner determination and movement toward value realization. He shows that the scientific understanding of the universe does not logically preclude the concept of the cosmos as drama, of the impulse of purely physical beings toward value realization.

On the other hand, the Neoplatonic theologian can help to bring out the special character of human subjectivity, which is not always fully enunciated by Whitehead and his followers, though it is arguably implied in much of what he says. Maximus's stress on the enfolding of the cosmos in the epochal advancement of humanity, guided by the incarnate Logos, can be brought out in such a way as to provide an enhancement of Whitehead's philosophy of organism. In this regard, one might better turn to Edmund Husserl than to Whitehead for a contemporary restatement of the Confessor's doctrine. Take, for instance, this quotation from a recent book by the American philosopher and Husserl scholar Robert Sokolowski describing the marvel of human syntax. Sokolowski considers this marvel in a seemingly banal context, that is, in the consideration of a tree whose intelligibility has been syntactically articulated:

The tree should be grateful to the power of syntax, because without syntax it would not have been enabled to show itself for what it is; without syntax it could not have become poetically or theoretically displayed; it would have continued to sleep in obscurity. It would not have come to light. Of course, without the presence of human beings and the syntax they introduce the tree could still have been displayed, say, to the wolves that prowl around it and the squirrels that climb its branches, but these creatures do not let the intelligibility of the tree come forward. They let the tree come forward, but not the intelligibility. Only the magic wand of speech lets that happen, and only the agent of disclosure [the human person] can wave the wand.⁵⁷

This is a poignant modern statement of the unique capacity and responsibility of human reason to uncover the logoi of things, a capacity and responsibility that Maximus so greatly emphasized. Yet, the implicit logic of Maximus's theology is such that one who accepts it should not be at all surprised if the tree did indeed express, in a manner befitting its nature, gratitude for having been made known in its intelligibility through human speech. And this, it seems to me, brings us around once again to the orientation of the Confessor's thought toward something deeply akin to aspects of Whitehead's panexperientialism.

The Cosmos, the Sacred and the Secular

There are resources, then, from within modern thought itself for appropriating anew the cosmological vision of the Confessor. And there are, naturally, implications for how we understand the sacred in relation to the cosmos with respect to the particular appropriation of the Confessor's vision that I have suggested here. If it is understood that all worldly actualities have an inner dimension, an impulse that moves them toward the Good, a thirst for their logoi, then the sacred character of the physical universe is more readily seen. One cannot easily justify trampling upon nature, and thereby violating its inner

⁵⁷ Robert Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 100.

meaning, if one recognizes its sympathetic connection to his own conscious being. Nor, if the directions indicated in this study are reasonable and reasonably followed and developed, could one's experience of value and meaning be logically confined to a mere isolated cabinet of constructive subjectivity. For if the dramatic character of the cosmos is an objective reality, and speaks of a world whose truth transcends the exterior, mechanistic objectivity of modern materialism, then all of existence could be seen to be truly expressive, and even self-determinedly so, of innate value and meaning.

Moreover, a modern appropriation of the Confessor's vision, along the lines that I am suggesting here, opens to us the possibility of making greater sense of the notion of cosmic liturgy. The sacred can be more readily experienced as present throughout the universe if the universe is seen in its "panexperiential" depths. The actualities of the universe, in all of their dimensions, physical as well as intellectual, could be more readily understood to bear within themselves some power to turn, according to their own inner capacities, in wonder and gratitude to the creator. The unique role of the Church in mediating the universal return of nature to praise of the creator need not be mitigated in this panexperientialist appropriation of the Confessor's thought. The unique power of rational, free and conscious human subjectivities need not be denied in affirming that there is a dimension to all worldly actualities that is analogous to subjectivity.

But if we turn to the Confessor's thought in this way are we not doing away with the secular? In affirming the concept of cosmic liturgy, and in strengthening it by appropriating it in the context of Whitehead's experiential philosophy, are we not sacralizing everything? Is there any room left over for the non-religious aspects of our lives? In answering these questions a strong affirmation would have to be made of the Confessor's Chalcedonian respect of the energies of created entities. Maximus, as I have shown, has a full appreciation for the integral natures of finite things. He understands that each individual and species of being has its own particular logos or end and does not find its individual being removed by deification but consummated by it. God does not create finite natures and beings only to absorb them into his nature without remainder. It would follow that the Confessor's exalting of liturgical praxis in no way devalues the scope of other human activities in their unique spheres.

There is thus a healthy appreciation for the secular implied in Maximus's vision, though he clearly recognizes that, in terms of ultimate meaning, no activity and no earthly being can be displaced from the eternal Logos without spiraling toward nothingness.⁵⁸

To conclude this study, I wish to say a word about ecumenism, an issue that has to be addressed by all of those who turn to the ecclesial theology of the Church Fathers for inspiration. The Confessor's thought is foundationally Christic, but this does not make him an enemy of ecumenical dialogue. His thought is steeped in the language of the Greco-Roman philosophy of his day and this, perhaps paradoxically to some moderns, gives it a character of natural opening to religious philosophies of other traditions in all ages. I am thinking in particular here of the Sufi philosophy so brilliantly carried on in the present day by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Maximus's thought naturally transposes theological discussion to its properly metaphysical plane, where theistic philosophers of all traditions must eventually develop their understanding. Moreover, the cosmic dimension of his thought is amenable to all ancient traditions of religious thought that understand that the cosmos is filled with sacral significance. Maximus, while not denying the value of the secular, helps to remind Christian theologians that the Christian tradition exists on analogous lines with these other traditional religions. The religious mystery enlightens the whole of creation and not only the interior of the individual human soul.

⁵⁸ *Ambiguum* 7, PG 91 1085A.

The Nature of Human Being: A Challenge from Hobbes' Anthropology

ARMADA RIYANTO

Why Hobbes?

This article is an attempt to study the meaning of human nature in Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*. One of the fundamental issues that comes up in debates on secularism is the notion of human nature. What is the nature of the human being? Hobbes, at the dawn of modern political philosophy in the West explored the anthropological account of the nature of the human being in the first English language political philosophy, his masterpiece, *Leviathan*¹. Hopefully this humble attempt may be a small contribution (or a small footnote) to the enrichment of this seminar on the sacred and secular, especially from an anthropological point of view.

Leviathan is a classic in ethics and politics. Hobbes' philosophy belongs to a "spring time" of the West in which modern political tradition was about to take shape. Leo Strauss has often mentioned that modern socio-politics of the Western world inherits Thomas Hobbes' philosophy.² Hobbes' philosophical context was religious. He lived in the Anglican *ambiente* of England, in which religion was axiomatic. However, Hobbes' philosophy has been viewed as beyond the religious atmosphere of his contemporary society. By saying this I would not rush to claim that Hobbes' philosophical ideas are secular. This we will look at more thoroughly. The teachings of the great

¹ M. Oakeshott regards Hobbes' *Leviathan* as the greatest, perhaps the sole, masterpiece of political philosophy written in the English language (Cf. M. Oakeshott, "Introduction," in *Lo*, viii). Richard Tuck says that especially with his *Leviathan*, Hobbes created English-language political philosophy. Before his *Leviathan*, there was little written in English on the more technical areas of philosophy (Cf. R. Tuck, "Hobbes," in *GPT*, 107-238). After publishing *Leviathan*, Hobbes drafted other works, such as *A Dialogue between a Philosopher and a Student of the Common Laws of England*, a new reply to Bramhall, *Behemoth*, and so on.

² Leo Strauss, "Introduction" in *What is Political Philosophy* (Westport, Connecticut, 1976); Cf. Smith, Steven B., "Leo Strauss: Between Athens and Jerusalem," in the special issue on Leo Strauss of *The Review of Politics*, vol. 53, no.1 (Winter 1991) pp. 75-99.

political philosophers such as Hobbes are important not only historically, as phenomena *about* which we must learn if we wish to understand societies of the present and the past, but also as phenomena *from* which we must learn if we wish to understand those societies.³

Hobbes and Hobbism

As a political philosopher, Hobbes⁴ has been frequently associated and confounded with what is called *Hobbism*. Hobbism is a term which refers to the political ideas attributed to Hobbes by the seventeenth-century literature and later, but *not* based on the proper analysis of his political writings. It alludes to some atheistic concepts and crude notions of nature, man, and society.⁵ We must, therefore, distinguish between

³ Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), xiii.

⁴ Hobbes was born on 5 April 1588 in Westport (Wiltshire), Malmesbury. He died on December 4, 1679. Hobbes' first substantial work of political theory, *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, was written under the threat of civil war. It was disseminated in manuscript copies in, or shortly before, 1640 to the friends of the parliament who were disputing and denying the kingdom and the necessary existence of the majesty's person. Soon afterwards, Hobbes had to face the attacks of his opponents which became so fierce that he had to flee to Paris. In his exile in Paris, he composed *De Cive* which is one of the most important works of political theory. *De Cive* was published in 1642, the time during which the civil war began to devastate and destroy his native country, England. Finally, in 1651 Hobbes published his masterpiece, in London, under the title, *Leviathan, or Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*.

⁵ This may be associated with Hobbes' crude expressions such as "man is by nature unfit for society," "war of every man against every man," "man's life in the state of nature is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," etc. (Cf. DCv i-ii; L xiii-iv; Z. Lubienski, "Hobbes' Philosophy and Its Historical Background," in *THCA*, I, 1). *De Cive* was included in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* by the Catholic Church on 16 June 1654. This information is found in the *Documenta Ecclesiae Romanae 1639-1757*, kept in the British Library, London. When in 1666 the House of Commons proposed a "Bill against Atheism and Profaneness," *Leviathan* was included (John Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. Oliver Lawson Dick, [Harmondsworth, 1949, 1962], 235). Perhaps no work of philosophy has ever generated such a strong reaction as did Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*. The response was so widespread that Samuel I. Mintz can list in an Appendix over 100 anti-Hobbes works written between 1650 and 1700 (see Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan* [Cambridge 1962]). According to Robert Filmer, Hobbes' "natural men" spring from the earth "like mushrooms" without any obligations of one to

the genuine theory of Hobbes and Hobbism. A system of political philosophy, which may be properly deemed Hobbism, is quite different in most fundamental points from the theory Hobbes sets forth in his writings. Following Lamprecht, the system of Hobbism, in summary, would be:⁶

(1) God made man such a beast and rascal that he inclines universally to malice and fraud. Man's typical acts, when he is unrestrained, are violent and ruthless, savagely disregarding the person and property of his fellows.

(2) There is no real distinction between moral right and moral wrong. Moral distinctions are artificial suppositions foisted upon the generality of humans by some superior power. Apart from the civil state there would be no moral distinctions at all.

(3) A *de facto* ruler is always justified in all his ways. Since the distinction between good and bad arises from the dictate of princes, the commands of princes are *ipso facto* the criterion of right and wrong for those whom they are strong enough to command.

(4) Appeal to law as a protection of popular rights is essentially invalid. For, there are no rights of the people. The rulers have more force than what is alleged to be law, and so forth.⁷

another (Robert Filmer, "Observations on Mr Hobbes' Leviathan," in *LevCon*, 1). Bishop John Bramhall claimed that Hobbes' concept of human nature destroys all religion (John Bramhall, *Castigation of Mr. Hobbes* [London, 1658]; "The Catching of *Leviathan* or the Great Whale," in *LevCon*, 115-179). Quentin Skinner notes that even the most careful student of Hobbes among the seventeenth-century jurists, Pufendorf himself, in his treatise of 1672, *De Jure Naturae et Gentium*, was frequently critical of Hobbes of whom he said: "His basic political axiom was unworthy of human nature" (Quentin Skinner, "The Ideological Context of Hobbes' Political Thought," *HJ*, 3 (1966), 90).

⁶ S. P. Lamprecht, "Hobbes and Hobbism," in *THCA*, I, 17-36. Also Cf. W.P. Christophilus, *Observations, Censures, and Confutations of Divers Errors in the 12, 13, and 14 Chap. of Mr. Hobs His Leviathan*, London 1657; E. J. Roesch, *The Totalitarian Threat, the Fruition of Modern Individualism as Seen in Hobbes and Rousseau* (New York, 1963). According to Roesch, in Hobbes there is no such thing as intrinsic value or morality (see 65-etc.).

⁷ For a cursory justification of this summary, Hobbism can find substantiation in the works of Hobbes. Those four points can be found especially in the *Leviathan* (parts I-II) and the *De Cive* (chapter I-II), but only when these works are read hastily, and when the separate sentences are taken out and quoted out of context.

A shift from Hobbism to the genuine ideas of Hobbes began with the publications of Ferdinand Tönnies at the end of the nineteenth century.⁸ After the writings of Tönnies a new impulse was given to research into Hobbes' heritage of philosophical ideas. A series of monographs has been published, and the personality of Hobbes has appeared in a new light. Hobbes' theories, when better known, prove to be less crude and more human than they had seemed.⁹

Hobbism is not Hobbes' theory as presented in his writings. The difference between Hobbism and Hobbes' genuine theory can best be exemplified by considering Hobbes' views in connection with the four points of Hobbism already summed up above. As an example, let us take just the first point which is concerned with man in the state of nature. Regarding the first point, the contemporary readers in Hobbes' time seldom noticed that the picture of "man in the state of nature" is *not necessarily* meant by him as an historical picture of

⁸ The works of F. Tönnies have been considered the most authoritative and detailed study of Hobbes' intellectual development. He perceived that Hobbes could be used to provide a theoretical defence of using the state in this way: capitalistic enterprises and their competitiveness, endangered social peace and individual liberty as surely as old religious feuding had done (Cf. R. Tuck, "Hobbes," in *GPT*, 206-277). From 1877 onward he worked on Hobbes, making many manuscript discoveries in England and publishing the results of his labours in a series of articles and in a book of 1896, *Hobbes, Leben und Lehre*. The 3rd edition of the same book was published in Stuttgart, 1925. Tönnies also published Hobbes' works, such as *The Elements of Law* and *Behemoth*, based on the manuscripts. Cf. Tönnies, F., *Thomas Hobbes, der Mann und der Denker*, Stuttgart 1925; "Die Lehre von den Volksversammlungen und die Urversammlung in Hobbes' Leviathan," in *THCA*, III, 494-512.

⁹ The seventeenth-century milieu that generally deemed Hobbes' theory Hobbism is quite intelligible because of the psychology of the turbulent days in his country (Cf. Z. Lubienski, "Hobbes' Philosophy and Its Historical Background," in *THCA*, I, 1). That his ideas continues to be deemed Hobbism by many historians in subsequent centuries has been due both to the force of tradition and to the wide acceptance of John Locke's rival political philosophy (Cf. Richard Tuck, "Hobbes," in *GPT*, 280). David Hume in his *History of England* considers Hobbes' political ideas as nothing other than Hobbism. Hume says: "In our time he [Hobbes] is much neglected...Hobbes' politics are fitted only to promote tyranny, and his ethics to encourage licentiousness..." (Cf. *Ibid.*, 209). David Hume was a supporter of the "Rockingham Whig," a political party in Great Britain (1679-1832) that favoured reforms and parliamentary authority. Rousseau also strongly criticised Hobbes' idea of the natural man as wicked (Cf. Howard R. Cell and James I. MacAdam, *Rousseau's Response to Hobbes* [New York, 1988], 19-45).

human beings. Hobbes does not regard the state of nature as an early historical period from which men later departed. He rather regards it as a concrete factor within society, that is, what man would be in the absence of all the normal associations of political life.¹⁰

Hobbes explicitly states that men are *not* naturally wicked. But they are naturally passionate. In the absence of means of security they are naturally the prey of haunting fears. That passions may make men evil is evident not only in the state of nature, but also can happen in any condition of conflict in which the ruling government is powerless. Sovereignty, thus, is the condition *sine qua non* of peace in political society. Hobbes, therefore, differs entirely from Hobbism, since he is not giving a picture of human nature in its entirety, but is fashioning a concept that is explicitly relative to the central theme of creating a political society.

Hobbes' State of Nature

Hobbes' understanding of the state of nature involves three main ideas: (1) it is the state of *bellum omnium contra omnes*; (2) in such a condition the people share the same *summum malum*, continual fear of violent death, which is considered the most powerful passion; (3) therefore, everyone seeks to preserve his life. These main points of Hobbes' understanding of the state of nature shall be elucidated below.

The State of Bellum Omnium Contra Omnes

The idea that the state of nature is the state of war of all-against-all or, *bellum omnium contra omnes*, does not merely sound extremely unpleasant, but also seems to bode horrible living conditions for the reader. But, I do not hold that Hobbes desires to scare his readers. So, we must examine carefully what Hobbes intended by *bellum omnium contra omnes*.

The state of war of all-against-all is *not* necessarily historical. This state does not assert the first temporal condition of human life before civil society. It describes what the condition of human life would be

¹⁰ A clear idea of man in the state of nature was a prerequisite to any formulation of a philosophical theory at that time. The state of nature, seen as entailing a general state of war, is probably the most widely known of Hobbes' concepts. Cf. François Tricaud, "Hobbes' Conception of the State of Nature from 1640 to 1651: Evolution and Ambiguities," in *PTH*, 107-123.

when there is no government. Macpherson argues that Hobbes' state of nature is a merely hypothetical condition that can lead to the necessary conclusion of the generation of a commonwealth.¹¹ Lubienski contends that it is logical since Hobbes' purpose is to build a new political system. The state of nature does not represent any historical period, but rather describes the logical condition that could become a powerful stimulus for a better new system of political life.¹² Strauss prefers to say that the state of nature is the moral basis of Hobbes' political ideas.¹³ For François Tricaud, the state of nature is nothing other than the main premise of Hobbes' whole ethical and political system.¹⁴

The state of war, for Hobbes, does not mean war in the strict sense as the Balkan war, the Gulf war, war in East Timor or Rwanda and Burundi, or the like.¹⁵ His meaning of war is particular.

WAR consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known...For the nature of war consisteth...in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE.¹⁶

This definition suggests that insofar as there is no assurance of peace, the condition of life is war. So, the primary element of Hobbes' understanding of *bellum omnium contra omnes* does not rest on the fact that the people fight brutally against one another, but rather on the absence of peace. And, the absence of government causes this absence of peace. During the time when people live without "a common power

¹¹ *LMa*, 25-38.

¹² Z. Lubienski, "Hobbes' Philosophy and Its Historical Background," in *THCA*, I, 1-16.

¹³ Cf. *PPHS*, 5-29.

¹⁴ François Tricaud, "Hobbes' Conception of the State of Nature from 1649 to 1651: Evolution and Ambiguities," in *PTH*, 107.

¹⁵ Cf. G. S. Kavka, "Hobbes' War of All against All," in *THCA*, III, 38-58; R. Polin, "La force et son emploi dans la politique de Hobbes," in *Ibid.*, 3-22; H. Bull, "Hobbes and the International Anarchy," in *Ibid.*, 79-96.

¹⁶ L xiii, 8.

to keep them all in awe," they are in the condition of war of "every man against every man"¹⁷ or "war of all against all."¹⁸

In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently, no culture of earth, no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea, no commodious building, no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force, no knowledge of the face of the earth, no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.¹⁹

Therefore, the basic question that we should examine is *how* the people live in the absence of a common power to keep them all in awe, rather than *why* they fight against one another. The distinction between these questions is delicate and important. For, the consequence of each question differs radically. The former question is more neutral than the latter, because the question, why they fight against one another, already presumes the view that the natural man is some kind of a fighter. Paul McNellis, for instance, contends that Hobbes' natural man is a hunter distinguished from Locke's farmer. "Hobbes was too blunt to be entirely accepted. His readers were offended at his claiming that men were naturally at war with one another. It is not the kind of portrait anyone likes to see drawn of oneself. Locke softened the image and gave man in the state of nature a hoe instead of a hatchet."²⁰ In my opinion, Hobbes' position is not as clear as this assertion suggests. Hobbes' natural man is not similar at all to a natural born killer. The natural man is neither a fighter, nor a killer, nor a hunter, because the understanding of war, first of all, alludes to the absence of common power, not to the fact of fighting against one another.

¹⁷ L xiii, 8.

¹⁸ DCv i, 12.

¹⁹ L xiii, 9.

²⁰ Paul W. McNellis, S.J., "Political Philosophy, Christian Ethics, and the Future of Europe," *Informationes Theologiae Europae: Internationales Ökumenisches Jahrbuch für Theologie*, 4 (1995), 347.

The answer to the question, *how* the people live in the absence of government, is that they are governed chiefly by passions, rather than by reason. Hobbes states that there are three main causes of war: competition, diffidence, and glory.²¹ This statement does not mean that the state of nature is like a bloody battle. It simply asserts the fact that people live with their passions which lead them to compete and quarrel with one another and to achieve glory. The life of people, moved by such passions, without a common power to keep them in fear, is miserable or, in Hobbes' expression, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." So, to the question of why life in the state of nature is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short, the answer is not because people are ready and eager to fight against one another, but rather because of the absence of a common power. And, such an absence makes them bow down more to passions, rather than reason. The further question we need to raise is Hobbes' understanding of human passions.

Human Passions

Hobbes' understanding of human passions begins with the "first natural beginnings of human motion."²² Such a motion belongs to sense or perception, by which a person does what is good for himself and avoids what is evil. The first formulation concerning human motion is stated in this proposition, "Man is moved by *appetites* and *aversions*."²³

The small beginnings of motion within the body of man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking, and other visible actions, are commonly called ENDEAVOUR. This endeavour, when it is toward something that causes it, is called APPETITE or DESIRE...And when the endeavour is fromward something, it is generally called AVERSION. These words, *appetite* and *aversion*...signify the motions, one of approaching, the other of retiring.²⁴

²¹ L xiii, 6-7.

²² L i, 1-2.

²³ L vi, 2.

²⁴ L vi, 1-2.

Hobbes' meaning of endeavor is particular. This is not endeavor in the ordinary sense in which one endeavors to eat a mutton chop or read a novel. Endeavor is the fundamental principle of first philosophy (metaphysics). He defines endeavor as "motion made in less space and time than can be given; that is less than can be determined or assigned by exposition or number."²⁵ Endeavor is a motion unobservable and unmeasurable. It is unobservable and unmeasurable, for its movement is too quick to be observed and measured (in space and time). Motion within the body is not caused by itself, but rather by objects from outside. So, by the "small beginnings of motion" Hobbes means the real affects caused by external objects which effect the eyes, ears or other organs of the body, then continue to the heart.²⁶ These real affects, which cannot be determined in number, are endeavor. Endeavor consists of appetites and aversions.

...[Whatsoever] is the object of any man's appetite or desire that is it which he for his part calleth *good*; and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*...²⁷

Hobbes does not say that the object of appetite is what is good, but rather what is *called* good. This statement asserts that the object of appetite and aversion is simply conventional. What a man achieves and avoids is not necessarily good or evil by nature. As "the constitution of the body is in continual mutation,"²⁸ so are appetites and aversions. Appetites and desires continually change and grow. Nobody possesses the same and permanent object of appetites and aversions for the whole time of one's life. Consequently, nobody can get and possess a full and ultimate satisfaction of his desires or appetites.

In line with this constitution of the body, Hobbes defines felicity as continual delight²⁹ or continual success.³⁰ The notion of "success" here seems to be more dynamic than that of "delight." The sense of success suggests and presumes an activity of acquiring or achieving. Success

²⁵ DCr xv, 2.

²⁶ L vi, 9.

²⁷ L vi, 7.

²⁸ L vi, 6.

²⁹ EOL I, vii, 6.

³⁰ L vi, 58.

renders felicity. The following statement brings to light what felicity is all about.

Continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continual prospering, is that men call FELICITY; I mean the felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetual tranquility of mind, while we live here; because life itself is but motion, and can never be without desire, nor without fear, no more than without sense.³¹

Since life is but motion, felicity is “a continual progress of the desire, from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the latter.”³² Since felicity is a continual progress of desire, for Hobbes, there is no definitive happiness as such. In other words, there is no happiness as the complete end or, as Aristotle stated, “the only one that does not refer to any other.”³³ For Aristotle, happiness is the complete end, since it is self-sufficient. A person who gains it lacks nothing, i.e., lacks no reasonable object of desire.³⁴ For Hobbes, in contrast, “there is no *Finis ultimus* (utmost aim) nor *Summum Bonum* (greatest good)...Nor can a man any more live, whose desires are at an end, than he whose senses and imaginations are at a stand [-still].”³⁵ There is no *finis ultimus*, here, does not mean that there is no ultimate end achieved. Certainly, when a person does something, he does it with some end to achieve. Hobbes does not reject that there is such an end. Rather, he spurns the view of Aristotle that happiness is the most definitive end or the *Summum Bonum*. For Hobbes, since desires or appetites never cease, there will never ever be such a happiness as the definitive end, at which a person does not desire anything else.³⁶ Since there is no definitive *finis ultimus*, there is no

³¹ L vi, 58.

³² L xi, 1.

³³ *Ethics*, 1095a18; Cf. 1139b3, 1140a28, 1140b7, etc.

³⁴ *Ethics*, 1097b6, 1134a27, 1160b4, 1169b3-8, etc.

³⁵ L xi, 1. Concerning “the abolition” of the *summum bonum*, see Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago, 1952), 178-184.

³⁶ “But for an *ultimate end*, in which the ancient *philosophers* have placed *felicity*...there is no such thing in the world, nor way to it, more than to Utopia: for while we live, we have desires, and desire presupposeth a further end” (EOL I, vii, 5).

certain way to attain it. End is always in the sense of further end or "always somewhat to come."³⁷ Since there is no ultimate end, there is no difference between end and means. End can be means, and vice versa. An end at which a person aims never becomes a proper end. For, soon after having achieved what he wants, he desires other things. On this striking point Hobbes is radically against Aristotle.

Hobbes calls desire or appetite with a possibility of attainment, "hope," and aversion, with a possibility of hurt from the object, as "fear."³⁸ He would say that hope and fear are included in the first natural beginnings of human motion. Since hope and fear are passions, the object of passions is that which a person desires, hates, fears and hopes.³⁹

Passions are expressed by speech.⁴⁰ The human beings have speech by nature. The origin of speech is God, but speech comes from the fact that men need it as well.⁴¹ Speech is necessary for people to articulate and express their own passions. It is indispensable to communicate what they desire and fear. Hobbes presents the speech of desire and aversion as follows: "The language of desire and aversion is *imperative*, as *do this, forbear that*, which when the party is obliged to do or forbear, is *command*."⁴²

Hobbes proposes that desires and aversions are some kinds of forceful inclinations. They are so forceful and strong that they can "hinder and break our sleep."⁴³ They powerfully urge a person to do what is good for himself and avoid what is evil. He also defines passions as the source of one's actions. Consequently, passions do not merely move a person to act, but also guide him to achieve a certain end. And, since the sense of end does not refer to the definitive one, passions never fail to move him.

Desire for Power

Having examined Hobbes' understanding of passions in general, now we proceed to study carefully man's desire for power, one of the

³⁷ L xv, 19.

³⁸ L vi, 14, 16.

³⁹ L vi, 13; *Introduction*, 3.

⁴⁰ L vi, 55, 56.

⁴¹ L iv, 1.

⁴² L vi, 55.

⁴³ L iii, 4.

most powerful passions. This passion is so powerful, according to Hobbes, because "Man from his very birth scrambles for everything he covets, and would have all the world, if he could, to fear and obey him."⁴⁴ This statement is striking, since desire for power arises from the beginning of human life, out of the depth of man himself. But, this does not show that Hobbes' natural man is some kind of natural born killer. Rather, this indicates how forceful such a passion is.

A person always desires to surpass others. There are two main reasons for this: first, he has by nature unlimited passion for power; second, in the condition without a common power to keep the people in awe, a person is always insecure and uncertain before another's power. Power gives assurance and a guarantee of future security. It is for the benefit of living. In this connection Hobbes argues:

So that, in the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with a moderate power, but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well which he hath present without the acquisition of more.⁴⁵

The important characteristic of power is that it hinders others.⁴⁶ Macpherson contends that, by reason of this characteristic, man's power may be simply defined as the exercise of his will over others'.⁴⁷ For instance, when there are two persons with the equal power who want the same thing, they cannot enjoy what they have. Rather, they fight against one another, because each one of them wants to surpass the other.⁴⁸ This characteristic asserts why in the absence of a common power there is mutual conflict. "For being distracted in opinions concerning the best use and application of their strength, they do not help, but hinder one another, and reduce their strength by mutual opposition..."⁴⁹

⁴⁴ *EW*, vol. VII, 73.

⁴⁵ *L xi*, 2.

⁴⁶ *EOL I*, viii, 4.

⁴⁷ *LMa*, 35.

⁴⁸ *L xiii*, 3.

⁴⁹ *L xvii*, 4.

For Hobbes, power causes honor. Since from birth, one desires power after power, one always wants to be honored. Consequently, honor is nothing other than an acknowledgment of power. For Aristotle, the true value that gives honor is virtue or excellence, rather than power.⁵⁰ To honor others, for him, implies the expression of the attitude in "honors," the awards given to recognize others' excellence.⁵¹ For Hobbes, to honor others means "to acknowledge that he [other person] hath the odds or excess of that power above him with whom he contendeth or compareth himself."⁵² Since a person always values himself higher than others,⁵³ competition and conflict is not unlikely. Every man is for that very reason the enemy of every other man, because each desires to surpass every other and thereby offends every other.⁵⁴

Passion of Vainglory

Aside from desire for power, the human passion that is dominant in the state of nature is that of glory or, better expressed, vainglory. This passion is associated with desire for power. A person desires power, because he wants to gain glory. Hobbes defines glory as the exultation of the mind that arises from imagination of power.⁵⁵

There are three sorts of glory: just glory, false glory and vainglory. Just glory is a glory based on real power or true opinion of the good action that is already done.⁵⁶ False glory is that which "may proceed *not* from any *conscience* of our own actions, but from fame and trust of *others*, whereby one may think well of himself, and yet be deceived."⁵⁷ Vainglory is an imagination of power or great actions. It differs from false glory, since vain-glory is only some kind of a dream of glory. A "false glorious person" is seeking glory with deception, whereas a vain-glorious person is looking for glory in his imagination. Both false and vainglory move a person to action. But, the former prevents him

⁵⁰ *Ethics*, IV, 3-4.

⁵¹ *Ethics*, 1123b1-24; 1124a4-25.

⁵² EOL I, viii, 5.

⁵³ L xviii, 15; Cf. xvii, 8." [To] a man nothing is so pleasant in his own goods as that they are greater than those of others..."

⁵⁴ Cf. *PPHS*, 12.

⁵⁵ L vi, 39.

⁵⁶ EOL I, ix, 1.

⁵⁷ EOL I, ix, 1; Cf. vi, 39.

from doing something he wants because one would not act with a false motivation; the latter, in contrast, urges him powerfully to act simply because of his imagination, regardless of its lack of reality.

Vainglory is forceful but also dangerous, since it provokes a person to destroy others.⁵⁸ It is "the passion whose violence or continuance maketh madness."⁵⁹ Madness means passion to surpass others since one does not want to see others stronger than oneself.⁶⁰ According to Hobbes' view, the motive of this striving is man's wish to take pleasure in himself by imagining his own superiority, his own recognized superiority, i.e., vanity. In this connection, vainglory is associated with men's ceaseless desire for power after power.

Vain-glorious seekers are those who live in the dream-world of their glory. Since it is based on imagining power, this glory is called vain. Vain-glory is also glory which does not have a definitive end. It is limitless in terms of satisfaction. It is vanity in terms of dignity. In the beginning, vainglory coincides with a person's rational characteristic since it is reason, not bodily perception, which can only imagine and dream glory. But, as vainglory is vanity, it is absolutely contrary to reason.⁶¹ Hence, regardless of having the rational characteristic in the beginning, vainglory belongs to a kind of animal characteristics.

Since man is not merely animal but also rational, the passions that move him should be related not only to bodily perception but also reason. Yet, vainglory is far more forceful than bodily perception. Bodily perception moves a person to act impulsively; vainglory urges him to compete with and conquer others.⁶² Whereas bodily perception simply leads him to do what is good or avoid what is evil for himself, vain-glory makes him achieve what is pleasant, because it gives him great pleasure. For a man, imagining or contemplating his own power as if it existed is more striking than just sensing or perceiving something as it is.

That vainglory leads man to conquer and destroy others is understandable, because it is related to anger and careless acts. It brings a person to crime. Crimes can be caused by error, false

⁵⁸ L xiii, 4.

⁵⁹ L viii, 18.

⁶⁰ L viii, 16.

⁶¹ L xv, 19.

⁶² L xiii, 4.

principles or a false interpretation of the laws, or a false reasoning from true principles,⁶³ but the most frequent cause of crime is the passion of vainglory or, in Hobbes' expression, "a foolish overrating of his own worth."⁶⁴

This is the very reason why Hobbes calls *Leviathan* "the King of the Proud" or, in connection with this case, the king of vain-glorious men.⁶⁵ There is nothing on earth to be compared with *Leviathan*. He, *Leviathan*, is made as one to fear; he sees everything as below him, he is king of all the children of pride. Hobbes' metaphor is logical, since if the people are by nature moved strongly by vainglory, the king that governs them should be the one with the greatest power to keep them in awe. And, the king who has such a power is only *Leviathan*, the "mortal God."

Apart from competition and diffidence, vainglory is also the main cause of war.⁶⁶ Each person in the state of nature should fear others who may attack for any of these three reasons. First, "competitors" may attack to remove one as an obstacle to the satisfaction of their insatiable appetites. Second, "moderate" men, who have no desire for power or glory for its own sake and who may have no specific quarrels with any other men because of their moderation in enjoying delight, may, for defensive purposes, engage in anticipatory violence. They are involved in violence for their future safety and assurance. Moderate men may attack to remove others as a potential future threat to themselves.⁶⁷ This causes diffidence among the people. Third, "vainglory seekers" may attack simply because they enjoy their presupposition of conquest. They desire that their dominion over others increase more and more. They are "taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest."⁶⁸ The term "contemplating," here, suggests that they are imagining the conquest over others. Being moved by such a forceful passion, they seek to destroy others. In this circumstance, eventual involvement in violent conflict is unavoidable.

⁶³ L xxvii, 10-12.

⁶⁴ L xxvii, 13.

⁶⁵ L xxviii, 27.

⁶⁶ L xiii, 6-7.

⁶⁷ L xi, 2.

⁶⁸ L xiii, 4.

Since human passions lead to destructive actions, how the people behave and live in the state of nature can already be foreseen. And, thus, from this striking account of natural human passions Hobbes declares the state of nature as the state of *bellum omnium contra omnes*.

By demonstrating how people live in the state of nature, Hobbes rejects the idealistic tradition. He means to do adequately what the tradition did in a wholly inadequate manner. He means to succeed where the tradition had failed. He traces the failure of the idealistic tradition to one fundamental mistake: traditional political philosophy assumed that man is by nature a political or social animal.⁶⁹ Hobbes, in contrast, declares that man by nature does not fit into civil society.⁷⁰ Since man is not by nature political, for Hobbes, society is merely a conventional being. Strauss contends that Hobbes' view of human nature, as described above, has its origin not so much in any learned or scientific preoccupation, but in actual experience.⁷¹ His intention is not only to expound his view of human life as the expression of his own experience, but above all, to justify this view as the only and universally valid view.

Share of the Summum Malum

In the time of the absence of a common power the people share the same *summum malum*, that is, the passion of continual fear of violent death. Hobbes says that "during the time men live without a common power...there is no place for industry...no culture...and, *which is worst of all*, continual fear and danger of violent death..."⁷² As we have seen above, fear is a forceful human passion. Hobbes has a particular understanding of the word "fear." Not every fear justifies actions, but

⁶⁹ Leo Strauss contends that by rejecting the traditional assumption, Hobbes joins the Epicurian tradition. He accepts its view that man is by nature or originally an a-political and even an a-social animal, as well as its premise that the good is fundamentally identical with the pleasant. But he uses an a-political view for a political purpose. He gives that a-political view a political meaning. He tries to instill the spirit of political idealism into the hedonistic tradition. In my opinion, Hobbes may be similar to the Epicurian, but to group him with the Epicurian tradition is less plausible. Cf. *NRH*, 169.

⁷⁰ *DCv* i, 2.

⁷¹ *PPHS*, x.

⁷² L xiii, 9. My emphasis.

the fear of every other man as a potential murderer does. In other words, only fear of "bodily hurt" can excuse man's crime.⁷³

In itself, fear is something to be rejected and avoided. But, fear also urges certain actions for the safety of life. Fear makes one endeavor to procure security for the future. It urges one to do something necessary in this life. In this connection, since in the state of *bellum omnium contra omnes* the lives of the people are always in danger, it is only through fear that they can manage and order their lives.

The most terrible fear is not that of physical hurt or oppression,⁷⁴ but rather that of violent death.⁷⁵ Consequently, continual fear of violent death becomes the greatest evil or, the *summum malum*, that everyone should avoid. And, since in the condition of *bellum omnium contra omnes* people live with the primacy of passions, fear of violent death is the primary and most common human motivation, though a negative motivation. It is striking that Hobbes prefers a negative motivation. It is negative because the people are motivated to act not by what they should achieve, but by what they should avoid. One may ask why Hobbes favors such a negative motivation. The following short account of the argument attempts to explain the reasons.

Firstly, as "the greatest of natural evils is death,"⁷⁶ death is the negation of the greatest or primary good. Yet, in this world, there is no "greatest good" or *summum bonum* as such.⁷⁷ Thus, the only absolute standard of reference to which the people can coherently order their lives is death. Only through death do human beings have a moving motivation and aim, because only through death do they have one compelling aim – the aim which is forced upon them at the sight of death – the aim to avoid death. But, death itself is not the greatest and supreme evil. Normal death does not horrify and is not painful; it is unavoidable. An abusive death or a violent death, i.e., a death marked by furious physical abuse, is the worst of all. Violent death is horrifying, painful, and terrible. Therefore, avoiding continual fear of such a death becomes the most forceful driving motivation in the state of nature. Furthermore, since the "passions of men are in themselves no sin" (L xiii, 10), being moved by the most

⁷³ L xxvii, 20.

⁷⁴ L xi, 9.

⁷⁵ L xiii, 9.

⁷⁶ DCv i, 7.

⁷⁷ L xi, 1.

powerful passion of the fear of violent death, man is naturally innocent. In the state of nature, where human life is always at stake and endangered continuously by violence, man is not evil, but innocent.

Secondly, Hobbes favors negative motivation because continual fear of violent death is the antithesis of vain-glory that strongly urges men to surpass others. It is the antithesis of vain-glory, for vain-glorious people can be awakened from their dream-world only by fear of violent death. Only through knowledge of mortal danger can they be radically liberated from the natural vainglory by which they take pleasure in their vanity. Whereas vain-glory moves a man to conquer others, fear of violent death motivates him to desire peace.⁷⁸ The former brings him to carelessness, anger and crime,⁷⁹ while the latter leads him to virtue. Therefore, to some extents, virtues originate from fear of violent death because the desire for peace is a virtuous and just intention. What one does from fear of violent death, being conscious of one's weaknesses when confronted with other men as their possible future murderers, is fundamentally just. As what comes from it is just, fear of violent death can be identified with conscience as well.⁸⁰ Furthermore, whereas vain-glory is only vanity, fear of violent death is real knowledge grounded on concrete experience. Vain-glory causes an irrational madness, while fear of violent death brings about reason. If this is the case, fear of violent death is not only the necessary motivation of self-preservation, but also the necessary condition of morality. This fear of a violent death, thus, is the root of all political society. As such, continual fear of violent death can be considered as the sufficient motive for all right behavior, and as the sufficient motive for the founding of the political state. The necessary and main duty of a political government is to give security from this fear of violent death. Hobbes denies all moral principles of politics that do not contribute to consolidating peace or to protecting men against the danger of violent death.

This is the main argument by which Hobbes sets up a position against the opinion of Aristotle. In Aristotle, the end of the city is to

⁷⁸ "They will neither give mutual help nor desire peace, except they be constrained to it by some common fear [fear of violent death]" (DCv v, 4).

⁷⁹ L xxvii, 17; xxvii, 13.

⁸⁰ Cf. DCv iii, 27; L vii, 4.

aim for and embrace the good life that consists in noble action – the kind of activity that is worthwhile in itself.⁸¹ In Hobbes the end of the commonwealth is to gain security that consists, first of all, in avoiding the worst evil, i.e., the continual fear of violent death. Here, Hobbes may be utilitarian since the value of political society is reduced to its utility in avoiding the most terrible danger. But, it is logical that morality and political society find their origin ultimately in the fear of violent death. In addition, fear of violent death is necessary to overcome vain-glory as the main root of all crimes.

Aristotle's moral principle of politics starts from the end (*telos*), i.e., the highest good that the people must achieve, whereas Hobbes' moral principle of politics starts from the beginning, the lowest or first natural passion i.e., the continual fear of violent death that one must reject. Contending that people may not have the same *telos*, the starting point of Hobbes' politics is plausible because in the state of nature they share the same natural passion, i.e., the continual fear of violent death. Since fear of violent death becomes the passion that leads them to achieve peace, it takes the place of the laws of nature that, in the condition of war, are not operative.⁸² Fear of violent death becomes the rational motivation to achieve peace, as the laws of nature are the "convenient articles of peace."⁸³

The Right of Self-preservation

In the state of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, people possess the right of nature or *jus naturale*. Hobbes defines the natural right as the liberty to use power according to his own judgment and reason for the preservation of life.⁸⁴ In sum, *jus naturale* is the right of self-preservation. He presents it as a consequence of the state of nature. Strauss contends that to understand the natural right doctrine, one must start not from the "scientific" understanding of political things but from the "natural" idea of political life.⁸⁵ Hobbes' natural idea of political life, as we see, refers to the bare state of life or the state of nature.

⁸¹ *Pol*, 1252a1-2; 1252b30.

⁸² DCv v, 2.

⁸³ L xiii, 14.

⁸⁴ L xiv, 1.

⁸⁵ *NRH*, 81.

And because the condition of man (as hath been declared in the precedent chapter [chapter xiii]) is a condition of war of everyone against everyone (in which case everyone is governed by his own reason and there is nothing he can make use of that may not be a help unto him in preserving his life against enemies)...it followeth that in such a condition every man has *a right to everything, even to one another's body*.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, Hobbes, in other passages, sometimes mentions natural right as a cause rather than a consequence of the state of war.⁸⁷ Concerning this formulation, which is apparently inconsistent, I would argue that Hobbes' statements are not problematic. The right of nature as a cause is not contrary to a consequence. The context of this right as a cause of the state of war is the generation of a commonwealth. And, such a right in this context does not refer to self-preservation, but rather a "right to all things." Before the commonwealth, people live in the condition of war. In such a condition, the right to all things can be at the same time the cause of war.

In my opinion, the right of self-preservation as a consequence of the natural condition of life is more plausible. This right as a cause of war seems to be problematic. If it were so, such a right would be transferred totally in the covenant for generating a commonwealth. In fact, according to Hobbes, the right of self-preservation still remains, since it can never be transferred.

Nonetheless, the term "consequence" here does not allude merely to the fact that the right of self-preservation is by some means granted to enable people to survive in the bare state of life. Rather, Hobbes wants to set up the right of self-preservation as originating and deriving from nature. Such a right originates from nature, since it is the ground of all other human rights. The ground of rights must be discovered in natural life, not the conventional life. In order to arrive at a clear distinction between the natural and the conventional, we have to go back to the period, in the life of the individual or of the race,

⁸⁶ L xiv, 4.

⁸⁷ "For before constitution of sovereign power...all men had right to all things, which necessarily causeth war" (L xviii, 10).

which antedates convention. We have to go back to the origins. With a view to the connection between right and civil society, the question of the origin of right transforms itself into the question of the origin of civil society or of society in general. This does not only mean that Hobbes wants to construct the ground of human rights as universal and independent from any temporal context of life, but that the universality of the right of self-preservation exists already from the beginning of human life. Strauss argues that "The discovery of nature is identical with the actualization of a human possibility which is trans-historical, trans-social, trans-moral, and trans-religious."⁸⁸ So, the universality of the idea of rights, grounded on nature, is valid and solid.

"If nature has made men equal, this equal right of self-preservation is to be acknowledged."⁸⁹ Natural equality is the origin of the same right of self-preservation for all the people.⁹⁰ What is the meaning of natural equality? Aristotle acknowledges the natural equality of the citizens, but not of all people who live in the city. A slave, for instance, is for him a "living tool" or "instrument" without which there would be no leisure for the activities that really make life worthwhile.⁹¹ Unlike citizens, slaves and women lack authority. Hobbes, on the contrary, declares the equality by nature for all of the people.⁹² By such a declaration, he means that such equality of the people is not only valid from the beginning of human life, but is also well grounded in nature.⁹³

Philosophical Position

Hobbes' philosophical background is grounded in the medieval tradition, yet he is also often viewed as one of the pioneers of the modern political philosophy. He remains attached to the medieval tradition in his belief that there is a harmony between natural reason and

⁸⁸ *NRH*, 89.

⁸⁹ *L xv*, 21.

⁹⁰ This statement also indicates that the right of self-preservation is the sign of the natural equality of humankind. See also *PTPI*, 74-77.

⁹¹ *Pol*, 1253b23-33.

⁹² *Pol*, 1260a10-14.

⁹³ Cf. M. A. Bertman, "Equality in Hobbes, with Reference to Aristotle," in *THCA*, III, 221-230; G. B. Herbert, "Thomas Hobbes' Counterfeit Equality," in *Ibid.*, 205-220; F. Tricaud, "La question de l'égalité dans le 'Leviathan'," in *Ibid.*, 231-239.

revelation.⁹⁴ He is in the mainstream of the medieval tradition also in distinguishing between natural and divine law on the one hand, and human law on the other. Such an understanding is connected with the idea of human nature. Like the medieval philosophers, he regards natural law as consisting of universal precepts discovered by natural reason. But, he also breaks radically with this tradition in his conception of the content of natural and divine law, and in his distinction between law and right.⁹⁵ Furthermore, Hobbes differs from the traditional position, to some extent, in his view of the relationship of human law to natural and divine law.⁹⁶ He is in agreement with the tradition,

⁹⁴ The third and fourth parts of *Leviathan*, which discuss the Christian commonwealth and the kingdom of darkness, indicate clearly Hobbes' belief that there is a necessary connection between philosophy and Christian faith. F.C. Hood argues: "The argument from Scripture is an essential part of the design of *Leviathan*. Hobbes professed to accord to Scripture, and only to Scripture, unquestionable authority over his mind. Hobbes' conception of religion was thoroughly political; but he was here adhering, not to a pagan secularization of religion, but to a Christian sanctification of politics." F.C. Hood, *The Divine Politics of Thomas Hobbes. An Interpretation of Leviathan* (Oxford, 1964), 1.

⁹⁵ Cf. L xiv, 1, 3, etc.

⁹⁶ Cf. *ST*, I-II, 90-97. It will be helpful to summarise briefly the salient features of medieval tradition. This can be conveniently done by taking the philosophy of law, as exemplified in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas defines "law" as "an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated. He distinguishes four types of law: eternal, natural, divine, and human. Eternal law consists in the government of "the whole community of the universe" by the divine reason of God the ruler of the universe. Natural law is "the rational creature's participation of the eternal law" by means of "the light of natural reason." Divine law is eternal law as revealed by God to man by means of special divine revelation. Human law is a human ordinance of reason for the common good, made and promulgated by him who has care of the community. Not only does Aquinas maintain that human ordinances, to have the status of law, must be compatible with natural and divine law, he also holds that they must be derived from natural law. This derivation can be done in either of two ways: "as a conclusion from premises" or else "by way of determination of certain generalities" (See Daniel A. Degnan, S.J., "Two Models of Positive Law in Aquinas: A Study of the Relationship of Positive Law and Natural Law," *Thomist*, 46 [1982], 1-32). Human ordinances which violate divine law ought never to be obeyed. Since for medieval man the detailed content of divine law is determined by the Church through its expounding the implications of the content of the Old and New Testaments, this means that human ordinances judged by authorities of the Church to be incompatible with divine law ought never to be obeyed (Cf. Arno Anzenbacher, "Der Konflikt zwischen Gesetz und Gewissen bei Thomas von

stemming from Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, that the goals and character of moral and political life should be determined by reference to nature, especially human nature.

The state of nature as the main premise of the whole ethical and political system is obligatory for the authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries writing on similar topics.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, Hobbes determines the way in which nature sets the standards for politics very differently than do classical or medieval philosophers. He denies that man is naturally social and political as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas teach. The grounds of this denial are made evident by Hobbes' theory of the state of nature, the pre-political condition in which men live without civil government or without a common power over them to keep them in fear. For him, men are not by nature social and political.⁹⁸

Leo Strauss contends that "While modern thought starts from the rights of the individual, and conceives the State as existing to secure the conditions of his development, Greek thought starts from the right of the State."⁹⁹ Modern and classical political philosophy are fundamentally distinguished in that modern political philosophy takes "right" as its starting-point, whereas classical political philosophy had "law." There is no doubt, in my mind, that Hobbes is the father of modern political philosophy; it is Hobbes who makes the "right of nature" the basis of political philosophy. He himself is aware that the precise subordination of law to right – that even a clear and consistent distinction between them – is an innovation. He says: "though they that speak of this subject, use to confound *jus* and *lex*, right and law; yet they ought to be distinguished; because right, consisteth in liberty to do, or to forbear; whereas law, determineth, and bindeth to one of them: so that law, and right, differ as much as obligation, and Liberty."¹⁰⁰

Aquin," in *Lex et Libertas*, ed. L. J. Elders S.V.D – K. Hedwig [Città del Vaticano, 1987], 147-159).

⁹⁷ Cf. François Tricaud, "Hobbes' Conception of the State of Nature from 1640 to 1651: Evolution and Ambiguities," in *PTH*, 107.

⁹⁸ Cf. L. xiii; DCv, ii.

⁹⁹ *PPHS*, 154-155.

¹⁰⁰ L. xiv, 3. Hugo Grotius, as a successor of the Roman jurist, according to Strauss, was indeed on the way to Hobbes' concept of right. But that Grotius did not reach it is shown by the fact that *ius proprie aut stricte dictum*, as he understood it, presupposes *lex*. As Hobbes is the first to distinguish with incomparable clarity between "right" and "law" in such a way that he seeks to prove the State as

Hobbes' break with tradition was decisively prepared by Machiavelli. The classical philosophers failed, according to Machiavelli, because they aimed too high. They based their political doctrines on considerations of man's highest aspirations, the life of virtue and the society dedicated to the promotion of virtue. Machiavelli's "realism" consisted in a conscious lowering of the standards of political life, taking as goals of political life not the perfection of man but those lower goals actually pursued by most men and most societies most of the time.¹⁰¹ Political schemes framed in accordance with men's lower but more powerful motives are much more likely to be realised than the utopias of the classical philosophers.

Unlike Machiavelli, Hobbes elaborates the natural law as a morally binding law, determining the purposes of civil society. But, following Machiavelli's "realism," he separates his doctrine of the natural law from the idea of the perfection of man. He attempts to deduce the natural law from what is most powerful in most men, most of the time: not reason, but *passion*. Because of what he regards as his discovery of the true roots of human behaviour and the knowledge of human nature, Hobbes believes that he succeeds where all others failed, that he is the first true political philosopher.

A Challenge

Thomas Hobbes does not portray anthropologically human nature in a comprehensive way. Yet, he has been considered as a philosopher who successfully articulated the nature of human being as the very basis of political society. From Hobbes we learn that human beings, by nature, are born free and equal. They are free since the state of nature presumes a condition of which every person should be entitled with freedom. They are equal, as they share the same danger which should be avoided by every person, that is violent death.

Hobbesian language looks too blunt to understand human nature. And, yet from such a language we learn that human being is

primarily founded on "right," of which "law" is a mere consequence, he is the father of the modern political philosophy. Or, in other words, because Hobbes' political philosophy is based on assumptions representing an extreme form of individualism – an individualism more uncompromising than even that of John Locke himself, Hobbes is for that very reason the founder of modern political philosophy (see *PPHS*, 155).

¹⁰¹ Cf. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, xv.

individual in the sense that he or she is the master of his/her life or preservation of life. Modern political democracy that brings issues of human rights or natural rights, individual liberty, democracy (in the sense that power originates from individuals) or even capitalism (when capitalism is understood as freedom to gain capital) comes from such a philosophical understanding.

Hobbes does not suggest only the fine things in his understanding of human nature. He also mentions some natural behaviours that can turn human life to misery, such as the passion of vainglory, the passion for power, the desire for honor and wealth, the desire to compete and dominate, and the like. These behaviours might not fit human nature especially when discussed in light of Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy. Yet, when we look at the fact that some people are so ambitiously fighting one another (for example, we Indonesians have been experiencing miserable conflicts because of various issues), we cannot state that the Hobbesian account of human nature is merely false theory. Colonization, invasion, slavery are evil behaviours originating from such a theory of humankind taken for granted in a wider sense and context.

What can be regarded as the limit of Hobbesian philosophy of human nature is the sense of transcendence as a part of being human. Human being concretely presumes some account of transcendental being. By being "transcendental" I mean that the human being cannot merely be reduced to philosophical presuppositions of politics, as Hobbes seems to have done. The transcendental being of humankind is beyond what we may define as passions, desires, and behaviours.

Besides, there is no sense of spiritual being in Hobbes' philosophical understanding of human nature. He seems to limit the nature of the human being to a material point of view. The crucial consequence of such a limitation is that a real sense of history is unlikely and, even, impossible for the human being. The historical aspect of human nature with his/her dynamic complex is something indispensable; persons cannot be deprived of their historical existence.

Can we say something about Hobbes relating to Charles Taylor whose philosophy we have been studying in this Fall Seminar 2009 on the sacred and secular? Charles Taylor in his *A Secular Age* mentions

Hobbes in some places. When Taylor traces historical-phenomenologically human behaviours in part I (especially in “The Rise of Disciplinary Society”), he also deals with Hobbesian vainglory which is still actual in the contemporary situation of human being). In his account of the “Age of Authenticity” (part IV) Taylor’s discourse focuses on understanding human nature with reference, in part, to Hobbes’ anthropology.

Thomas Hobbes together with Machiavelli and John Locke, belong to the “spring time” of a civilization in which political philosophy of the modern tradition of the West was about to take its shape. Leo Strauss has often mentioned that socio-politics of the Western world inherits Thomas Hobbes’ philosophy. Charles Taylor, one of our contemporary philosophers, is living in the Western society of which the idea of modern culture has been said to be in its “winter time.” Spring symbolizes the beginning or bright start, whereas winter indicates decline.

Hobbes’ context of philosophy was religious. He lived in an Anglican *ambiente* of England, in which religion was axiomatic. However, Hobbes’ philosophy has been viewed as beyond the religious atmosphere of his contemporary society. Again, by saying this I would not want to claim Hobbes’ philosophical ideas as secular. This needs to be looked at more thoroughly. Yet, when it was said, in 1710, that the Englishman Thomas m should be considered as the first scholar who foretold that belief in God would disappear,¹⁰²Hobbes must be considered the first philosopher whose anthropological idea of human nature brought us into the crisis of belief in God.

Charles Taylor, a Catholic, breathes the air of the Western atmosphere in which religion is no longer axiomatic, but an alternative or choice. Religious society, for Hobbes was evident, whereas, for Taylor, religion is challenged and often gradually turned into the secular. Everybody was religious in Hobbes’ time. In Taylor’s period being religious is an option. Whereas there was no such distinction between public and private space in terms of the religious sphere in Hobbes’ socio-political context, there is a division of private and public realms in terms of religious affairs in the contemporary period of Taylor.

¹⁰² Cf. José Casanova, “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective,” in *Hedgehog Review*, Vol. VIII (2006), 1-22.

The society of 1500 in Europe can be perceived as singular, while that of 2000 in Western society is now sociologically plural. By "singular" I mean that there was no separation between Church and state; and "plural" here does not merely mean that there is separation between religious authority and state; it also indicates a complex reality that has various cultural as well as religious values blended together shaping and reshaping contemporary society in the West.

Differing from Aristotle who conceived the nature of the human being from reason, Hobbes starts with passion. Instead of a social/political animal, as we see in Aristotle, for Hobbes, human nature is at first a "solitary animal." Hobbes' philosophical methodology was related to that of Machiavelian realism¹⁰³ with some shifts in terms of understanding the state of nature. He went deeply through the reality and experience of human life portrayed in civil conflict rather than civil society. Human nature is to be found in the very real conditions in which people lived in the absence of political authorities. Such a condition is hypothetically called "the state of nature."

Charles Taylor's methodology is historical phenomenological. His philosophical project is to examine the lived experience of human beings in the secular world. As Robert Bellah mentions, Taylor's book *A Secular Age* achieves something quite different from what other writers on secularization have accomplished. "Most have focused on decline as the essence of secularism – either the removal of religion from sphere after sphere of public life, or the decrease of religious belief and practice. But, Taylor focuses on what kind of religion makes sense in a secular age."¹⁰⁴ In Taylor, "secularization" is part of "the continuation of a moral narrative" that has been long present in Christianity. Thus, he sees the emergence of the secular age as a historical narrative rather than a theoretical discovery. By saying this Taylor is narrating human beings in their lived experience of the secular age, not theorizing on secularity. The method used by Taylor is then that of an historical-phenomenological narrative. He is not offering a scientific-positivistic hypothesis, but rather inviting us to a phenomenological-philosophical conversation on human beings in a

¹⁰³ The Machiavellian realism is clearly indicated in *Il Principe*, Chapter XV.

¹⁰⁴ Robert N. Bellah, "The Rule of Engagement: Communion in Scientific Age," in *Commonweal* (September 12, 2008).

secular age. And in such a “conversation,” or better expressed, “phenomenological narrative,” we can grasp a sense of human nature.

Thomas Hobbes for his part theorizes hypothetically on the anthropological idea of human nature. He discovers human nature as the very basis of political society in such a way that the creation of a strong and invincible *Leviathan* (government) can be possible. We “need” *Leviathan* in order to avoid the miserable condition of human life produced by *bellum omnium contra omnes*, but we should also work hard to continue to develop the transcendental aspect of being human by which historical-phenomenological human lives can be dynamically explored.

Abbreviations

DCv *De Cive* (1642). The English translation appears under the title *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society* (1651). Quotations are from *The English Works*, II, ed. W. Molesworth (1839).

DCr *De Corpore*, the first section of *The Elements of Philosophy* (1651). Quotations are from *The English Works*, I, ed. W. Molesworth (1839).

DCrP *De Corpore Politico* or *On the Body Politic* (1650). Quotations are from the texts edited by J.C.A. Gaskin (1994).

DH *De Homine* (1658). Quotations are from the text edited by W. Molesworth (1839)

EOL *The Elements of Law* (1650). This work consists of two parts, the first *Human Nature* (HN), and the second *De Corpore Politico* (DCrP) or *Body Politic* (The book cited here is from the edition with modernised spelling edited by J.C.A. Gaskin under the title *Thomas Hobbes The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, Oxford 1994).

Ethics Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by T. Irwin, Indianapolis 1985.

EW *The English Works* of Thomas Hobbes, I-XI, collected and edited by W. Molesworth, London 1839, 1841.

GPT K. Thomas, ed., *Great Political Thinkers*, Oxford 1992.

HN *Human Nature* (1650). Quotations are from *Thomas Hobbes: The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, edited by J.C.A. Gaskin (1994).

HJ *The Historical Journal*.

HPP L. Strauss – J. Cropsey, ed., *History of Political Philosophy*, Chicago 1963, 1987³.

JHI *Journal of the History of Ideas*.

L *Leviathan* or *The Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* (1651). Quotations are from *Thomas Hobbes Leviathan*, ed. E. Curley (1994).

LevCon G.A.J. Rogers, ed., *Leviathan. Contemporary Responses to the Political Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, Bristol 1995.

LMa *Leviathan* edited by C.B. Macpherson under the title, *Thomas Hobbes Leviathan*, London 1968.

LMO *Leviathan* edited by W. Molesworth in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, III, London 1839, 1841.

LO *Leviathan* edited by M. Oakeshott under the title, *Thomas Hobbes Leviathan*, Oxford 1946.

LT *Leviathan* edited by R. Tuck under the title, *Hobbes Leviathan. Cambridge Text in the History of Political Thought*, Cambridge 1991, 1994.

NRH L. Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, Chicago 1965.

NRT R. Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories*, Cambridge 1979.

OL *Opera Latina* of Thomas Hobbes, I-V, collected and edited by W. Molesworth, London 1839, 1841.

Pol Aristotle, *Politics* translated by E. BARKER, revised by R.F. Stalley, Oxford 1995.

PPHS L. Strauss, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes. Its Basis and Its Genesis*, Chicago & London, 1952, 1973³.

PPHW H. Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes. His Theory of Obligation*, Oxford 1957.

PTH G.A.J. Rogers – A. Ryan, ed., *Perspective on Thomas Hobbes*, Oxford 1990.

ST T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. English translation, Introduction, Notes, Appendices & Glossary by Thomas Gilby O.P., London 1966.

THCA P. King, ed., *Thomas Hobbes Critical Assessments*, I-IV, London 1993.

Martin Buber on the Sacred and the Secular

PETER M. COLLINS

Introduction

The title “The Sacred and the Secular: Complementary or Conflictual in Global Times?” suggests the purpose: “to discover and forge a positive interrelation of the sacred and the secular in response to the challenges of our global times.” More specifically, it is intended to explore “how the secular does not entail a closed secularism, but is a legitimate – indeed essential – attention to proper human concerns, and how the sacred with its absolute attention to Truth and Goodness opens, rather than closes, minds and hearts to the concerns of all peoples.” In other words, the search is focused upon “the proper and complementary relation between the sacred and the secular so that both can be promoted through mutual collaboration.”¹

The presumption here is that there is a radical and meaningful distinction between “secular” and “secularism.” Martin Buber concurs: The secular refers to the world created by God; whereas secularism rules out the Creator, and that for Buber is untenable. Since both God and the world exist, their interrelationship becomes paramount in Buber’s life and work. Furthermore, his life and work are never far apart: his “work is less concerned with defining theoretical concepts [which however he does not neglect] than with pointing to an image of man, a way of life.”² In this same regard, he is noted for having *lived* the kind of life recommended in his writings. According to Friedman, Buber’s “influence as a person...has been almost as great as the influence of his thought. It is this integral

¹ Citations are taken from the announcement of the 2008 Seminar on “The Sacred and the Secular: Complementary or Conflictual in Global Times?” provided by Rev. George F. McLean, November 7, 2007.

² Maurice Friedman, “Editor’s Introduction,” Martin Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, ed. and trans. by Maurice Friedman (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, an imprint of Prometheus Books, 1988 [1960]), 1.

combination of greatness as a person and as a thinker which makes Buber one of the rare personalities of our time.”³

Martin Buber was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1878 and died in Jerusalem in 1965. I wish to explore his analysis of the sacred and the secular, and their interrelationship within two major dimensions of his thought: his interpretation of the Jewish Hasidic movement and his philosophy of dialogue. The former is a religious movement within Eastern European Jewry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, founded by Israel ben Eliezer, the Good Master of the Name of God (Baal-Shem-Tov). The latter is a philosophy of the “between,” based upon the distinction evident in what Buber calls I – It and I – Thou relationships. Employing largely primary sources, I intend to examine the following thesis, namely, that in his writings, especially concerning Hasidism and dialogue, Buber developed a positive interrelation between the sacred and the secular in response to the challenges of his times – which also might assist us in forging a similar kind of relationship between God and the world, the absolute and the relative, in response to the challenges of our own global environment.

Why was so much of Buber’s attention throughout his long life focused upon this topic? Obviously, his eventual belief in God is fundamental, but so is his personal, spiritual development within Judaism, as well as the challenges of the external world in which he lived. Concerning his personal “World of Confusion,” in which he found himself in 1918 (at the age of forty), he says, “Here I lived in variegated richness of spirit, but without Judaism, without humanity, and without the presence of the divine.” As a result of this “outer dispersion” and “inner turmoil,” Buber later came to realize that “creativity” is a morally neutral ability and passion that can become an expression of fragmentation rather than of the wholeness of personhood if it remains groundless and without direction.⁴

Concerning the external world in which he lived, Buber confronted circumstances similar to those in his personal life of 1918: the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany between two world wars. While events of these years were catastrophic, the prevalent denial of, and

³ Maurice Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, Publishers, 1960 [1955]), 5.

⁴ Maurice Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge: a Life of Martin Buber* (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 20. Buber citations quoted from secondary sources will be indicated throughout with single quotation marks within double, as here.

indifference to, religious faith in the world wore so heavily upon Buber that they provoked a lifelong response following his experience of “summons and sending,” “revelation and mission.” This experience occurred in the first decade of the twentieth century when he read *The Testament of Rabbi Israel Baal-Shem*, a collection of sayings attributed to Israel ben Eliezer.⁵ This represented to Buber a call to Hasidism enroute to the development of his dialogical philosophy in which God is the Eternal Thou. The extant world Buber portrays is a reflection of the direct claims of atheism fostered by Sartre,⁶ the lack of recognition of, and indifference to, God proposed by Jung,⁷ the Communism of Marx⁸ and the nihilism of Nietzsche.⁹ As a consequence, he says, “the image-making power of the human heart has been in decline so that the spiritual pupil can no longer catch a glimpse of the appearance of the absolute. False absolutes rule over the soul, which is no longer able to put them to flight through the image of the true.”¹⁰

In terms of the I – It (objectifying) relationship and the I – Thou (genuinely dialogical) relationship, Buber observes that

In our age the I – It relation, gigantically swollen, has usurped, practically uncontested, the mastery and the rule. The I of this relation, an I that possesses all, makes all, succeeds with all, this I that is unable to say Thou, unable to meet a being essentially, is the lord of the hour. This selfhood that has become omnipotent, with all the It around it, can naturally acknowledge neither God nor any genuine absolute which manifests itself to men as of non-human origin. It steps in between and shuts off from us the light of heaven.¹¹

⁵ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁶ Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation between Philosophy and Religion* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, Publishers, 1952), 66-67.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 109-11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

A critical feature of this “eclipse of God” is the obscuring of morality: “Nietzsche knew,” Buber says, “so basically as not many modern thinkers before him, that the absoluteness of ethical values is rooted in our relationship to the Absolute.”¹²

How does Buber respond to this kind of milieu? As noted, he addresses it with his whole life – literally, in his writings and extensive educational efforts. I will cite a few direct comments from the *Eclipse of God*, and then note his personal immersion in Hasidism and philosophy of dialogue as counter-measures. Against Sartrean atheism Buber is blunt: “We undoubtedly have here before us [in Sartre] an atheism which is basically different from any materialistic one. That it follows, however, from an existential conception of the world, that is, from one that proceeds from the reality of human existence, cannot be substantiated.”¹³ Sartre faces the silence of God, Buber claims, because he identifies *all* relationships between two beings with the subject – object (I – It) relation.¹⁴ However, “God can never become an object for me; I can attain no other relation to Him than that of the I to its eternal Thou....”¹⁵ Therefore, the personal God of Judaism necessarily remains a total stranger to Sartre. Being “religious” means “the relation of the human person to the Absolute” in which the former “enters and remains in this relation as a whole being.”¹⁶

Furthermore, this Absolute, as noted in connection with Nietzsche, is essential to morality: “One can believe in and accept a meaning or value, one can set it as a guiding light over one’s life if one has *discovered* it, not if one has invented it” [emphasis added]. This discovery is made, according to Buber, only in the meeting with Being.¹⁷ Comparing Plato and Nietzsche in this context, Buber is clear: “...in contradistinction to the doctrine of Ideas [of Plato], the ‘teaching of the Superman’ [of Nietzsche] is no teaching at all and...in contradistinction to the value-scale defined by the idea of the Good, the value-scale strong-weak is no value-scale at all.”¹⁸ Due to human

¹² *Ibid.*, 110.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

need, the denial of *the* Absolute (God), Buber says, leads to the acceptance of false absolutes. The failure to accept the absolute reality itself results in the *creation* of pseudo-absolutes. The path to God must lie in the education of human beings to recognize the distinction between the relative and the absolute. Then the education must continue: "To penetrate again and again into the false absolute with an incorruptible, probing glance until one has discovered its limits, its limitedness – there is today no other way to reawaken the power of the pupil to glimpse the never-vanishing appearance of the Absolute."¹⁹

These comments from the *Eclipse of God*, in which Buber addresses the religious malaise of his time, were preceded in his own life by a personal path to God through Hasidism and his dialogical philosophy. In these two intimately related dimensions of his thought, we find the core of his theoretical and practical concern for the sacred and the secular, God and the world. In his interpretation of Hasidism, Buber tends to be generally descriptive of human living in a manner uniting the sacred and the secular, whereas, in his philosophy of dialogue, he provides details of *how* one ought to live out a union of God and the world, namely, through I – Thou relationships. Any doubt concerning the potential effectiveness of the union of the sacred and the secular (from Buber's perspective) in securing world peace will tend to vanish by considering the practical implementation of I – Thou relationships in the world – toward meeting God, the Supreme Thou.

Interpretation of Hasidism

According to Friedman, Buber spent a lifetime "convinced that Hasidism, more than any other teaching, has the power to remind modern man of what he is in danger of forgetting – 'for what purpose we are on earth.'"²⁰ Among Buber's combatants are the Gnostics, who claim to possess "a secret knowledge that delivers the man who knows from a dark and evil world...a knowledge which is itself salvation for the knower." In its stead Buber proposes "holy insecurity," the key to which is "the 'ever-anew' of each situation as opposed to the 'nice-for-all' with which man tries to abstract himself

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

²⁰ Friedman, "Editor's Introduction," *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, 2.

from the concrete.”²¹ For Buber, any possibility of meeting God requires the “lived concrete” and an openness to its persistent uniqueness; meeting God requires enduring the contradictions of life and redeeming them.²²

This redemption of evil is another essential element required in appreciating Buber’s interpretation of Hasidism. Redemption does not occur in the individual soul and withdrawal from the world. Rather, it occurs “in the world through the real meeting of God and man.” Friedman goes on in interpreting Buber: “Everything [literally] is waiting to be hallowed [made holy] by man, for there is nothing so crass or base that it cannot become material for sanctification. ‘The profane,’ for Hasidism, is only a designation for the not yet hallowed. No renunciation of the object of desire is commanded: it is only necessary that man’s relation to the object be hallowed...” The “object” might include nature, work, friendship, marriage, community, etc. Redemption is dependent upon “the unpremeditated *turning* of our whole world-life to God” (emphasis added). “...all action for God’s sake is messianic action.” Friedman quotes Buber in saying that “The world is reality, and it is reality created not to be overcome but to be hallowed.”²³

These notions of holy insecurity and redemption are integrally linked: the former is necessary in order to enable a person to meet the uniqueness of every situation in a manner conducive to hallowing or redeeming the situation. This will be elaborated in the context of Buber’s interpretation of Hasidism, which requires an acceptance of a personal Deity Who is both Transcendent and Immanent. The separation of the sacred and the secular can be overcome only if both are preserved because the “...transcendence [of God] is drawn into the whole world.”²⁴ For Buber, the “eternal core of Hasidic life and teaching” (the living being the basis of the teaching) is the following: “Man cannot approach the divine by reaching beyond the human; he can approach him by *becoming human*. To become human is what he,

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²² *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 10-12.

²⁴ Ronald Gregor Smith, “Introduction,” Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Second edition, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), p. x.

this individual man, has been created for" (emphasis added).²⁵ This goal is amplified by Buber himself. "The demarcation between the *sacred*, that is, that which is designated for hallowing, and the *profane*, that which still lacks such designation, is a provisional one" (emphases added).²⁶ "God wills that everything be hallowed until in the messianic age the distinction between *sacred* and *profane* no longer exists because all has become holy" (emphases added).²⁷ However, Buber did not claim to live in the messianic age – quite to the contrary. This is why he preferred the term "hallowing" to "holy": the former characterizes a *process*, not a finished product. The human being must *become* holy by directing the world to God. "Hallowing," then, is a task, the task of redemption confronting an unredeemed world.

The goal is clear: "What is of greatest importance in Hasidism, today as then, is the powerful tendency, preserved in personal as well as in communal existence, to overcome the fundamental separation between the sacred and the profane."²⁸ There is a natural desire (instilled by God in creation) to "build the bridge" between the holy and the profane, a desire founded in the reality that "nothing in the world is entirely alien to the holy" and that "anything [in the world] can become its vessel." Buber says, "As fundamental as the distinction between the holy and the profane was in Judaism, the wish still awoke ever again to invest the holy with effect and influence in the realm of the profane...."²⁹ This goal of uniting the sacred and the secular is found within human nature as well as all of reality – as invested by God the Creator.

Buber claims that the Hasidic worldview wishes to "reveal God in this low, undermost world, in all things and at the same time in man that in him there be no link and no movement in which God's strength might not be hidden, and none with which he could not accomplish unification."³⁰ Herein lies an undying realism because "Everything wants to be hallowed, to be brought into the holy, everything worldly in its worldliness: it does not want to be stripped of its worldliness, it

²⁵ Martin Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, an imprint of Prometheus Books, 2000 [1958]), pp. 34-35.

²⁶ Martin Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, p. 50.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²⁸ Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, p. 20.

²⁹ Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, p. 87.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

wants to be brought in its worldliness into the *kavana* [intention] of the redemption – everything wants to become sacrament.”³¹ Therefore, man’s work toward redemption entails “Turning the whole of his life in the world to God and then allowing it to open and unfold in all its moments until the last...”³²

Therefore, a fundamental feature of this central Hasidic teaching, as taught by Buber, is the fact that the hallowing of the world, which is the path to redemption, must be achieved within the ordinary activities of daily life: *right here*, as Buber emphasizes. “For it is here, where we stand, that we should try to make shine the light of the hidden divine life.”³³ Again, “The unification of God shall take place in the world, man shall work on God’s unification out of his own unification...”³⁴ In summary of this purpose of Hasidism, which Buber spent a career attempting to implement for the sake of peace in the world and human happiness, we follow his own formulation:

This is the ultimate purpose: to let God in. But we can let Him in only where we really stand, where we live, where we live a true life. If we maintain holy intercourse with the little world entrusted to us, if we help the holy spiritual substance to accomplish itself in that section of Creation in which we are living, then we are establishing, in this our place, a dwelling for the Divine Presence.³⁵

Next, we will consider further this process of hallowing the everyday: its necessity for redemption; a further analysis of its meaning and practice; and the interrelationship between God and His human creatures. The last point, concerning the fact that God sends and human persons respond, foreshadows a consideration of Buber’s dialogical philosophy, pertaining to *how* the sacred is united with the profane in human living. First of all, what is the *necessity* for the connection between the hallowing of the everyday and the salvation of each human being? Why must this bond be realized? In one sense, the answer is simple. It is to be implemented in each human life because it is the *only* means of redemption: “...*only* the hallowing of

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 111-12.

³³ Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, p. 165.

³⁴ Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, p. 137.

³⁵ Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, p. 168.

all actions without distinction, *only* the bearing to God of ordinary life as it comes to pass and as it happens, *only* the consecration of the natural relationship with the world possesses redemptive power" (emphases added).³⁶

Further analysis of the meaning and practice of this aspect of Hasidism relies upon the *de facto* relationship which Buber sees between the sacred and the secular: there is no *essential* distinction. There is a distinction, but it is not an essential one: "In life, as Hasidism understands and proclaims it, there is, accordingly, no essential distinction between sacred and profane spaces, between sacred and profane times, between sacred and profane actions, between sacred and profane conversations, at each place, in each hour, in each act, in each speech the holy can blossom forth."³⁷ This fact of reality renders more plausible Buber's contention that "man's bond with God authenticates and fulfills itself in the human world."³⁸ This fulfilling, however, is not automatic, existing by the very fact of human existence; it requires attention, intention, and activity on the part of each human person. According to Buber, "...man influences eternity, and he does this not through special works, but through the intention behind *all* of his work. It is the teaching of the hallowing of the *everyday*" (emphasis added).³⁹ As he stresses over and over in his interpretation of Hasidism, this human intention and activity goes on, not in specially devised actions, but in *all* good actions.

Permeating these actions are the virtues associated with love, joy, and humility. Of course, there also must be prayer. In regard to the first, Friedman notes the key point: "Nor can one love God unless he loves his fellow man, for God is immanent in man as in all His creation."⁴⁰ In Buber's own words, "You cannot really love God if you do not love men, and you cannot really love men if you do not love God."⁴¹ These daily activities of life, in order to be redemptive, must also be characterized by joy, according to Buber's Hasidism. Joy has a double character: an affirmation of the external world and of the "hidden world behind the externals." "In perfect joy the body and the

³⁶ Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, p. 107.

³⁷ Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, p. 23.

³⁸ Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, p. 139.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁴⁰ Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*, p. 22.

⁴¹ Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, p. 225.

soul are at one," which enables the person to avoid both extreme asceticism and libertinism. As "one of Hasidism's greatest commandments," joy alone can banish the "alien thoughts" which prevent human beings from loving God. Thirdly, redemptive human activity requires humility, which signifies a denial of self – as distinct from self-negation. Authentic humility is not derived from a comparison with others, but by affirming one's true self as a creature of God, in need of redemption along with the whole of creation. "Humility, like joy and love, is attained most readily through prayer." ⁴² In addition to traditional prayer, there is mystical meditation, and Hasidic singing and dancing. Prayer is the most important means to union with God in the Hasidic tradition.⁴³

These comments by and about Buber make it abundantly clear that the essence of redemption lies in the process of unifying the sacred and the secular, God and the world. This process has been ordained by God and is to occur in the world in which human beings dwell. "God's grace consists precisely in this, that He wants to let Himself be won by man, that He places Himself, so to speak, into man's hands. God wants to come to His world, but He wants to come to it through man. This is the mystery of our existence, the superhuman chance of mankind."⁴⁴ In this "superhuman chance" granted to humankind, God sends and human persons respond. "The real communion of man with God not only has its place in the world, but also its subject. God speaks to man in the things and beings that He sends him in life; man answers through his action in relation to just these things and beings. All specific service of God has its meaning in the ever-renewed preparation and hallowing for this communion with God in the world."⁴⁵

As noted above, the existence of God in the world (His Immanence) does not compromise His Transcendence, according to Buber's Judaism and interpretation of Hasidism. He says,

Hasidism preserves undiminished God's distance from and superiority to the world in which He nonetheless dwells. In this distance Hasidism sets the undivided wholeness of human life in its full meaning: that it should

⁴² Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*, p. 22.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁴ Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, p. 167.

⁴⁵ Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, p. 94.

receive the world from God and act on the world for the sake of God. Bound to the world, receiving and acting, man stands directly before God – not ‘man’ rather, but this particular man, you, I.⁴⁶

Despite the emphasis required by various circumstances, Buber preserves in his assessment of reality both the Transcendence and the Immanence of God. For example, in countering Karl Barth’s overemphasis on transcendence, he observed, “Of course, God is the Wholly Other, the *Mysterium Tremendum* that appears and overthrows, but He is also the wholly same, nearer to me than myself.” In addressing the opposite error in the philosophies of Sartre and Heidegger, he said that “Those who restrict God to the transcendence limit Him unduly, but those who make God wholly immanent mean something other than God.”⁴⁷ Buber’s position in respect to the Transcendence and Immanence of God suggests a very important contemporary distinction concerning the academic disciplines of metaphysics and psychology. Friedman hints at the issue when he says, “Unlike the great systematizers, Buber did not claim that the experience on which he based his philosophy was other than a limited one. But he rejected any attempt to designate that experience as ‘subjective.’”⁴⁸ Buber himself says “Subjectivity always means opinion, reflection. I don’t speak of this at all – only about being, existing.”⁴⁹

The central feature of the personal experience characterizing Buber’s philosophy is the reality of an absolute being, the Eternal Thou, to which further attention will be devoted below. He severely attacked “the great foolishness of our time’ – that of a becoming God who needs to be realized and brought forth by the human spirit.” The “hopelessly perverted conception” of the *becoming* God is replaced by the “divine *being* that enables us to sense the awesome meaning of divine becoming, in which God imparts himself to his creation and participates in the destiny of its freedom.” What the subjectivists overlook is the meeting with *otherness*.⁵⁰ As early as 1919, Buber

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴⁷ Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*, p. 343.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 382.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 127-28.

asserted that “it is not God who changes, but only the theophany, the manifestation of the divine in man’s symbol-creating mind...”⁵¹ As we shall see, the person who turns to the Transcendent God, the Absolute Thou “need not turn away from any other I – Thou relation [in the world]; but he properly brings them to him [God], and lets them be fulfilled” in the presence of the Transcendent God. This Eternal Thou (Who never becomes an It) is not separate from the interhuman, the communal, and the social, but is “the radical center of all of them,” in which Buber had found a home – which he spent the rest of his life recommending to others.⁵² In rejecting the “psychologizing of the world,” Buber was not denigrating psychology; in fact, he wrote extensively on psychology. What he rejected was “the attempt to subsume all reality under psychological or psychoanalytic categories,” which amounted to “an attempt of the soul to detach itself completely from its basic character of relationship.”⁵³ The key here is relationship – which demands attention to otherness, ultimately an Absolute Other.

We have seen that the process of redemption, the hallowing of the profane, features a *loving* God and *loving* human beings. Buber himself confirms this: “...this God of all, the God who loves his world he [the human person] first learns to know through himself loving the world. Thus one may then regard the way from love of man to love of God as decisive for the development of the person, not as though he had to go this one way and not the others.”⁵⁴ It is clear that for Buber, redemption is “an event of the ‘between’ and cannot be relegated simply to God’s side or to man’s, to divine grace or to human will, to apocalypse or historical progress.”⁵⁵ It is equally clear that Buber teaches that “Whoever goes in truth to meet the world, goes forth to meet God.”⁵⁶ This is achieved in the context of summons and sending: “To God’s sovereign address, man gives his autonomous answer.” Again, the centrality of love in this process is essential, as Friedman testifies in interpreting Buber: “He who loves brings God and the world together – this Hasidic teaching is the consummation of

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁵⁴ Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, p. 231.

⁵⁵ Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*, p. 144.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Judaism."⁵⁷ Therefore, we can describe Buber's view of Hasidism with Friedman as "a kind of piety that is tied to life and that has overcome the unholy division into sacred and profane spheres by the hallowing of the whole of life."⁵⁸

Philosophy of Dialogue

The question still remains, how is the human person, as individual and member of a community, to respond to the summons of God to unite the sacred and the secular through living in the world? We have seen that this response requires joy, humility, and above all love – always in conjunction with prayer. Nevertheless, a more specific roadmap to social harmony and peace on earth in a redemptive manner needs to be clarified. This Buber does in his dialogical philosophy, particularly in terms of the twofold relationships of I – Thou and I – It. He says that Jewish teaching is "wholly based upon the double-directional relation of the human I and the divine Thou, on the reality of reciprocity, on the *meeting*. Here...this miserable man is, by the very meaning of his creation, the helper of God. For his sake...for the sake of him who can choose God, the world was created. Its shells are there in order that he may penetrate through them into the kernel."⁵⁹ Meeting is crucial to Buber, meeting others in the world as a means to meeting the Eternal Thou. Meeting connotes relationship, and I – Thou relationships constitute the path of redemption. How is this related to the shells and the kernel?

The "sparks teaching" of Hasidism, which so influenced Buber, derived from the later Kabbala and became an ethical teaching of his original Hasidic master, Baal-Shem-Tov. According to the myth,

In the primordial time of being, in the time when God built worlds and tore them down, sparks have fallen into all things of the world. In a material shell, in a mineral, in a plant, in an animal the spark is hidden, a complete figure like that of a man, doubled up, his head on his thighs without being able to move his hands and feet, like an embryo. Only through man is there a redemption for him. It is up to man to purify the sparks out of the things and beings that he meets day by day, and raise them to

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁵⁹ Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, p. 122.

ever higher rungs, to ever higher births, from mineral to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to man until the holy spark can return to its origin. If you accomplish this, it is as if you had liberated a king's son from captivity.

In the hands of the Baal-Shem-Tov, the founder of Hasidism there developed "a task that embraced the whole life of man."⁶⁰ In Buber's interpretation,

Man's service of the sparks takes place in everyday life; men can accomplish it even with the most profane bodily action that brings him into contact with things and beings, for even the most profane action can be done in holiness, and he who does it in holiness raises the sparks. In the clothes that you wear, in the tools that you use, in the food that you eat, in the domestic animal that toils for you, in all are hidden sparks that are anxious for redemption, and if you have to do with the things and beings with carefulness, with good will, and faithfulness, you redeem them. God gives you the clothes and food that belong to the roots of your soul in order that you may redeem the sparks in them. One can serve Him with all actions, and He wills that one serve Him with all. Therefore it says, "On all your ways shalt thou know Him." As the seed sown in the ground draws its strength from it and from it makes the fruit, so that man who fulfills the service draws the sparks from all the things that belong to the root of his soul and raises them to God.⁶¹

On the basis of the sparks teaching, all things in the world, in themselves, "are the object of religious concern, for they are the abode of the holy sparks that man shall raise up."

The things of the world represent "the exile of divine being." Thus, there is an *ontological* basis for unifying the sacred and the secular. "By concerning himself with them [things in the world] in the right way

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

man comes into contact with the destiny of divine being in the world and helps in the redemption."⁶² (If we can anticipate, the "right way" is to be associated with the dialogical relation I – Thou, to be developed below.) Buber sometimes employs the term "Shekina" to refer to this presence of God in the world; so, "it is incumbent upon man to do all that he does with his intention directed to the unification of the highest divine being [the Supreme and Eternal Thou] with its Shekina..."⁶³ In a related context Buber refers to the soul of a person as "a particle of God from above," or "a holy spark." When the person does evil against God, the holy spark is imprisoned in a "shell." This is why, in the story retold by Buber, we should love the evildoer – as distinct from the evil. "As the primal source of the divine is bound with all His soul-sparks scattered in the world, so what we do to our fellow man is bound with what we do to God."⁶⁴ This also helps to explain the relationship between the shells and the kernel in the citation above, the latter being the holy spark or the Shekina.⁶⁵ Furthermore, we are assisted in better understanding why "the 'ethical' actions are by their meaning and nature just as much religious actions as the 'religious,'"⁶⁶

Before considering further the means to redemption in his dialogical philosophy, we should remind ourselves that his conversion to Hasidism had given Buber a direction in his life, in fact, "a unique personal direction from which, even in the most terrible crises, he was never again deflected." Through Hasidism he also had been alerted to the combination of summons and sending, revelation and mission, to which he draws attention in *I and Thou*.⁶⁷ Education from this point would be at the forefront of his life and work. The union of Buber's interpretation of Hasidism and the crux of his dialogical philosophy is seen in "the central portion" of his life work: "...it could not be anything individual, but only the one basic insight that has led me not only to the study of the Bible, as to the study of Hasidism, but also to an independent philosophical presentation: That

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 238-39.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁶⁴ Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, pp. 232-33.

⁶⁵ Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, p. 122.

⁶⁶ Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, p. 233.

⁶⁷ Friedman, *Encounter or the Narrow Ridge*, p. 40.

the I – Thou relation to God and the I – Thou relation to one’s fellow man are at bottom related to each other.”⁶⁸

What remains then in portraying Buber’s efforts to unit the sacred and the secular lies in an elaboration of his distinctions and interconnections between the two fundamental relationships, I – It and I – Thou, in which the I is always a human being, and the Other is some being not I. In brief, the I – It relationship is always a subject – object relationship in which the I objectifies and uses the Other, although not necessarily in a negative sense (as the passenger relying upon the bus driver). The I – Thou relation is one in which the whole being of the I addresses the whole being of the Other, recognizing, accepting, and promoting the unique well-being of the other. The goal of life is to meet God, the Eternal Thou, not by turning away from the world, but by turning *to* the Other as Thou in the world. In an I – Thou relationship, the human person “meets” the other, and “He who truly goes out to meet the world goes out also to [meet] God,”⁶⁹ the latter a meeting that “does not come to man that he may concern himself with God, but in order that he may confirm that there is meaning in the world.”⁷⁰

In some detail I will attempt to describe the two relationships featured in Buber’s dialogical philosophy as a basis for considering how they are related to the implementation of redemption, which he identifies as the goal of Hasidism. The theoretical-practical question concerns how the I – Thou (in tandem with the I – It) relationship enables one to realize the unity of the sacred and the secular enroute to a more unified, harmonious, redeemed world. The I – Thou relationship itself can be depicted in three moments: “listening,” “becoming aware,” and “accepting.” The first refers to the effort to become totally sensitive to the whole being of the other, not merely to what the other says (since the other may not be saying anything!). The second moment signifies becoming conscious of the whole being of the other, especially the needs of the other in concrete circumstances. (This whole process can be explained, if at all, only in terms of specific situations). Thirdly, “accepting” does not mean simply agreeing with the other – in fact, it might signify the contrary on a particular

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁶⁹ Buber, *I and Thou*, Second edition, p. 95.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

occasion. It does mean the confirmation of the being of the other, or “being for” the other, certainly entailing in some manner assuming responsibility for the well-being of the other. If this sounds like love of another, the description has succeeded because that is what it is! This other who becomes a Thou for the I can be another human being, or it can be a non-human being; the nature of the other does not affect the kind of relationship pursued by the I (except in the case of God, Who remains a Thou in all relationships in which the I engages).⁷¹ A typical example of an I – Thou relationship is the relationship between a mother and her child.

The I – It relationship, on the other hand, is a relationship entailing objective knowledge (so to speak), including frequently some kind of use of the other by the I. A simple description of a physical being, for example, constitutes knowledge which Buber associates with I – It. This kind of awareness of the other may be carried into the use of the other as in the case of the I “using” the cashier in grocery store or the teller in the bank. As noted, while “use” could convey negativity, it does not necessarily do so. In any case, in the I – It relationship, the I does not meet the *whole* being of the other, but is concerned only with certain aspects or dimensions, such as whether the bank teller can count money! This difference between the two relationships, in which the I relates either to the *whole* being of the Thou or only to “parts” of the It, must be understood in conjunction with the fact that the I – Thou meeting exists primarily for the sake of the other, while the I in the I – It relationship acts primarily for self-benefit (as in “using” the bank teller).

At this point, the concept of “uniqueness” is crucial in detecting the differences between I – Thou and I – It relationships. The It obviously is in every instance a unique being insofar as it is not identical with any other being. However, the It is not unique in the sense in which every Thou is unique: in the sense that the Thou is *irreplaceable*. The uniqueness of the It is clarified by comparison with other beings: no two bank tellers are exactly alike – or they would not be two! The uniqueness of the Thou stems from the fact that the Thou is non-comparable; comparisons are irrelevant – which renders the Thou

⁷¹ Friedman relates Buber’s later (long after the 1923 publication of *I and Thou*) comment that the non-human Thou, as plants and animals, was the most heavily criticized of his principles and that, were he to redevelop it, he would use another term. Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*, pp. 341-42.

irreplaceable. A hunting dog can be replaced, perhaps by a better one. A wife or husband in a good marriage cannot be replaced. In other words, this It is the only one with these *accidental features*; this Thou is the only *one*.

While the I can never relate to the other as Thou and It simultaneously, there is a necessary alternation between these two kinds of relationships. What does this mean? Since I – It and I – Thou relationships in the natural world are not distinguished on the basis of the nature of the being to which the I is relating, the alternation between the two relationships on the part of a single I has nothing to do with the particular kind of being to which the I is relating. The only factor to be considered is the nature of the relationship, and, in fact, an individual person on a specific occasion can relate to the other as It and in the next moment as Thou. Friedman says in interpreting Buber that

I – Thou and I – It stand in fruitful and necessary alternation with each other. Man cannot will to persevere in the I – Thou relationship. He can only desire again and again to bring the indirectness of the world of It into the directness of the meeting with the Thou and thereby give the world of It meaning. So long as this alternation continues, man's existence is authentic. When the It swells up and blocks the return to the Thou, then man's existence becomes unhealthy, his personal and social life inauthentic.⁷²

The necessity of I – It relationships becomes evident when it is realized that an act of empirically describing an object constitutes I – It; and such description is essential to an I – Thou relationship since relating to another as Thou requires an awareness (to some extent) of the general nature of the other to which one is relating as Thou. Furthermore, we all need other persons: asking one's sister to return a book to the library does not necessarily do much for the latter. While this does not necessarily bear any negative connotation, the I – It

⁷² Maurice Friedman, "Introduction," Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), pp. xiv-xv.

relationship can assume a negative character if, as Friedman says, it overrides the I – Thou when one would expect the latter to occur. That is, if one sees her sister *only* as one to perform services, there is a moral issue.

The I – Thou relationship in the natural world can become reciprocal only between two persons; a non-human being cannot respond to the other as Thou or It, although it can become a Thou and/or an It. However, no I – Thou relation is *necessarily* reciprocal; relating to another as Thou might tend to invite this reciprocity, but it can be no more than an invitation. It should be noted, also, that an interchange of words is not necessary to an I – Thou relationship. That fact becomes clear in observing the essence of the relationship: the response of the whole being of the I to the otherness of the other, especially in terms of the needs of the other in a concrete situation. It is not surprising that Buber finds in marriage the “‘exemplary bond’ in which we touch on the real otherness of the other....”⁷³ Buber’s own marriage, according to Friedman’s account, exhibited this “‘exemplary bond.’”⁷⁴ In this immediate context we are reminded again of the centrality of love in ideal relationships to the other: “Buber...sees love as precisely the recognition of the other’s freedom, the fullness of a dialogue in which I turn to my beloved in his otherness, independence and self-reality with all the power of intention of my own heart.”⁷⁵

The centerpiece in Buber’s dialogical philosophy, which is obviously fundamental to the theme of the sacred and the secular, pertains to the fact that God is the Supreme Thou. God never becomes an It (an objectified God is not God) and is met *only* by means of the development of I – Thou relationships in the world, on the human and natural plane. Friedman testifies that “God is not met by turning away from the world or by making God into an object of contemplation, a ‘being’ whose existence can be proved and whose attributes can be demonstrated.”⁷⁶ In fact, “The eternal Thou is met in each particular Thou” (in the natural world).⁷⁷ Buber himself says that “‘The man who

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

⁷⁴ Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*, esp. pp. 182-84 and 374-76.

⁷⁵ Friedman, “Introduction,” *Between Man and Man*, p. xvii.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

⁷⁷ Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*, p. 137.

says Thou ultimately means his eternal Thou."⁷⁸ In other words, the destination – in answer to the question of the purpose and meaning of life – is to meet God, the Eternal Thou, by meeting others as Thou in the natural world. In this connection Buber clarifies his own kind of belief in God: "If to believe in God means to be able to talk *about* him in the third person, then I do *not* believe in God. But if to believe in him means to be able to talk *to* him, then I do believe in God."⁷⁹

Underlying Buber's appreciation of the "good life," a life lived by "meeting" others in the world as a means of meeting the Eternal Thou, is the notion of *responsibility*. We have seen the centrality of love in all I – Thou relationships: this love requires responsibility. The following comment of Friedman ties the "meeting" in Buber's I – Thou to loving responsibility:

The responsible quality of one's decision will be determined by the degree to which one really 'sees the other' and makes him present to one. It is here, in experiencing the relationship from the side of the other, that we find the most important key to the ethical implications of Buber's dialogue – an implication that none of the other thinkers who have written on the I – Thou relationship has understood in its full significance. Only through 'seeing the other' can the I – Thou relationship become fully real, for only through it can one be sure that one is really helping the other person. To deal lovingly with thy neighbor means to recognize that he is not just another I but a Thou, and that means a really 'other' person. Only if we see a man in his concrete otherness is there any possibility of our confirming him in his individuality as that which he must become. 'Seeing the other' is for this reason of central significance.⁸⁰

In Buber's own words, "The idea of responsibility is to be brought back from the province of specialized ethics, of an ought that swings

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁸⁰ Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*, pp. 204-05.

free in the air, into that of lived life. Genuine responsibility exists only where there is real responding."⁸¹

What does Buber say, especially in his landmark work *I and Thou* (published in 1923 and re-issued in a second edition in 1958), concerning how meeting others as Thou unites the sacred and the secular? We have seen in Buber's interpretation of Hasidism that redemption, individually and socially, occurs through the unity of the sacred and the secular within the daily activities of life. The dialogical (I – Thou) relation has been described in anticipation of showing *how* living this kind of relationship in the world serves the cause of redemption, the process of uniting the sacred and the secular. Before turning to selected comments of Buber in this regard, the need for the redemption of the world should be established. Friedman comments and cites Buber as well:

What is in question with both modern philosophy and modern religion is not the choice between I – Thou and I – It, but whether the I – Thou remains the architect and the I – It the assistant, the helper. If the I – Thou does *not* command, then it is already disappearing. Yet precisely this disappearance of 'I – Thou' is the character of this hour:

In our age the I – It relation, gigantically swollen, has usurped, practically uncontested, the mastery and the rule. The I of this relation, an I that possesses all, makes all, succeeds with all, this I that is unable to say Thou, unable to meet being essentially, is the lord of the hour. This selfhood that has become omnipotent, with all the It that surrounds it, can naturally acknowledge neither God nor any genuine Absolute which manifests itself to man as of non-human origin. It steps in between and shuts us off from the light of heaven.⁸²

In *I and Thou* Buber explicates, to some extent, the manner in which I – Thou relationships in the world constitute redemption and contribute to world peace. The significance of this topic to Buber is evident in the question which he calls "incomparably the most

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁸² Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*, p. 345.

important of all: 'How can the *Thou* – relationship of man to God, which is conditioned by an unconditioned turning to him, diverted by nothing, nevertheless include all other *I – Thou* relations of this man [in the world], and bring them as it were to God?'⁸³ As noted, the human person must cultivate these I-Thou relationships in the world in order to "meet" God. Buber claims that "the man who turns to him [God, the "absolute Person"] therefore need not turn away from any other *I – Thou* relations; but he properly brings them to him [God], and lets them be fulfilled 'in the face of God.'"⁸⁴ In fact, his "most essential concern," Buber says, is "the close connection of the [I – Thou] relation to God, with the [I – Thou] relations to one's fellow-man."⁸⁵ Reminding us of the personal responsibility (of the I) which is essential to the implementation of all I – Thou relationships, Buber says that "He Who serves his people [through I – Thou relationships] in the boundlessness of destiny, and is willing to give himself to them, is really thinking of God."⁸⁶ Presumably referring to marriage, Buber says that "He who loves a woman, and brings her life to present realization in his, is able to look in the Thou of her eyes into a beam of the eternal Thou."⁸⁷

Because "the relation with man is the real simile of the relation with God..."⁸⁸ "man can do justice to the relation with God in which he has come to share *only* if he realizes God anew in the world according to his strength and to the measure of each day" (emphasis added).⁸⁹ Applying this to the dialogical relation, it means to Buber that *every* being in the world *can* be met as Thou within the context of one's daily activities, as determined by the circumstances and the free choices of the I. As noticed, the necessity of meeting others in the world as Thou as a path to God and redemption does not eliminate the necessity of I – It relationships in the world. However, there is a persistent concern in every authentic human life of the proper alternation between I –

⁸³ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, Second edition, p. 134.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-24.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Also referring to marriage, he recalls the saying, "When a man is together with his wife the longing of the eternal hills blows round about them" (*Ibid.*, p. 103).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

Thou and I – It; what is “proper” is a moral consideration, which will not detain us any further here. In any case, the unity of the sacred and the secular remains the goal of human living. “The world, lit by eternity, becomes fully present to him who approaches the face, and to the Being of beings he can in a single response say *Thou*. Then there is no more tension between the world and God, but only the one reality.”⁹⁰ Truly, the path to God, the Supreme Thou Who never becomes an It, is the path of I – Thou relationships in the world, especially (but not only) those with other human beings.⁹¹

Conclusion

Testimonials to the authenticity of Martin Buber’s life abound. A few counter-examples can be found, but, on the whole, he is said to have lived the kind of life which is reflected in his writings.⁹² I would like to provide one general example of Buber’s having lived a life of *responsibility*, as required by his philosophy of dialogue. Secondly, I would like to offer a small bit of practical evidence of Buber’s belief in the unity of the sacred and the secular, which pervades much of what he has written about Hasidism and dialogue. Thirdly, while Buber has not proclaimed a dedication to the peace education movement, I would like to indicate in what manner his theory and practice of education *is* peace education. Before a final comment, I wish to suggest further investigation into the relationship of Buber’s Judaism to Christianity by mentioning similarities between his thought and a recent encyclical, *On Christian Hope*, by Pope Benedict XVI.

1. First of all, this example of Buber’s life of *responsibility* in accord with his Hasidism and dialogical philosophy is focused on Buber the educator. His intense association with education derives from the summons and sending, revelation and mission, which he experienced in turning to Hasidism about 1904 through his study of *The Testament of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem*.⁹³ A very brief survey of his own description of the life of dialogue precedes here a similarly brief description of his educational activities on behalf of the German Jews during Hitler’s

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁹¹ One is reminded here of how the I – Thou relationship with non-human creatures might constitute the basis of a theory and practice of environmental ethics.

⁹² Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*, pp. 5-6.

⁹³ Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*, pp. 39-40.

rise to power from 1933 to 1938.⁹⁴ Any account of the I – Thou relationship in accord with Buber must focus on *lived responsibility*. The concept of responsibility is essential, but only in order to inform the concrete lives of real people. This responsibility is exercised in every genuine I – Thou relationship, and it is carried out on the basis of the love of an I for a Thou. This loving responsibility is exercised when, with one's whole being, the I *listens, becomes aware, and accepts* the whole being of the other. This entails on the part of the I, a serious and relatively successful effort to become totally sensitive to the whole being of the other, especially the needs of the other in a particular instance. Accepting the other signifies an active (although not necessarily in a manifestly overt manner) promotion of the well-being of the other. This acceptance represents the basic purpose of the I – Thou relation, within the context of which the uniqueness of the Thou is recognized. This is not a uniqueness discovered by comparing, but one that is developed by prizing the other in the relationship *between* them. The Thou is non-comparable, thus, irreplaceable.⁹⁵

Buber is noted for having lived the kind of life he prescribed in his writings. One instance of this fact is the responsibility which he assumed for the education of fellow Jews in Germany during the rise of Nazism. It will be recalled that he was living in Germany from 1933 to 1938, when he departed for Jerusalem. He resigned his professorship at the University of Frankfurt, "correctly anticipating the official dismissal,"⁹⁶ according to Friedman. However, he did not forsake education: in April, 1933, he wrote to a friend, "For my part I shall now seek whether I can bring something about for the community."⁹⁷ He could and he did. In Buber's view, "Human truth is bound up with the responsibility of the person. It becomes existentially true only when we stand the test in hearing and responding." Friedman suggests that "a pregnant example of such personal responsibility was Buber's leadership in Jewish education during the time of the Nazis,"⁹⁸ "an enormously demanding

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 11.

⁹⁵ For summaries of the dialogical relationship, see Friedman, *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue*, pp. 78-89; and Friedman, "Introduction," *Martin Buber, Between Man and Man*, p. xiv-xix.

⁹⁶ Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*, p. 209.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

task...that occupied him until his departure from Germany" in 1938.⁹⁹ Friedman claims that Buber, "more than any other single person...taught the unassimilated German Jews why they were suffering and by reawakening their Jewish consciousness gave them a counterweight against total despair." "By his personal engagement in every type of course, program, and lecture, and by his direction of cultural and educational activities, Buber quickly became famous...as the fearless spokesman for the German Jews....[He] provided leadership of a rare quality, teaching them to face their fate with courage and faith through a deeper affirmation of their Jewishness." "Perhaps even more important was Buber's organization of small groups of teachers and disciples who toiled and lived together in work communities....[By] counseling, comforting, and raising their dejected spirits, he saved countless numbers from spiritual despair."¹⁰⁰

A few specific examples illustrate Buber's response to the need of his fellow Jews in Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1938. In 1934 he suggested and eventually directed a "Central Office for Jewish Adult Education," a position through which he "exercised an enormous influence on every aspect of Jewish education and culture in Germany during the next five years."¹⁰¹ A year earlier he had reopened the Frankfurt *Lehrhaus*, which he directed until 1938, and in which he promoted "a community in which there is a transaction between teachers and students, in which both groups learn and teach," an essential purpose of which was "to strengthen and renew the Jewish by becoming a *people* of God."¹⁰² Also by his public lectures and writings, Buber guided and motivated the German Jews in their period of great crisis. One observer comments that "Martin Buber's lectures were historical events"¹⁰³ Another notes that his "writings were for me a response to Nazi propaganda....We read him as a great teacher."¹⁰⁴ Buber truly was living the I – Thou relationship during these early years of Nazism in Germany – in the most trying of times. Looking back at these years in 1956, he said that "The time of Hitler was the most terrible that I have lived through, but even in that time

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 222-23.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

there was a holy meaning in history, there was God...only I cannot say, how and where.”¹⁰⁵ A friend of Buber’s, Abraham Heschel, testifies that “This was a period of Buber’s true greatness.”¹⁰⁶

2. A second point to be observed in this conclusion pertains to practical evidence of Buber’s belief in the unity of the sacred and the secular. This, also, is an instance of his *living* what he *taught*. It has been emphasized, in accord with Buber’s interpretation of Hasidism and dialogical philosophy, that everything can be hallowed in the course of one’s daily activities; one meets God, the Supreme Thou by doing what one does: eating, working, mowing the lawn, etc. In this way, the union of the sacred and the secular is realized, and redemption is attained. Ironically, this conception of the “good life” offers some explanation for Buber’s failure to follow the practices of Orthodox Judaism. He became known for his “religious abstinence”: in conducting his Open Forum “experiments in dialogue” in a Jerusalem synagogue, he refused to take part in the service beforehand. Friedman explains that the Jewish Law functions as a mediator between God and the Israelites. Buber, rejecting the division of life into spheres distinguished as sacred and secular, holy and profane, “forsook the rituals that designated set days and hours, circumstances and spheres, as holy in order to bring into the light of God those wide stretches of *everyday* life that the Jewish rituals leave in the darkness of profanity” (emphasis added).¹⁰⁷

3. Thirdly, the phenomenon of “peace education” has become a prominent issue in recent years. Buber did not talk about peace education; rather, one might claim that his philosophy and his life constituted a peace movement. Analysis of his theory of education would clarify further this assertion. However, Buber himself does assert his belief that the I – Thou relationship “can transform the world...into something much more human...than exists today.”¹⁰⁸ This should not be taken to mean that he was a pacifist; he said so in accepting an invitation to speak to the Jewish Peace Fellowship in New York in 1952: “I am no pacifist; for I do not know whether in a

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 293. This point might need to be considered further in relationship to his insistence upon the need for (formal?) prayer as an essential element of Hasidism.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

given situation in which fighting had become necessary, I would not fight.” Asked by a member of this Fellowship why Israel did not disarm, he replied, “Because the first day the Bedouins would look on in amazement, and the second day they would ride in.”¹⁰⁹

Buber apparently saw the cold war between the United States and Russia, as well as all war, linked inextricably to a crisis in trust, for he says, “I can only speak to someone in the true sense of the term if I expect him to accept my word as genuine.” He goes on to explain that “In a genuine dialogue each of the partners, even when he stands in opposition to the other, heeds, affirms, and confirms his opponent as an existing other. Even though conflict cannot be eliminated from the world, through genuine dialogue it can be humanly arbitrated.... Let us dare, despite all, to trust.”¹¹⁰ Somehow, Buber did – despite all – continue to trust, to teach and to live a life of dialogue. Friedman affirms this: “What is most remarkable is that, living in Nazi Germany, Buber could still affirm the body politic as the human world that seeks to realize in its genuine formations our turning to one another in the context of creation.” This attitude is not to be understood apart from the source of creation: Absolute Being, Transcendent God, Supreme Thou. For Buber says, “Creation is not a hurdle on the road to God, it is the road itself.” Friedman elaborates: “Creatures are placed in my way [notice the phraseology] so that I may find my way *with them to God*. The real God is the Creator, and all beings stand before him in relation to one another in his creation” (emphasis added).¹¹¹

4. Finally, I would like to comment briefly upon Buber’s relationship to Christianity. He did not accept the Divinity and messiahship of Jesus: “I do not believe in Jesus, but I believe *with him*.” He also says, “For us there is no cause of Jesus; only the cause of God exists for us.”¹¹² However, he exhibited a very positive attitude toward Christianity in some respects. Friedman reports the view of Old Testament scholar J. Coert Rylaarsdam to the effect that “Professor Buber is in a unique way the agent through whom, in our

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 346-47.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44. Perhaps two of Buber’s most important writings directed immediately to the topic of peace are: “Hope for This Hour” (1952) and “Genuine Dialogue and the Possibility of Peace” (1953); the latter is an address given on the occasion of his acceptance of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade.

¹¹¹ Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge*, p. 219.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 293.

day, Judaism and Christianity have met and enriched one another."¹¹³ Fruitful studies have been made and will continue to be made concerning doctrinal and other substantial similarities between Buber's Judaism and the Christian religion. I would like to mention a few passages of a recent encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi (On Christian Hope)*, 2007, which might remind one of Buber's principles despite the differences between them. For example, we recall Buber's insistence upon love within the core of I – Thou relationships in the world as a means of redemption. Pope Benedict says, "It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love. This applies even in terms of the present world. When someone has the experience of a great love in his life, this is a moment of 'redemption' which gives a new meaning to his life."¹¹⁴ Secondly, for Buber, all love and all I – Thou relationships entail responsibility. The Pope says in this encyclical letter that "Love of God leads to participation in the justice and generosity of God toward others. Loving God requires an interior freedom from all possessions and all material goods: the love of God is revealed in responsibility for others."¹¹⁵

Thirdly, Buber stresses endlessly that our redemption is found in I – Thou relationships *within* the activities of everyday life. The Pope claims that "His [God's] kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his Kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us."¹¹⁶ Fourthly, Buber recommended and lived a life of love in the midst of a conflicted world because of a commitment to what he viewed as truth and reality. Pope Benedict says, "Truth and justice must stand above my comfort and well-being, or else my life becomes a lie." "To suffer with the other and for others; to suffer for the sake of truth and justice; to suffer out of love and in order to become a person who truly loves – these are fundamental elements of humanity, and to abandon them would destroy man himself."¹¹⁷ Fifthly, the essence of Buber's philosophy is based upon relationship, on what is found between the I and the Thou, ultimately the Supreme Thou. In Pope Benedict's

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

¹¹⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *On Christian Hope (Spe Salvi)*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2007), par. 26.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

words, "Life in its true sense is not something we have exclusively in or from ourselves: it is a relationship. And life in its totality is a relationship with him who is the source of life."¹¹⁸ Martin Buber, if he were alive today, would have much to discuss with Pope Benedict XVI.

It is clear that Buber's lifelong attention to the sacred and the secular was not merely an academic exercise. It developed gradually out of a personal crisis and was fuelled by two world wars, life in Nazi Germany, and many controversies. His concern became and remained to *discover* and to *live* the truth needed to meet "the great need of the hour." His great desire was "to remind modern man of what he is in danger of forgetting – 'for what purpose we are on earth.'"¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹¹⁹ Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, p. 2.

6.

A Phenomenology of Political Philosophy: Personal Freedom and Open Society

MAMUKA DOLIDZE

Our starting point is to acknowledge the distinction between philosophical thinking and political thought. While doing so, it is my conviction that this distinction is a hidden way of revealing the unity of different spheres. The purpose of both investigations is the truth, but in moving from philosophical thinking to the area of political thought, the meaning of truth shifts in a subtle way. Therefore, the world of philosophical insights and the reality of political acts are far from being the same. Such a distinction leads us to the discovery of at least two forms of truth: philosophical truth – the truth in itself, as the accordance of the actual state of things and events with their cognitive reflection in the human mind – and political truth, which is indifferent to the actual situation but expresses the thought of the majority of the people. So philosophical thinking turns into political thought as a result of changing the meaning of truth.

Political thought, oriented to finding the truth as the will of the overwhelming majority, does not imply a denial of the philosophical sense of subject-object relations. Quite the contrary: there is a deeper and more unselfish motive for political ambition to make a statement which is suitable for others, namely, to destroy the direct causal link between mind and object, to purify the phenomenon of thinking and orient it to an internal, intersubjective truth.

This way of thinking evidently has an intentional structure, which means that it always strives to go beyond itself in order to find objective existence, something that is alien to its subjective essence.

Thus the discovery of the intentionality of the cognitive act supports a belief in the world of objects, and the process of thinking might reflect these objects. To put it differently, intentionality refers to the idea of adequacy between the internal and external. Indeed, this is a miraculous correspondence, for there is no causal pattern connecting the subjective ego with the corporeal matter of things; physical laws and mental ideas are not in contact like cause and effect. Nevertheless,

thanks to the intentional structure of being, there is a correspondence between them, which makes it possible to actually understand the world.

Political thought is worth considering as a purposeful process, which goes beyond the individual mind, though keeping the body-mind distinction. It reaches objectivity not in a direct way, connecting thought with physical object, but in a roundabout way. Political thought goes beyond itself and at the same time does not overstep its limit of subjectivity, as there is no logical bridge between subject and object. Thus it strives to, but does not go beyond itself. This means that here thinking creates an alien or different object within itself; eventually the sameness of the subjective self, thanks to intentionality, turns into a sense of otherness. This dialectical process of the unity of self-being and otherness by changing the sense of the self within subjectivity means that political thinking reveals the individual essence of a person thanks to self-alienation and relation to the other person. Hence, the political person uses thinking to confirm the reality of the other person who, in his turn, by self-intentionality, comes back to the reality of the first person. Therefore, an individual person needs political thinking to establish his real existence within its subjective essence.

But it is here that we encounter difficulties. To put it more precisely, the relation of two individuals is not sufficient to establish personal existence. The fact is that intentionality is not a reversible phenomenon and a second person in his way of purposeful thinking cannot return to the first person. A second person needs a third person, the latter needs a fourth person, and so on.... This endless relation is realized by the idea of society, which embodies all real and possible people needing each other to establish their own existence. Only the realization of the idea of society, which is an intersubjective entity of existentially bounded people, is a sufficient basis for establishing my own self. Thus, society is thought to be the existential basis of an individual person. Personal relations leading to the integrity of a new social whole do not erase the individual freedom and uniqueness of a person. It is the other way around: it is the freedom of the individual being that makes it possible to integrate separate members into a society. Thus, the process of differentiation leads us to the unity of society. But if society established the existence and revealed the essence of personal uniqueness, it would have the

feature of individuality and, in this case, is open to another system of human relations. So society, existentially establishing the person, is an individual and open wholeness.

Openness is a phenomenon of both individual being and the social system, and we are in a state of expectation of the unattainable aim of the individualization of being. Here I cannot help evaluating such an endless chain as a tendency to grasp a cosmological idea of the world as a subjective being. Hence the political way of thinking, despite being limited by various political systems, has a wide range of possibilities of unfolding from the uniqueness of personal ego to the subjectivity of total world. An open society, while developing in this way, plays the part of an ultimate goal of this process. An open society presents the general integrity of human interactions, and simultaneously shows its individual indivisible nature.

It is time to abandon the sociological point of view and to consider political thought in terms of aesthetics. Indeed, there is a hidden but deep connection between art and sociology. Political reality and the artistic world are both areas that have conditional nature. Creative artistic work looks like political thinking, for the initial task of both activities is to establish the individual being of a person through relation to the other being. However, the latter arises, not as a real person, but as an ideal structure of otherness, unfolding endlessly on the basis of the idea of an open society. Aesthetically, this means the existence of an artistic hero and the relation between an author and a character seems to fall short of the ideal link of self and otherness in political thinking. Both political truth and artistic truth have similar forms, different from absolute philosophical truth; both are called 'the truth within the situation.' Finally, both political and artistic truth pretend to coincide with philosophical truth, as the process of self-alienation (aesthetically or sociologically) attaches to human activity the sense of subject-object relation.

Now let us consider in the light of the new paradigm of twentieth-century thinking the problems emerging in modern society. There is an awareness of the wholeness of art and nature as the heart of the life phenomenon. All the achievements of contemporary art, literature, modern physics, post-modern philosophy, phenomenology, etc, have emerged from the wholeness of life, implying that everything is alive, for there is nothing beyond the process of individualization of the world. Here, life is viewed in an extremely wide sense, as a realization

of the idea of self being, but in its new aspect, that is, the interconnection of all the things (including human beings). This creates the uniqueness of being and, in its endless set of relations, refers to the universe as the pinnacle of personal existence. It is important to take into account that the wholeness mentioned above is compatible with the duality of spirit and matter eventually leading us to the many-world universe. Thus the universe as a subject is one and indivisible, and at the same time is objectively plural. Such weirdness in the new paradigm demands an alternative style of thinking connecting the various fields of human activity: political thought, artistic creativity, scientific research, psychology, sociology.... Although each of these realms is distinct, they merge together in a stream of philosophical thinking.

In respect to the analogy between art and sociology it is worth considering the impressionistic manner of painting and the emergence of the social contract in the history of political thought. I would like to limit the association of this similarity to the relation of subject and object. Impressionism appears, as I see it, to establish a body-mind duality in the art of painting. Remarkably, such a split serves to achieve the unity of creative work according to the general theory of the creation of the world. The development of philosophical thinking has not proven the hypothesis that the world presents the result of the generalization of individual beings. On the contrary, it is an act of separation which outlines the form of being in the endless interactions of the world. The act of distinction seems to anticipate the being of all. As I have no idea how to comprehend the act of distinction before the existence of things, I assert that differentiation and unity, the totality and the uniqueness of the world must be unexplainable unless I assume the distinction as the origin of being, which turns the homogeneous void into heterogeneous existence. Therefore, being arose as something with its individual form. 'Distinction' has given rise to such a single object in the deep darkness of not-being and, in order to prolong itself as an act of distinction, creates an expectation of a new phenomenon that is not an object. This phenomenon is relation. But relation needs at least two objects in relation with each other. Hence the first object refers to the second object to establish the relation between them. Remarkably, the relation is not the consequence of twofold being, quite the opposite. Relation anticipates the emergence of another object as it presents the

phenomenon which is not an object and hence keeps and develops the process of distinction.

Unlike an object, a relation as a phenomenon of distinction has no existential dimension. It embodies all interactions of objects, extending itself beyond objective reality and eventually coming back to its starting point, to the first object. A relation refers to an object as its own not-being. It does not exist as an individual existence, but it implies all objects which might interact with the first one. Hence a relation presents the senses and meanings of an object in the whole system of the world. Such significant content forms the essence of an individual object. It determines the appearance of the object. That is the reason for the equivalence of the appearance and existence of an object. If the process of distinguishing is thought to be the source of being, the emergence of an object and its relation through other objects and eventually to its own self, will define two stages of the act of discerning, i.e. the process of making the appearance of being. The object's relation to its own self, including all relations to other objects, creates the individual form of the object where appearance and being mean the same. Such a phenomenological result derives from the principle of distinction, claiming to be the source of the world. It leads us through an object to the fact of self-relation, which is not an objective fact, as the relation as a not-being of an object seems to be the subjective essence of the individual. Hence, thanks to the initial intentionality of distinction, the individual object and its subjective essence are distinguished. Therefore, the differentiation of being leading to interaction with other objects means at the same time the generalization of being. It is worth repeating that the unity and wholeness of being is obtained through distinction, providing that the difference between objective existence and subjective essence, according to duality of spirit and matter, is maintained.

If I applied such judgment to social reality, the necessity of the other person would be clear in order to distinguish the subjective essence of myself. This necessity does not limit itself by the other person but needs an ideal concept of otherness in order to extend relations to all possible individuals comprising the whole of society, which in its turn unlocks its objective reality towards the subjective self. Such 'openness' of society presents a turning point of social relations to the subjective essence of self. Thus, instead of objective reality, society became the subject, which helps me to be in relation

with myself through relations with other members and with the whole of society. This global relation, transferring to self-relation, creates my true essence in accordance to my freedom, which is in alliance with the wholeness of society. To put it differently, I create myself according to society, which as a subject influences me to realize my uniqueness as a way of social unity. I create my freedom according to the internal sense of responsibility.

In order to explore the idea of an analogy between art and sociology I have already mentioned, it is worth referring to Merleau-Ponty's work 'The Eye and the Mind.'¹ The author emphasizes that a painter draws no more than his own body...Descartes' duality of body and mind appears to be the basis of the author's conception. Indeed, if the mental and the physical are not compatible, my mind's eye cannot grasp a physical object in order to express it in a picture. The only possibility is to touch the physical through the art of painting: to draw my own body, as it is I to whom is exclusively given a miraculous unity of body and mind through the sense of life. My body is accessible for a paintbrush as far as it merges with my mind. Therefore, it presents the object and the subject of painting simultaneously. Hence, the body is something that is pictured and at the same time it is someone who is picturing....But my body is seen directly as an object (its subjectivity is not seen at all). Therefore, to express the subjective state of my body, I am forced to invent something that is not my body and which plays the role of a subject toward my objectiveness. To conclude, the artistic reality of the picture might include things and events in the world providing that they are an extension of my physical body and at the same time that they express the subjectivity of myself. Painting goes beyond a physical extension of my body in a mode of otherness (other objects), which in turn, does not express itself directly but plays a role of subject and acquires subjective features.

Thus retreating from the natural position of naive painting, which used to assume direct contact between the spiritual eye and the physical object, Merleau-Ponty, keeping the Descartes' duality of spirit and matter, seems to restore such contact in a roundabout way. This is providing that the external nature of painting acquires the

¹ Merleau-Ponty (2007), *The Eye and the Mind*. Translated into Georgian and edited in Tbilisi by D. Labuchidze, p. 34.

subjective shadow of the painter and thus has immortalized something in nature, which corresponds to my subjective self.

It becomes obvious that Merleau-Ponty implies the impressionistic manner of painting. The contingency and uniqueness of life have been responding to the uniqueness of my subjective self. Impressionism does not present my subjective relation to the world; it is an extension of my subjectivity in nature and beyond me.

The difference is due to the fact that here we do not express the world as the author perceives it, but rather emphasis is placed on the subjective being of nature – the contingency and instantaneity of the world and the unique character of life.

We think that such a tendency eventually leads us to the deconstruction of the 'objective reality' of art, attaching to a picture a conditional face, although it is the conditionality of life rather than the abstraction of speculative thinking.

As a result, the picture becomes the subject of the creative act. In the process of painting, the picture influences the painter, creating the psycho-emotional essence of his spirituality. There is no distinct border between cause and effect: painter and picture mutually influence each other, and the roles of the subject and the object of creativity are permanently exchanged.

For the crowning of our inquiry into the origins of the analogy between art and sociology, let us return to the self-regulated nature of an open society stemming from Rousseau's social contract. In her work 'The Origins of Life',² the founder of the phenomenology of life, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, raises a question about the origins of such a social contract from the angle of its generation. "...I have tried to show successfully the self-prompted and self-regulated nature of the social sphere of life, which is manifestly an original matrix of generation. I submit that by approaching social life from the angle of its generation we see both its fully human origins and its status as an autonomous though existentially dependent sphere of life significance...I believe that its generative matrix, as described above, qualifies its being accounted a new form of life, specifically that of human sharing-in-life."³

² A-T Tymieniecka, in: J. Analecta Husserliana, LXVII, pp. 3-12.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Let us see how this position accounts for grounding society in freedom and the normative structure of life. The intentional content of time, place, circumstance, individual psychology and communicative relations are all factors responsible for the coexistence of individuals who out of necessity seek support in group cooperation to create a community as such.

Tymieniecka's point of view encourages us to suggest that the necessity of the social contract has conditional roots and, in fact, that the social contract is an extension of personal freedom and subjectivity in society: members of a society make an agreement to arrange their coexistence. The necessity to exchange goods, mutual aid in handling the difficulties of life, and the necessity of solidarity in common defence against aggressors and cataclysms are all factors that lead humans to unite under the social contract. But these factors are external motives of agreement. There is no deterministic link between people when making the social contract. Here, purposeful conditionality replaces causal interaction. If the social contract were the result of necessity, it would not be only the necessity of people's coexistence, but also it could be the necessity for the whole society, as a live phenomenon, to bring out in itself the conditionality of life, transforming an 'objective' system of society into a subject. The social contract is a sign of the emergence of subjectivity in society. This subjectivity, expressed by Rousseau through the concept of the universal will, does not absorb the individual. Quite the contrary, it makes clear the unique essence of the citizen providing his true freedom through the personal imperative of responsibility by assimilation with the universal will.

Thus the analogy between impressionism and the social contract becomes clear.

The art of painting:

1. The painter wants impressionistic painting to extend his subjectivity in nature;
2. He gets used to painting the contingency and instantaneity of the world – the external agents of the internal uniqueness of his own self;
3. For the crowning of his creative work, he gets the picture to influence his psycho-emotional state;
4. Here the roles of subject and object interchange;

5. The picture, the resulting effect of painting, acquiring the features of self-existence turns into the subject, which inversely influences the painter;

6. The painter, the subject of the creative work, becomes an object of reverse action of the picture.

The social contract:

1. The person needs the social contract to arrange his coexistence with other individuals. Such an interaction goes beyond the objective necessity of social defence in order to unfold the subjective essence of a person. Hence, the person wants social contract to develop and extend his subjectivity in society;

2. Through the social contract he gets used to expressing the freedom and conditionality of his coexistence, which are the external agents of the uniqueness of his own self;

3. For the crowning of his social creativity he gets society to influence his self through an internal sense of responsibility;

4. Here the roles of subject and object are interchanged;

5. Society, the resulting effect of an individual's coexistence, acquires the features of self-existence and turns into the subject which inversely influences the person;

6. The person, the subject of the social contract, becomes an object of reverse action of the society.

As we see, in both cases, in social and artistic reality, the creative development of human activity reaches a turning point, a point of extension of subjectivity beyond the subject. The effect of the subject's creative work (a picture or society) is considered to be live self-existence, which acquires a unique wholeness of subject and inversely influences the person.

Such influence does not oppress the person. On the contrary: Through the social contract society as a subject helps the person to find his true essence.

The same is true with painting.

The influence of a picture does not oppress the painter. Moreover, thanks to the impressionistic appearance, the picture as a subject helps the painter to find his true essence.

This pattern of the societal ordering of existence, similar to impressionistic art, shows the vital coexistence of subject and object.

The complexity of this interaction lies in the fact that we get opposite points, differentiation and unity, to create the indivisible integrity of subject and object. The vital process of creativity is offered as a solution to this problem. This raises a question: how can the unity of being be explained not despite but because of individuality and the difference of subject and object (deriving from the duality of spirit and matter).

To support this deliberation it is worth going back to the philosophies of Socrates and Plato. It is my conviction that the difference between the philosophies of Socrates and Plato originated from a distinction between oral and written forms of thinking. It was not accidental that Socrates never wrote down his thoughts, as he believed that live speech should easily catch the initial stream of thinking arising from the unique sense of debaters. Here we cannot help seeing the influence of the Sophists, namely Gorgias' argument that the word, bearing a general meaning, is neither a private sensation nor an individual thing, and so it is unable to express either subjective sense or objective being. Also experiencing the same problem, Socrates nevertheless attempted to restore the communicative function of the word, providing that we take into account only oral speech. Indeed, the oral word has an advantage over the written one since the first arises within a conversation by a real person who embodies all the contradictions between unique sense and general thinking.

Plato dared write down the oral teaching of his master, although this teaching was offered to him as an attempt to restore the communicative ability of the living word. Plato's intention was to create a written text that could keep the flexibility of the oral word and hold the differentiation and unity of manifold existence. Moreover, Plato regarded the written text as the most convenient form for this purpose. The written text could bracket the reality of speech in order to construct the ideal essence which would be responsible for holding together the individuality and unity of life. Plato did not want the act of bracketing to erase the reality of speech. It should be maintained, but maintained by virtue of its claim to be an ideal phenomenon of the living word. This is the very process of artistic creation, the process of turning the actual world into an artistic reality (individuals into heroes). That is why, instead of theoretical issues, Plato reproduced

his philosophy through literature and through the dramatic art of dialogue.

Leo Straus remarked⁴ that Platonic dialogue is in a way insoluble, as Plato tried to retain the flexibility of oral speech in his writing. Here we see the following problem: If speech was written down, it would lose the individual listener, whom the speaker might address. The written word leads us towards the abstract reader. Such a relation also means losing the individuality of the speaker, turning him into the voice of the writer. Therefore Plato's Socrates was in danger of losing the face of the real Socrates by representing Plato's image of his master.

Plato tried to break away from this problem and to answer the question: Will the subject and object of speech keep their individuality if they pass from the oral to the written word? A positive answer implies polyphony of the written form, for only in case of multiple meanings of a word is there a chance of returning to the individual listener and the speaker. Polysemy provides the flexibility of the artistic word through its figurative sense. This is the key to the variety of understanding of the artistic word, appealing to the individual efforts of readers. Thus metaphorical writing, like oral speech, refers to the reader, who contributes his own energy to understand the word. Such a contribution distinguishes the individual reader, although, besides the listener, the number of perceiving individuals might increase endlessly.

On the other hand, the method of expression of the speaker of this metaphorical word turns into irony. Plato's Socrates was full of irony, but not because of his character, which did not sneer at the listener but in order to keep the individuality of subject and object when replacing the oral conversation by written dialogue.

Thus we obtain similarity and difference between Socrates' conversation and Plato's dialogue. Similarity has occurred as the individuality of the speaker and listener (author and reader) is kept. But the ways of supporting such individuality are different. Socrates used oral speech and the direct meaning of the word. Plato, as he wrote down what he heard, was obliged to use the figurative word to reach the same effect. Irony as a methodological background of the

⁴ *Essays and Lectures by Leo Straus* (Chicago and London, 1989), p.151.

metaphorical word transforms the direct speech of Socrates into the reported text of Plato.

Therefore Plato's written form includes some kind of uncertainty. This is a sacrifice to the freedom of the speaker and listener to avoid the directness of the author and the homogenous perception of an infinity of readers. Such uncertainty provides the insoluble character of Plato's dialogue in a type of positive feature as it keeps together the individuality and unity of subject and object which animates the written text and turns it into a phenomenon of life. Irony and the flexibility of figurative text, creating an area of uncertainty within the dialogue, liberates Plato from obedience to his teacher.

If I defined political thought according to Rousseau, it would be clear that the vital entity of society, which is considered the subject of political interactions, does not oppress the individual, as the universal will, through internal responsibility, coincides with personal freedom. Such a political point of view is compatible with both Socrates' oral thinking and Plato's dialogue. In comparison with personal existence, which reveals its true essence through an interaction with another person, Socrates' speech discovers the truth through conversation. In conversation people influence each other and come to the point of the general concept of truth, keeping at the same time their own relations to the truth. Such coexistence of individuality and unity is not incredible thanks to the oral word and the vital stream of thinking.

Things become complicated in the case of Plato. Plato as a writer could not preserve the individuality of the speaker and listener unless he created an area of uncertainty within the dialogue to ensure the metaphorical freedom of the artistic word. Hence, instead of clarity in the concept of truth, Plato was obliged to offer the idea of truth, which is, in a way, the unobtainable goal of playing on figurative words appealing to the individual efforts of speaker and reader. As the idea of truth could not be reached, the philosophical thinking of Socrates acquires the form of political thought, where the artistic word is used as a rhetorical element, or a way of persuasion.

The deliberation we have been compelled to carry out takes place under the shadow of modern phenomenology. Our viewpoint on the difference between Socrates and Plato seems to be reducible to a distinction between the oral and the written word. Plato could not help differing with his master. If Plato had been true to Socrates' convictions, he could not have restored his philosophy, because of the

spontaneous difference between the oral and the written word. Quite the contrary: It is precisely Plato's faithfulness to Socrates that causes the emergence of a difference between them. In order to fix precisely what he heard, Plato wrote down Socrates' speech and came across the difficulty of losing the individuality of the speaker and the listener. He was therefore forced to diverge from his writing into an area of uncertainty through irony and the figurative sense. Socrates created an exact concept of things; Plato turned this concept into an idea which, because of the uncertainty of the artistic word, was inexpressible by the concept.

Therefore, if Socrates' concept belonged to the reality of things, Plato's idea would be considered beyond this reality in the nominal sphere for, if the idea had really existed, the reader and the speaker could not have kept their individuality. The existence of general truth, according to the idea, would have destroyed the freedom of the individual in interpreting the written word.

On the other hand, if the idea did not exist at all, both the individual speaker and the actual reader would lose their unity. The non-existence of an idea (in reality) determines the individual relation of subject and object of speech. The existence of an idea (beyond reality) is responsible for the unity of the subject and object above. An idea exists not really but nominally, as an unobtainable aim of reality, and unity becomes an interminable point of subject-object interaction. Therefore Plato's dialogue has an unfinished nature in principle. In the end, the author does not express any conclusion about the idea he discussed. Platonic dialogue is 'open' for further debate. So, as we see, the mono-logic rationality of Socrates, which is based on the unity of life-world, turns into the duality of reality and the nominal sphere (the sphere of ideas), yielding the theory of ideas of Plato.

Thus, two different fields of creativity are proposed to be similar to political thought: impressionistic painting and Plato's dialogue. This analogy happens to relate to the philosophical problem of the unity of the world in the case of taking into account the individuality of being and the duality of spirit and matter. The unity of life does not appear to have difficulty in correlating such mutually exclusive phenomena. There are some turning points in different branches of the development of human thinking that point out the emergence of subjectivity and the integrity of life. Quantum theory in atomic physics, the impressionistic style of painting, polyphony and the

'unfinished' nature of Plato's dialogue, and an open state of society are all achievements of creative thinking and are witnesses to such turning points in subjective existence.

In particular, according to Bohr's interpretation of quantum theory, if the principle of complementarity was taken into account, it would be clear that the quantum object acquires physical meaning by interaction with the measuring instruments. This interaction is indivisible and cannot be subject to control. It reflects not only the interaction between classical and quantum objects, but also between subject and object or, strictly speaking, between subjective and objective being. Otherwise, the uncontrolled character of the interaction could not be explained.

Finally, to summarize our discourse in various fields of human thinking, we would like to underline a conclusion which echoes the phenomenology of life: It is a process of the individuality of being that leads us to the unity of the world.

The phenomenological principles of the integrity of life and the unity of the subject and the object are both revealed in various fields of human activity: in the spheres of art, literature, physics, and psychology. In sociology, this conception is reducible to a deep connection between personal freedom and an open state of society.

Part II
Sacred and Secular, On-Going Saga:
Complement or Conflict?

The Sacralization of the Profane and the Profanation of the Sacred: The Case of Eastern Europe

TADEUSZ BUKSINSKI

Naïve Profanation during the Communist Period

It is a common and well known fact that Marxism was an atheistic ideology and that communist regimes combated churches and religions in various ways. Marxism generally viewed religion as an “opiate of the people,” which the Church hierarchy used to oppress the people. Marxist metaphysical materialism rejected the existence of both an internal and external spiritual reality and practical materialism conceived the nature of the human being primarily in biological and economic terms. The thought process was considered a mere function of matter while the content of thought was understood to be based upon the material conditions of social life. There was no place for holiness in the life of man; the only reality was the profane.

In Eastern and Central Europe, where the communists held political power (in the USSR since 1917, and in Central – Eastern European Countries since 1945) the fight against religion and the churches took very brutal forms. Clerics were murdered (USSR, Czechoslovakia), imprisoned (Poland, Hungary), watched and harassed, while believers were deprived of work, or at best prevented from occupying important or well-paid positions in the state and the public sphere. This politics frightened the citizens and the number of believers decreased during this period in all communist countries except Poland. Using Charles Taylor’s terminology, we may speak of the communist era as an especially crude and brutal form of naïve secularization of the second stage. Religion and faith, after being removed from social and public life, began also to decline in the private sphere (family and personal life) as well.

The Communist Conception of the “Sacred”

The above-mentioned facts are well known. It must therefore cause surprise (because less known) that the communists at the same time attached great importance to symbols, rituals, ideas, ideologies and in

general to the realm of the “spiritual” life of individuals and social groups. This was because they wanted to have total control of human minds in order to reign absolutely. They sought to change the material conditions of human existence through indoctrination, propaganda, brain washing, and intimidation; they also created new institutions, with corresponding rituals and symbols, that sought to imitate the ecclesiastical and religious institutions.

The processes of sacralization of the profane appeared in the past and for a long time and had repeatedly been reported, often with cooperation between churches and political powers. In the communist period, however, it was different. This paper describes only some of the most striking phenomena that took place during the communist regime in Central and Eastern Europe. Of course, the intensity of the processes of sacralization of the profane changed over time. The most striking was during the Stalinist period. The process took different shapes in different parts of the communist world: the most intense was in the Soviet Union and East Germany, the weakest in Poland. However, in all countries of real socialism these processes were present and significant. Using the conceptual tools developed by Eliade and Charles Taylor, the sacralization of the profane could be described as having a definite conceptual structure and one can distinguish in it various degrees of “sanctity.”

Until the year 1956 the most “sacred” were the views of Stalin and Lenin. Later, Stalin was removed from the “altar of sanctity” and the highest degree of holiness was afforded to K. Marx, F. Engels, and W.I. Lenin, along with their theories, which also became “sacred.” Their communist writings functioned as sacred scripture, in particular: *Capital*, *Communist Manifesto*, *State and Revolution*, and *A Short Course in Bolshevik Communist Party*. These were issued in many languages and distributed by the millions and eventually obtained an extraordinary status. The classical theory of Marxism presented in these writings required recognition of its absolute truth and equity, and no criticism or doubt of its validity was allowed. It was treated as providing the meaning of life¹ and as the basis for the formulation of the essential individual and collective identity. To defend and protect

¹ In the context of the work of Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, see chapters 18 and 19 wherein he discusses L. Ferry’s meta-question concerning the “*le sens du sens*.”

it, communists were willing to make sacrifices. By referring to it as "scientific," they sought to underscore its infallibility and objectivity. According to the common interpretation at that time, the theory proved the truth of the thesis that God did not exist. A full understanding of these works was understood to be available only to a closed circle of people, namely, to those communists having proper faith and trust. They knew the truth; others had to change their consciousness to understand the truth.

The views of the founders of Marxism were treated more rigorously than the dogmas of religious faith. Persons, who dared to criticize them, were put into prisons, work camps, and psychiatric hospitals (in the Soviet Union), or simply forced to emigrate. Critics who undermined the faith were thought to be dangerous for the population, and were treated as the embodiment of evil. Marxism was taught in schools and universities. Usually, however, the theories of Marx, Engels and Lenin were adapted to the current policy of the Communist Party, and were therefore modified, simplified and often distorted. Out of this process, a kind of Communist Catechism emerged. The many theses of Marx were altered with the aim of teaching the party line, but the political powers carefully avoided allowing or encouraging direct study of his writings. Marxism, as adapted to the politics of the communist party in the Soviet Union, became the secular religion and the basis for politics. It required its citizens to place their confidence in it and to implement it in their social and personal life. The main preoccupation was only how best to put the "truth" into effect.

The founders of Marxism also belonged to the realm of the highest eternal "holiness." Criticism of them as persons or of their personal lives was forbidden. Their "sanctified" styles of living became occasions for assemblies that were held to honor the "holiness" of their lives. Their biographies described them as men of unusual character, without moral or physical blemish from birth to death. From one side they were depicted as very brave, defending the poor people against capitalists, from other side as living as saints: modest, hardworking, honest in every way, suffering for the cause of truth. Superhuman qualities were attributed to them: they were able to overcome evil (especially the evil of capitalism) and bring good to the whole world. They lead the working class to the Promised Land of communism. Their actions demanded reverence and commemoration: for example,

the October 1917 revolution, or the 1943-1945 war against the Nazi regime. The cult of persons (Stalin till 1956, and Lenin throughout) was particularly intense in Russia. Children in kindergarten had to memorize their fictitious CV's, and in schools special rooms were devoted to Lenin, where his photos and books were collected. Regular assemblies, quizzes, songs, and meetings were organized, along with ostentatious anniversaries of their birth, death and great deeds. Children were taught how to imitate Lenin in everyday life, and in practice they were taught how best to serve the Communist Party. Votive lights and candles burned perpetually in front of Lenin's (and till 1956, Stalin's) portraits and monuments. The houses and rooms in which they lived, and even the furniture, were venerated. Their bodies were embalmed and treated as relics. The best example of this worship is the Lenin mausoleum in Red Square in Moscow. It was forbidden to come too close to Lenin's body. Visitors were only allowed to view it for a moment and with the greatest reverence, dignity and peace. Pilgrimages from the remotest locations of Russia and from abroad were organized.

In other Communist countries the cult of the founders was smaller. However, all communist countries had their own "holy" regional founders: Bulgarian Communists embalmed the body of Dymitrow; Czechs, the body of Gottwald; in Vietnam, that of Ho Chi Minh; and in China, of Mao Zedong. Their graves were associated with religious cults.

The Sanctification of Secular Reality

In addition to the absolute *sacrum* or holiness, Communists had a sanctified or enshrined *sacrum*, the *sacrum* of the lower level. It belonged to the *sacrum*, by taking part in the absolute *sacrum*, for as Eliade rightly pointed out the sanctified realm belongs to two orders: sacred (ideal, perfect) and profane (natural, infirm, defective), and sanctification is gradual and of different kinds. One could therefore be involved in the communist sacred reality to a greater or lesser extent. The procedures of sanctifications were complex and far reaching: taking part in the ideological training, cooperation with secret services, participating in party meetings. There were sanctified places, things, peoples, events, and times. The best known sanctified place was Red Square in Moscow. There were no toilets and smoking was prohibited. The key sanctified parades, celebrations, and assemblies

took place there. Participation in the sanctified events was obligatory for citizens, such as rallies to honor May Day (1 May), Victory Day (9 May), the proletarian revolution anniversary (17 October) and others. This was required in order to contribute to the correct consciousness of the people. Those who dared to work on a particularly sanctified day were punished and imprisoned in Stalin's period, or publicly stigmatized after 1956.

The sanctified world was a kind of medium between the absolute *sacrum*, reserved for the chosen ones (the elect and the believers) and the world of the evil capitalist enemies. It was the realm of ideological activity, the realm of transformation of citizens into communists.

The communist attributed this to the ability of the self to go beyond a purely temporary sense of action and to enter a gradual initiation. The more persons were ideologically committed, the more access they gained to elite circles. One's activity was geared toward a specific future target, whose achievement was assured by this activity from the one side, and by the scientific dialectical law of social development, from the other side. Those who accepted this perspective got the chance to interpret history correctly and to know what to do in the contemporary historical situation. By virtue of processes of interpretation of history going in the direction of communism, the transitory or temporary phenomena took on an eternal sense, as a contribution to reaching the final end with an eschatological sense. Some were involved in this process unintentionally and did not know what they really were doing; they were objects of the historical processes. Communists, knowing the direction of the development, became the subject of history and influenced it consciously. History was conceived, from the one side, as something governed by objective laws, and from the other side, as the subject upon which the development of the human will depended. History was the realm of war or struggle between what is good and right and what is evil or wrong. It concluded with the achievement of a paradise on earth – a kind of salvation for all mankind. It was supposed to last forever in an earthly time and space.

Thus, under communism, there are at least three basic types or varieties of sanctification of human deeds and events. Sanctification of the first degree was to take place within the community of communists, conscious of their mission to implement it in everyday life in the historical dimension. The two other types of sanctification

were of a secondary or lower level and refer to the society of noncommunists, though not to its enemies. First, ideological and educational work increases the awareness of many people, who do not identify themselves until now with communists, but are becoming to some degree the subjects of historical processes aimed at the final goal. Others are treated by communists as instruments participating in the process of building communism and fighting with capitalism. They participate in it without the proper awareness and without the intention to do so.

Replacement of Religious Rituals by Secular Ones

As a specific form of sanctification we distinguish the imitation of strictly religious rituals. These activities happened outside the bare sacrum and on the borderlines between sanctified and unsanctified space, i.e., in the private or community sphere. Its aim was to eliminate the ecclesiastical and religious rituals and customs and to substitute them with similar ones having a communist or atheistic aim. In this area the imitation of churches was most striking and most visible. People were persuaded and constrained to lay rituals to sanctify the important events in their personal and family life. These were organized as secular baptisms for families considered by authorities to be particularly deserving – for example, families of miners were identified in such wise that the First Secretary of Communist Party was called godfather; solemn secular weddings; and solemn secular funerals with revolutionary songs and speeches. It was prohibited for a priest to officiate at a wedding without a prior solemn secular wedding. The rank to be given to these customs and rituals is provided by the instruction of the Central Committee of PZPR (Communist Party) in Poland to the activists of the Communists Party, after the first visit of Pope John Paul II to Poland. Section Nr 5 of the Instruction, called “Developing and disseminating socialistic habits and rituals” requires that:

In parallel with the increasing development of these guidelines and the ideological forms of educational work, which form the layer of rational social attitudes, the impact on emotional experiences must be evolved and improved,...(a) The Administrative Committee of the Central Committee (of the Communist Party in Poland), in conjunction with interested ministers and social

organizations, will aspire to further work on the dissemination of civic rituals, especially for universal application; the following should be considered:

- A secular ritual for giving names to children,
- A solemn celebration of the jubilee of 25 years of married life,
- A secular funeral ceremony, regardless of any religious ceremony, and
- To be widely introduced are decisions of the solemn giving of the first personal passport for 18-year-olds.

According to the instruction the secular rites and behavior should replace the religious ones. They should become a lifestyle, without any alternative. And the party's activists tried to fulfill these aims.

The worst situation was in the Soviet Union. As is well known, churches in the Soviet Union were destroyed or changed into museums of atheism.

Curiosities of Communist Sacralization

For a fuller understanding of the phenomena occurring in the communist system we make a distinction between relative and non-relative sanctification. Relative sanctification of some parts of the secular happens in democratic societies and it is accepted there. It is justified by such social or cultural-political values and goods as: identity, unity, solidarity, and freedom. Usually the important political values are represented by symbols, such as flags, a national hymn, and a constitution. Their justifications are rational and could be questioned. Sometimes these important values together with their symbols are treated as components of the public secular religion. Rousseau, Montesquieu, and the American Federalists wrote in this sense that public religion exists regardless of religious beliefs and membership in a Church; it does not compete with the religion represented by churches and denominations and it does not conflict therewith.

In contrast, communists ascribed a strictly religious respect to secular but designated events, persons and deeds. They imposed this kind of holiness on all of society, as exclusive to all other possible holiness. What is interesting in the turn of history is that the new teams and cliques holding political power or seeking it have sought to

legitimize their position and their claims, by demonstrating that they are more faithful to the principles of Marxism than the others, and are able to implement better than the competing groups the atheistic absolute sacred. The strongest argument in the ideological and political struggle between communists was the accusation of apostasy or desertion from the science of Marxism – Leninism. The greatest enemies were dissidents and revisionists, that is, the people who earlier belonged to the sacred sphere and now became excluded. The frequent praxis of self-criticism of some insufficiently faithful followers of communism recalls a public confession.

Profanation of Sacrum

1. After the collapse of communism the relations between *sacrum* and *profanum* have changed. The sphere of the profanum ceased to aspire and to strive to be sanctified. Religions and churches entered the public sphere of politics in two forms: first, the church took part in the discussion, for example, about abortion; and second, the church appears as a conservator of the tradition and the symbols of the state's independence and identity. The last activity takes the form of arranging the divine services to honor state holidays and anniversaries or hanging crosses in some public institutions. This is from the one side, symbolic, and from the other, a partnership of churches as institutions in the secular sphere of politics.

2. Inside the churches there appears a process of some liberalization. Democracy and capitalism or free market influenced the behavior of the clergy, which have become more open to believers and unbelievers in post-communist countries. They appear to interpret religious dogmas, and especially the category of sin, more liberally than ten or twenty years ago. The threshold between the sacred and the profane was lowered, while at the same time the clergy began to set store by material goods and well being much more than in the period of communism. The absence of the crude near-enemy weakens the internal discipline in the life of many representatives of the churches, which has a negative influence on the image of churches, particular among young people for whom the processes of secularization is conceived as the subjectivisation of religion. More and more young people do not attend mass or observe the norms prescribed by the church. But, in general, after the collapse of

communism the number of believers rose rapidly in all post-communist countries except Poland.

3. But what is most visible and striking at the present time is the profanation of the sacrum realized intentionally by different groups and institutions. The most primitive examples of this profanation are the devastation of cemeteries and places of religious cult by groups of atheists and Satanists. On a massive scale, more important are the activities of some left-minded liberal mass media, artists and organizers of cultural events. Their activity determines the main stream of profanation and secularization today. Mass media compete with each other in finding out and making known the immoral behavior of clergy, interpreted as signs of the degeneration of all churches and religions. They describe the believer as simple, reactionary, and backward while religious symbols, prayer and other sanctities are parodied and derided by journalists.

4. The most offensive activities of profanation are done by artists. In the theatres and in the films religions are ridiculed and shown as superstition, while religious rituals are parodied and desecrated. The acts of profanation are present not only in Eastern Europe of course, but are fashionable, treated as signs of the new modernity, open-mindedness, new enlightenment, and freedom in all of Europe. We may quote many examples of this trend: the caricatures of the prophet Mahomet in the Danish newspapers, and the photos of singer Madonna on the cross or with the crown of thorns on her head. Many writers, painters, and sculptors, such as Morizio Cattelana, Kewin Smith, Milos Formann, Adolf Frohner and others specialize in the acts of profanation. Of course, the thresholds and borderlines between sacred and secular are different in different religions and cultures, but are present in all of them.

The acts of profanation reflect relations of contemporary artists and creators of culture to the supernatural world and to the religious dimension of man. Usually they are justified by invoking the freedom of artistic expression and creativity, but they evoke the indignation of believers and churches, offending convictions and faith. Therefore, the discussion is about the limits and borderlines of freedom, and about the relation between freedom and human dignity and respect for religious faith, values and symbols.

One may look at these artistic and pseudo-artistic activities from yet another point a view. The acts of profanation are intentional acts

of invasion in the sacred sphere from outside; they are acts of insult and sacrilege. We have to ask why artists and societies demand them today. The churches and religions always played the role of inspiration for artistic and cultural activity: they provided the motifs, symbols, and ideas productive of the culture, while the works of artists expressed and shaped in material forms spiritual, supernatural contents. Huntington has shown that the basis and essence of every culture is its religion, as God's prohibitions and prescriptions, or religious taboos laid the foundations of cultures. They introduced the order, norms, customs, safety, and the higher law above the chaos of human natural behavior and above the laws of nature.

It appears that today too, in the epoch of the third secularization, artists and animators of culture are not able to be creative without religion and relation to sacred. Only the references of some of them are negative. Religion and sacrum still play the role of inspiration, but now as provocation.

One may ask: have these negative attitudes something in common with the third stage of secularization as described by Charles Taylor? Some of those mentioned above may be included in the stream of naïve atheism, still popular among many groups of people, but not all. It seems that some of them are expressions of optional attitudes. What is interesting in the acts of profanation is that they seem to go beyond the optional awareness, wanting to annul it. In my opinion they are acts of despair, which rise in the frame of bare profane styles of life. This style of life shows itself to be insufficient in the optional situations. The optional *profanum* in acts of profanation wants to make itself more valuable and more visible. If only great and authentic values and goods inspire and give meaning to life, in their own way they relate to these values and goods.

In this situation the next question arises: does this mean that, despite all changes and the processes of secularization, the basic source and structure of human cultural life and spiritual creativity is the same – sacred?

Novalis said once that the real art is a vision of God in nature. The contemporary artist wants to reverse this thesis and to naturalize God. With its drastic characteristics this kind of art is a bitter sign of our time; it is a witness of the 'embarrassed human,' a sign of his abandonment. To profane the sacrum means to design outside the emptiness of one's internal profane life and alienate this from the

world of meaning. It is an attempt to escape from the flourishing *profanum* without resigning the basis of life. It is an attempt to bring value to the *profanum* by depriving it of the sacrum. This shows that *profanum* in the optional age can exist only in relation to the sacrum, but as the anti-sacrum.

Christian Humanism in Our Time

M. JOHN FARRELLY

It is a daunting task to try to say something coherent and intelligible about Christian humanism in our time and in one paper. Here I will give a brief introduction on the historical use of the word, and then sketch something of the problem and elements of an answer in five points.

The word 'humanism' was coined by the 19th century German philosopher Johann Herder. It is used primarily to designate the spirit and focus of some poets, philosophers and artists of the Italian Renaissance who were animated by their rediscovery of the riches of the Roman and Greek literature, philosophy and art. He did so in order to value the human present in those cultures, to concentrate on it in a way that seemed new when compared to the concentration on God and Christian faith in the high and late middle ages, and to integrate the study of the classics into the education of the young. Many of these Renaissance men did not see a dichotomy between Christianity and humanism, as we can see in the most prominent artists of that time; rather Christianity itself proclaimed human dignity and sought to promote a way that enhanced and protected it. Thus, their artistic work, poetry and philosophy are frequently called Christian humanism. In the twentieth century, a number of Catholic philosophers, like Jacques Maritain, have sought to promote a Christian humanism integrating the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas with philosophies of the aesthetic and the social order. Maritain calls for a "heroic humanism," and this as distinct from what he, in the 1930's, called "liberal-bourgeois humanism," which "is now no more than barren wheat or than starchless bread."

There are many ways of expressing and studying this Christian humanism and its presence in our world today, but what I am attempting in this paper is a brief identification of some major current tensions between Christianity and humanism and of ways to address these tensions. I will all too briefly: 1) identify the problem in our time and place, 2) survey some ways that classical Christian thought dealt with the tension between Greek philosophy that acknowledged human transcendence in the sense that human beings are capable of

and meant for a knowledge and meaning beyond the human, and Christian revelation, 3) give some instances of how there was a loss of such integration in dominant Western culture in recent centuries, with a loss for many people of a sense of human transcendence and Christian faith, 4) try to show that a contemporary historical consciousness supports rather than undermines human transcendence, and 5) show how Christian faith and hope integrate and fulfill human history, without being reduced to history. It would be too much here to treat how Christian humanism relates to our current larger world of religions. I will dwell primarily on sections four and five, trying to identify a few ways in which the Christian riches could help to heal and enlarge a current anthropocentric humanism. To use a phrase that the eminent philosopher-theologian John Courtney Murphy used of one of his lectures, I am offering only a skeleton of this theme, and some limbs may be missing.

A Sketch of the Tension between Current Humanisms and Christian Faith

Vatican II interpreted the cultural situation to which their message was addressed; the following passage is an important part of this interpretation:

Ours is a new age of history with critical and swift changes (*profundae et celeres mutationes*) spreading gradually to all corners of the earth. They are the products of man's intelligence and creative activity, but they recoil upon him, upon his judgments and desires, both individual and collective, upon his ways of thinking and acting in regard to people and things. We are entitled then to speak of a real social and cultural transformation whose repercussions are felt too on the religious level.¹

Vatican II did much to make the Church's message and structure more appropriate for this new era – for example, in its embrace of ecumenism, its acceptance of freedom of religion, its discourse on

¹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World) para. 4, in the translation in Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1975).

world religions and in the large place it gave to the Holy Spirit in its ecclesiology.

For many people in the West, this “new age of history with [its] critical and swift changes” has led to their focusing more and more on the immediate needs of their lives, individual and social, within history, using the many modern instruments and technologies that could help them address these needs – such as the technologies made possible by science, the political organizations of their country and the international community, etc. In the United States, if there is one philosophical interpretation of human life dominant in the 20th and 21st centuries, it is a pragmatism. That is, philosophy interprets the human condition as inserted into certain physical and historical contexts and as having problems set for them of improving their individual and social conditions – of fostering a fuller human life. The thrust of this philosophy is to creatively find means that address these specific problems. But this philosophy tends to downplay or even lose a sense that man is made for more than history or that there is a certain transcendent character to human nature to which one is called to be faithful.

Thus, there is a tension between a sense of our human transcendence and our sense of being in history and answerable for our historical future. This tension is fed by many other elements of our culture, for example, by the tension between knowledge found in the physical sciences and the knowledge found in classical philosophies of what it means to be human. A current humanism in tension with Christianity can be called modern historical consciousness that is in practice and frequently in theory also largely naturalistic. That is, human beings act as though the only resources they have are natural and human and the only goal they have is one within history. Thus, Pope Benedict XVI, when a Cardinal, described “liberal faith in continuous progress as ‘the bourgeois substitute for the lost hope of faith.’” He adds that the replacement of the concept of truth by the concept of progress is the “neuralgic point of the modern age;” and summarized the “fundamental crisis of our age” as “coming to an understanding of the mediation of history within the realm of ontology.”² By this he means the need to integrate somehow a classical

² See Tracey Rowland, “Variations on the Theme of Christian Hope in the Word of Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI,” *Communio*, Summer 2008, pp. 202, 215.

philosophy of being with a philosophy of history, a philosophy that accepts a distinctive human nature characterized by transcendence through history, and all of this with the authentic Christian message.

Tensions and Integrations in the Past between Judaeo-Christian and Greek Interpretations of Humanity

The Christian view of humanity has continuity with the Jewish belief that God chose a particular people in history, revealed to them through historical acts and words through prophets like Moses, and promised them a future in history – a promise he would fulfill if his people were faithful to him. Greek philosophy was not without a sense of the divine, as we see in Plato and Aristotle, or without a sense that there is a certain transcendence in humans in virtue of which they are oriented to this divine. But they discerned this divine through the lens of nature and the impact of the good upon a search for it in accord with conscience, not through an historical revelation. Even in the pre-Christian era Jews encountered the Hellenism that had spread through the Middle East since the time of Alexander the Great, and dialogued with Greek philosophy, for example, in the Book of Wisdom. The author of this book, a Jew in Alexandria about 50 B.C. tried to keep Jews from being seduced by Hellenistic culture, in part by integrating some of its strengths into his own writing. He taught that indeed God could be seen from his effects in creation (13:1) and that a Wisdom that comes from God teaches the four great virtues esteemed by Greek philosophers, “moderation and prudence, justice and fortitude” (8:7) and God gives immortality (*athanasia*) to the just (3:4). What he contested was the self-sufficiency and limited results of Greek philosophy, and what he sought was to bring people to a surrender to God. This spirit was continued in the New Testament, for example in Paul’s speech in Athens recounted in Acts 17.

As Christianity became predominantly a Church of the Gentiles, it met varied views of the gods and the human relation to them. Not all were as debased as popular polytheistic and official Roman religions. Philosophy in the form of Middle Platonism had an exalted view of God as spiritual, one, simple and immutable. Christian thinkers used elements of this philosophy to contest polytheisms, and complemented it by the Christian belief, for example that God freely created all other than himself and is Triune. Augustine was deeply influenced by a later form of Platonism, called Neo-Platonism. In fact,

it helped him on the way to conversion because it showed the reality of the spiritual. And he integrated this philosophy into his explanations of the Christian faith in God and our human relation to God. Neo-Platonism taught that all lesser reality cascades as it were from the Ultimate, the One, into successively diminished levels of being even down to matter; and we are called to return to God through an interior journey from matter to our spirit and from there to the Ultimate One. Augustine's description of his own and his mother's mystical experience shortly before she died reflects this Neo-Platonic scheme.³ Augustine taught that such a philosophy knew about God, but not about God's humility in becoming man and calling us through faith in Jesus Christ. We should note that Greek philosophy was characterized by a certain cyclicism, perhaps because nature itself showed the cycles of seasons and because they accepted a geocentric universe. Augustine integrated this into his theology so that our return to God showed a transcendence through levels of being.

This viewpoint is called "*exitus-reditus*," meaning the coming forth of all things from God and our return to God. This was different from the early Christian view that our return to God is through the fulfillment and liberation of history that was the work of Christ's redemption and would be apparent when he came back at the end of time. Christ had entered that future kingdom through his cross, resurrection and exaltation; and it was from that future kingdom that he sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples as the power of the age to come, already present in this age.⁴ Some eight centuries after Augustine when St. Thomas brought medieval theology to its high point, he used an integration of Greek philosophy similar to Augustine's, now with more emphasis on Aristotle, and Christian belief. Once again it was this *exitus-reditus* scheme that was the overall integrating principle in his major work, his *Summa theologica*. This work begins with God, one and Triune, and then the emergence of all from him through creation, humanity and its fallen condition, and the return of humanity to God through the theological and cardinal virtues – a return made possible by Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection together with grace, and the Church and the sacraments he founded. In his construction of a

³ I have treated Neo-Platonism's influence on Augustine in *Belief in God in Our Time* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992) 122-127, and in *Faith in God through Jesus Christ* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 217-221.

⁴ See *Faith in God*, 186-198.

Christian humanism Thomas used more a philosophy of being than a philosophy of history to explain the Christian faith.

Some Instances of a Loss of this Integration in Modern Western Culture

There are many books written on this theme. We shall simply indicate some widely accepted major reasons given for this decline, for which both the Christian Churches and modern culture were responsible. This disruption began in the later Middle Ages with a reaction against Thomas's integration of classical philosophy with Christian revelation – including a rejection of his moderate realism in epistemology and a substitution of nominalism, a viewpoint that prevents humans from having knowledge of God and God's ways that Thomas thought was accessible to us. There was also such a stress on divine freedom that it seemed to open a chasm between created natures and who God really was. A decline in Christian holiness in some of its leaders and an emergence of secular leaders trying to whittle down any authority the Church had in their areas contributed to this decline. All this erupted in the 16th century with Luther, on the one hand, rejecting Greek philosophy in his effort to get to the purity of what he thought was the biblical message, and some – not all by any means – Renaissance cultural leaders on the other hand rediscovering and admiring achievements of pre-Christian Greek and Roman cultures, to the extent of positing an opposition between that and Christianity and promoting an anthropocentric humanism.⁵ After the collapse of Christian unity, the Council of Trent did articulate some contested Christian mysteries in a way that kept together God's grace and human freedom as compatible, if in tension.

The beginnings of modern physical sciences on epistemological bases other than Aristotelian and the Church's condemning Galileo fostered the sense that a philosophy based on modern science was the future and was superior to both the kind of literary and artistic humanism characteristic of the Renaissance and what the churches had to offer. The disastrous results of religious wars in Europe to settle religious differences and discoveries of peoples in America and Asia

⁵ A profound analysis of the move in the modern age toward a more restrictive humanism is offered by Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 2007).

who lived without benefit of Christian revelation left many people searching for bases of civilization not moored to Christianity. All of this ushered in the age called the Enlightenment, between the mid-seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth century where reason and a general revelation were given priority over Christian revelation by intellectual leaders.

In the nineteenth century two intellectual strands further weakened Christianity as a dominant cultural influence. One was an emergence of a widespread atheistic humanism. Feuerbach, a materialist, gave a psychological account for the emergence of belief in God due to the evils human beings experienced, a viewpoint in which he was followed by Karl Marx and later by John Dewey, Nietzsche and Freud, "masters of suspicion." For these men and many influenced by them the center of life, resources and knowledge was what was here in history and only in history. Interpretations of Darwin's evolutionary biology supported this, as did attacks upon accounts of geological time in Scripture. Another strand was an integration of these new viewpoints by much of liberal Christian theology that dropped what was distinctive of Christian belief in order to accommodate itself to the modern world.

In the twentieth century, two World Wars dealt a serious blow to the myth of inevitable progress and turned many to religion – some to fundamentalist forms, particularly in the United States. Dominant political philosophers in the United States have sought to reduce the influence of religion in public life, reducing it to a private matter for those who still needed it. But recent public moral issues in the United States and encounters with Islam have brought this question back to center stage. There is still a sense on the part of many intellectual leaders in the Europe and United States that the humanisms possible and appropriate for us are those wedded to science and to a naturalistic historical consciousness.

Thesis: A Contemporary Historical Consciousness Supports Human Transcendence

Part of the dichotomy between a Christian humanism and modern consciousness has come from the association of a classical Christian humanism with pre-modern science and a culture that was not as historically conscious as is the modern world. This is true of the view of St. Thomas as of other pre-modern theologians. A large part of the

problematic search for identity in American Catholic Universities and colleges comes from this unresolved issue. However, questions that arise from our experience of the evolutionary world today raise some of the same questions that Thomas had to face in a non-evolutionary world. His philosophy, it seems to me and many others, has a potential to help elucidate these questions, to interrelate with the physical and human sciences of our time, and to be developed and corrected by this relationship.⁶ The understanding of the human person is a good example. The contrast between Thomas' and developmental psychology's interpretation of the human person, and the way these two can be interrelated give us an illustration of how a classical humanism can integrate what is best in modern experience.

In Thomas Aquinas' philosophy of the human person there is both a phenomenological, i.e. experiential, and a metaphysical dimension. He calls upon experience when he says, for example, that there is a special word, 'person,' coined for the individual human being, because such individuals, as distinct from lower animals, "have mastery over their own acts; they are not only acted upon, like others, but they act of themselves."⁷ They are not restricted to an automatic response when presented with a stimulus, but can through freedom and reason initiate their own response. This represents a call upon experience, and thus a kind of phenomenology that supports human distinctiveness.

Thus, in his philosophy Thomas seeks to know the structure of being that enables humans to act in this way. He relates such action to the roots in the person, namely the person's nature as a rational animal and existence itself. The person's intellectual capacity emerges as a property from the substantial form, the soul. The existence (*esse*), a metaphysical principle of the person along with the human nature, is associated by Thomas with the good. As he writes:

the good is that which all things desire...but all things
desire to be in act (*esse actu*) according to their measure,

⁶ I have discussed this question in varied places, for example in "The Relation of the Trinity to Creation" in Farrelly, *The Trinity. Rediscovering the Central Christian Mystery* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 139-154. I make significant use here of a work by the physicist Paul Davies, *The Cosmic Blueprint: New Discoveries in Nature's Creative Ability to Order the Universe* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988).

⁷ ST I, 29, 1.

which is clear from the fact that everything of its nature shrinks from corruption. To be in act therefore (*esse igitur actu*) is the essential notion of the good.⁸

What evokes love and desire (*eros*) – and so action – is the good, the perfection or actualization of the person and that to which this actualization is related, like that of other human beings and God himself. Thomas examines in depth the activity of the intellect in knowing and the human will in loving and acting, but the first intrinsic source of these capacities is the substance (form or soul and matter) and the existence or *esse* of the being. The agency of the human person has as its metaphysical root this dynamic structure and as its intrinsic horizon his or her actualization as a person.

Erik Erikson, a prominent developmental psychologist, also analyzes the roots of the characteristic activity of the human person, specifically what enables the adult human person to be a mature person.⁹ For him this maturity involves the concern to foster, even at some significant personal cost, the next generation, an attitude he calls 'generativity.' He accounts for it through showing it to be an attitude that emerges in men and women only through a sequence of stages from infancy. He interprets this emergence through relating it to certain psychic structures that he borrowed and adapted from Freud – social processes (*superego*), somatic processes (*id*) and ego processes (*ego*). The individual goes through stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence and early adulthood in which there are interactions between an enlarging social environment and the individual's maturing human potential that are marked by successive critical stages calling for the individual's restructuring of the self. In this process there is necessary at each stage a response that promotes certain ego-strengths. These strengths have a cumulative effect in the genesis of that generativity that characterizes the mature human being. But at each stage there is also the possibility of degrees of failure on the part of the social environment or the individual that present

⁸ *Sum. contra. Gent.*, I, 37. See Farrelly, "Existence, the Intellect and the Will," *The New Scholasticism* 29 (1955), 145-174.

⁹ See Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton 1965). Much use of Erikson is made in Jack Balswick, Pamela King and Kevin Reimer, *The Reciprocating Self. Human Development in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

obstacles to such growth and that can call for therapeutic intervention. The basic reason for the individual's growth here is the meaning such interactions have for the individual and for his or her social environment.

One can see that Erikson's analysis of the roots of the activity characteristic of the human person is largely phenomenological rather than metaphysical. In fact, the psychoanalytic tradition has been criticized for not getting beyond the ego, superego and id, for it presumes "that there is no such entity as a human person aside from the sum of these subdivisions of the psychic apparatus."¹⁰ Particularly in his later writings, however, Erikson seeks to get beyond this apparatus to some sense of a metaphysical "I"¹¹ though he does not achieve clarity.

It is clear that Thomas' and Erikson's analyses of the human person are very different. But, I propose, they can correct and complement one another. As fruitful as is Erikson's study of the emergence of a mature human disposition through stages, it leaves questions unanswered that call for another form of analysis, one we can call metaphysical. Thomas' analysis of the person does get beyond the 'psychic apparatus' to the one who acts. And it can explicate (by *esse*), on another level than the "id" (or modifications of the id proposed by Erikson or others), the motivation and energy that moves the growing person. This can give a basis for what Erikson seems to assert at times, namely that there is a constitutive human good that is normative for human growth; the *esse* that motivates human desire and love is the good of a specifically *human* being. The child cannot be formed by any blueprint people may choose to impose upon it.

But Thomas' interpretation of the human person is brought up to date and corrected by a contemporary phenomenology of human experience and its interpretation by Erikson and others. For example, Erikson's study shows that the capacities for mature human action emerge through a succession of intermediate agencies that are evoked by the interaction between the social environment and the maturing human potential at critical junctures. This implies a correction of Thomas' philosophy of the person. It means that the human nature

¹⁰ D. Yankelovich and W. Barrett, *Ego and Instinct. The Psychoanalytic View of Human Nature – Revised* (New York: Random House, 1970), 323.

¹¹ See Erik Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed. A Review* (New York: Norton, 1982), 85 f.

and existence are in principle the metaphysical origin not simply of 'faculties' but of a whole succession of subordinate agencies that emerge largely as Erikson and others analyze this. The metaphysical principles of the person are the internal root of the epigenesis of adult personality structures; their influence is explicated temporally. This modern phenomenology also shows that the person is essentially a *cultural* being, because the social environment is an essential principle of such emergence. I suggest that this interrelationship between classical philosophy and contemporary human science is fruitful for both,¹² and can help us toward a more adequate humanism for our time, one that integrates being and historical process rather than seeing them as counter to one another. This view integrates some dominant elements of pragmatism within an acceptance that there is something about the human that is normative for human behavior, which enhances a human being or degrades a human being. This view accepts modern historical consciousness and seeks to integrate it with a classical philosophy of the human person, enriching both the latter and the former, excluding neither process nor human transcendence. In practice, this is very widely acknowledged and followed, for example in the Church's social teaching, but the philosophical support for this is, as far as I know, not so widely known. Many Christians and indeed many Catholics are seduced by the short term pragmatism of our culture.

How Christian Faith and Hope Integrate and Fulfill History

There is another question we must raise if we are to offer a genuinely *Christian* humanism, even in outline. The above analysis emphasizes the historical good of the individual and society as normative for human behavior, but how does this relate to the integration of the Christian story of salvation and sanctification within the *exitus-reditus* scheme found in Augustine and Thomas? Recent scriptural studies help us to answer this question.

If we ask how the ultimate horizon of our deep human desire is related to what Christ offers us, Thomas would say we wish to see God and that is what Christ gives us. Jesus uses another wording that may well be closer to our contemporary self-understanding. The center of his message and offer was expressed by the Synoptics as

¹² I treat this more extensively in *Belief in God in Our Time*, 179-204.

follows: "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel" (Mk 1:15). There is dispute over what Jesus meant by the kingdom of God. Some exegetes interpret it in continuity with the Messianic strand of the Old Testament, and so conclude that Jesus was promising that through him God would renew his people as his people. This is an historical and communal transformation so that his people would genuinely put God first and establish a society of justice and compassion. Other exegetes say Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom was in continuity with the 7th chapter of Daniel, namely the apocalyptic strand of the Old Testament expectation. Writing around 165 B.C. while the Seleucid emperor Antiochus IV was trying to bring about a homogenized Hellenistic culture in Israel, and putting Jews to death for obstructing this by circumcising their baby boys or refusing to eat pork, Daniel had a vision of a succession of empires coming up out of the sea and enjoying power for a time, and then a vision of one like a Son of Man coming before the Ancient One on the clouds of heaven and being given by him a kingdom that would be one of peace and justice and would be universal and everlasting. This was to occur in the age to come rather than in the present age dominated by evil. It would overturn kingdoms of the present age that seek to dethrone God and his ways, and it would be the fulfillment and liberation of history. Also, in chapter 12, Daniel has the first Old Testament explicit prediction of the resurrection of the just – those who were willing to die rather than to cave in to Antiochus and assimilate to the kind of kingdom he sought. Many exegetes say that Jesus expected the kingdom in this sense, called apocalyptic.

There is much evidence to support the view that in his early ministry Jesus proposed the kingdom in the Messianic mode, and he praised Peter when Peter proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah (Mt 16: 16-17). Jesus genuinely sought to renew his people, but such renewal depended on their response to him by faith, as a people. This did not happen; it became clear to Jesus that the leaders of the Jews were seeking to get rid of him. And so toward the latter part of his ministry, his proclamation of the kingdom took on much of the cast of the apocalyptic. In fact, immediately after Peter proclaimed him Messiah, Jesus began telling his disciples that he would be put to death and rise again. God would bring about his kingdom not by renewing the kingdom of the Jews but by overcoming them, because through their leaders they too became a kingdom set to dethrone

God's rule. He would bring about God's rule or kingdom through his death and resurrection and transform the world from the age to come through that small group of disciples that genuinely believed in him and lived the implications of that belief. This would be the New Israel.

The first theology or interpretation of Christ's death and resurrection in the primitive Church was, exegetes largely agree, apocalyptic. The resurrection was a part of the apocalyptic strand of interpretation of God's coming kingdom, as we indicated. But Christ's resurrection was wholly directed toward the promise of his second coming or *Parousia*. And it seems that the first ascription of divinity to Jesus was in reference to the power to save and judge that he would exercise when he comes again (Phil 2:7-11). He would be "Lord" then, i.e., exercising divine prerogatives. Thus, the early Christian prayer, "Maranatha," "Come, Lord Jesus." And the first meaning of salvation was what he would do when he comes again. Salvation was initially a future word, pointing to what he would do then. Paul writes that our "salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand" (Rm 13:11-12).

It was soon realized that what Jesus would do then, he is already doing in part now from that future kingdom into which he went through his exaltation. He sent the Holy Spirit upon his disciples from there as the power of the age to come, that enables us to live in the present age by the power and Spirit of the age to come. And from that future age beyond the veil, Jesus presides at the Eucharist, a sacramental anticipation of the Messianic banquet, and he sends his ministers as his ambassadors to proclaim the good news throughout the world and help to transform that world as leaven in dough.

This has important implications for our lives. In our age of historical consciousness, it presents what God offers us through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as the fulfillment and the liberation of history. When Christ comes again he will establish that community that will be seen as that toward which the whole of evolution and history is moving as their secret source and meaning. It will be seen as the goal and fulfillment of God's providence and governance of the world, and as the result of the salvation and liberation effected by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. And so too, it is the fulfillment and liberation of our humanity, individual and collective. It is trans-historical, not as disengaging us from history and its tasks but as the

fulfillment of the tasks of history and the liberation of all that obstructs perfect community.

One thing to note about this salvation that is offered us by God is that it is at present *absent*. We possess it in hope, but hope that is seen is not hope (Rom 8:24). We live by faith, but faith that has grounds in the resurrection of Jesus, the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, and that crowd of witnesses who have preceded us in the way of faith (Hebrews 11). But it is present in part – through the Holy Spirit within us, through the sacraments, through the body of Christ's disciples that is the Church. And this is a promise or first installment of what is to come. We are called by Christ to have his mind and his spirit and to engage with and in him to help transform our world and its systems so that they have more of the characteristics of that age to come – particularly justice and compassion. What happened to Israel when Jesus visited it was not unique to itself but a harbinger to what happens when he visits other times and places.

We propose that this theology of the fulfillment of our humanity is both more in accord with Scripture and more in accord with what is valid in our present understanding of our humanity than is the approach of Thomas. It is in continuity with his view, but in part a correction of it by both Scripture and later human experiences and what they reveal to us of what it means to be human. What we have offered is of course only an imperfect sketch of a much larger theme, but perhaps it is enough to suggest some notes of a Christian humanism appropriate for our time.

Secularism: An Interpretation in the Light of Panikkar's Vision and Dallmayr's Concerns

EDWIN GEORGE

Introduction

The issues of the "veil" in France, turban in England, internal secular conflicts in Algeria, clashes of rites in the Middle East, and religious violence in India all have once again brought the debate on "secularism" to renewed relevance. The claim of Western countries to be secular is contested by their cultural divisions along religious *versus* secular (non-religious) lines. It is relevant then to re-examine the meaning of "secularism" and "secularization" and their relation to religious faith.

For Fred Dallmayr, terms like "secularism" and "secularization" are "emblems of intense historical conflicts and transformations, struggles aiming in large measure at the liberation of social life from clerical tutelage and the forced imposition of dogmas."¹ The questions that remain unanswered are whether religion can challenge itself to cultivate faith without becoming embroiled in public power and whether religious faith is able to withstand the force of the modern propensity of secularization in these globalizing times. Moreover, can the constitutional secular frameworks of, e.g., India and other countries uphold the worth of their religious traditions against the global "pervasive secularizing propensities of modernity?"² These issues must concern social and religious thinkers and philosophers.

Secularism or secularization has been a central category defining modern society as such. Comte moved from religious myth and religion-centered life to positive science, even elevating science to the status of a religion. After Marx and Spencer, Durkheim and Weber suggested that secularization is linked with modernization, especially with Protestant Reformation and the rise of capitalism, and held that

¹ Fred Dallmayr, *Dialogue among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 186.

² *Ibid.*

religion would soon disappear.³ The “functionalist” social scientist Talcott Parsons held that social functions increasingly marginalized or even led to an obsolescence of religion.⁴ This was pronounced more clearly in G. Almond’s and B. Powell’s views, backed by J. Habermas, namely that social revolution leads to structural differentiation (structural complexity) and cultural secularization (rational reflexivity of ‘life-worlds’).⁵

Later, some sociological practitioners have replaced that constrained outlook with a new and more flexible interpretive framework called the “transformation thesis,” which calls for reinscribing religion into a set of functional coordinates such that secularization is no longer an unassailable doctrine. In this, sociologists and social scientists have been largely oblivious to the nature of the sacred-secular or the secular-sacred to which Panikkar will point.

In India, the terms “secular” and “secularism” have varied notions and interpretations. Basically they mean “a foreign, largely western element”⁶ brought into the political and social scenarios of India. Secularism has now taken roots and dimensions within the body politic of India and it is certainly embedded into the fabric of the Indian sub-continent. Secularism in India is a constitutional, “complex, multi-value doctrine.”⁷ For Bhargava, Indian Secularism does not entail strictly a wall of separation between religion and state, but proposes a ‘principled distance’ between them. He proposes it as “a model of contextual moral reasoning” and prefers to call it “contextual secularism.”⁸

³ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁴ Talcott Parsons, *Sociological Theory, Values and Sociocultural Change*, ed. E. A. Tiryakian (New York: Free Press, 1963); refer also to C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 32-33.

⁵ Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell Jr., *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1966); J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), 1-8 (quoted in Fred Dallmayr, *Dialogue Among Civilizations*, 188).

⁶ T.N. Srinivasan, ed. “Introduction,” *The Future of Secularism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism,” Rajeev Bhargava, 34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 21. Bhargava’s chapter 3 takes pains to explain the distinct characteristics of Indian Secularism. He holds very strongly that Indian Secularism is distinctively different from the Western conception of the same term and that it

This study concerns the ongoing debate on secularism by social scientists, social theorists, political theorists, political philosophers, philosophers of religion and scholars of religious studies, set primarily on the notion of secularism from the western perspective. The analysis takes into account the growing multicultural aspects of Western countries (both European and American) in the socio – political arena. After some clarification of the prevalent terms, it begins with a major focus on the contributions of the philosopher of religion, Raimon Panikkar. It moves then to the views of the contemporary political thinker and philosopher, Fred Dallmayr, to illustrate the relevance of these notions to the global political context. Throughout, the concern is with secularism in relation to interculturality, religious faith and public space.

1. Panikkar's Vision

1.1 *Cosmotheandric Ontonomy*

At the very outset it should be noted clearly that secularism is interpreted by the late multidimensional thinker, Raimon Panikkar, in a broader and deeper perspective than that connoted by the term in the above discussions. Panikkar's views on secularism and secularity need to be viewed in the context of his basic insight of "Sacred Secularity" and his Cosmotheandric or Trinitarian vision of reality. In that light secularism today is not mere affirmation of the temporal aspect of the world, but a re-assertion of the sacred quality of the secular world. In other words, the secular is now seen in a positive light.⁹

Now, what is emerging in our days, and what may be a "hapax phenomenon," a unique occurrence in the history of humankind, is – paradoxically – not secularism, but the sacred quality of secularism. In other words, what seems to be unique in the human constellation of the present *kairos* is the disruption of the equation sacred-nontemporal with the positive value so far attached to it.

requires an understanding of the Indian social, religious and cultural background apart from the political terrain.

⁹ L. Anthony Savari Raj, "Secularism in a Panikkarian Perspective," *Jnanodaya Journal of Philosophy*, No. 10 (June 2003), 1.

The temporal is seen today as positive and, in a way, sacred.¹⁰

Modern Man has killed an isolated and insular God, contemporary earth is killing a merciless and rapacious man, and the gods seem to have deserted both man and cosmos. But having touched the bottom, we perceive signs of resurrection. At the root of the ecological sensibility there is a mystical strain; at the bottom of man's self-understanding is a need for the infinite and non-understandable. And at the very heart of the divine is an urge for time, space and man.¹¹

To formulate the words of Panikkar differently: secular and sacred, matter and mystery, belong together. In this perspective, the transcendence of the divine is to be discerned more in terms of the transparency of the world. Divinity is to be discovered in matter's very core. The secular is sacredly secular and the sacred is secularly sacred. "Sacred Secularity" is a prospect, therefore, that would mark our time as a privileged moment and place for a sacred happening or disclosure in our earthly city.¹² Hence, what is increasingly being realized in our age, partly or even mainly as a result of the process of secularization, is the perspective of a "cosmotheandric" ontology¹³ which stresses the integral connection between the Divine, the Human and the Cosmic. In Panikkar's words: "There is no Matter without Spirit and no Spirit without Matter, no World without Man, no God without the Universe, etc. God, Man and World are three primordial adjectives which describe reality."¹⁴ In this cosmotheandric ontology

¹⁰ R. Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man* (London: Orbis Books, 1973), 2, 7, 10-13.

¹¹ R. Panikkar, *Cosmotheandric Experience. Emerging Religious Consciousness* (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 77.

¹² R. Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man*, 9ff.

¹³ The division of history under three headings by Panikkar is painstakingly explained by Dallmayr in his exposition against the background of Western metaphysics. They are "heteronomy (a hierarchical structure of reality from above), autonomy (radical human self-reliance and self-determination) and ontology (shunning internal and external constitution and accentuating instead a web of ontological relationships). This is explained in a more detail way in Fred Dallmayr, *Dialogue among Civilizations*, 192-193.

¹⁴ R. Panikkar, "Philosophy as Life-Style," *Philosophers on their Own Work*, A. Mercier and M. Svilar, eds. Vol. IV (Bern: Peter Lang, 1978), 206. For an elaborate

Panikkar seeks to enlighten our vision so as to make us realize "that the worship that matters is the worship of the secular world...it is the worship of (possessed by, coming from, corresponding and fitting to) this secular world."¹⁵

1.2 Politics and Religion: Advaitic Relation

Panikkar returns to the theme of secularization and secularity a decade after *Worship and Secular Man*, focusing on the relation between religion and politics. In Western civilization the relationship between religion and politics is portrayed by two contrasting models of fusion or identity leading to theocracy (or 'caesaropapism'), with both as incompatible or antagonistic forces. After clarifying the two terms, "politics" (as directed towards the common good of the *polis*) and "religion" (as pointing toward the *summum bonum* of life), Panikkar points out that the former is concerned with the "realization of the human order" while the latter aims at the "realization of the ultimate order," thereby contributing to a tensional polarity between them. But, our age is now seen to be overcoming this Western dilemma and thus religion and politics seem to enter into a "nondualistic relation between the two": "religion without politics becomes uninteresting, just as politics without religion turns irrelevant."¹⁶

Panikkar points out that the task is to move beyond these two above-mentioned dualisms in such a way that "politics and religion are not two independent activities, nor are they two indiscriminate things. There is no politics separate from religion. There is no religious factor that is not at the same time a political factor...the divine tabernacle is to be found among men; the earthly city is a divine happening."¹⁷ In this situation, people speak of a "politics of engagement" and a "religion of incarnation" and thus people are able to discover "the sacred character of secular engagement and the political aspect of religious life." In practical terms of 'political engagement' here, humans do not have "two natures, two countries,

exposition of this vision, Cf. Anthony Savari Raj, *A Hermeneutic of Reality. Raimon Panikkar's Cosmotheandric Vision* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998).

¹⁵ Panikkar, *Worship and Secular Man*, 42, 47, 49-52.

¹⁶ Panikkar, "Religion or Politics: The Western Dilemma," in Peter H. Merkel and Ninian Smart, eds., *Religion and Politics in the Modern World* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 44-46.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45-47, 49-50.

two vocations"; rather the relation between the two domains is to be understood as "non-dualistic" or "*advaitic*." In extension of this understanding to the realms of *praxis* or to the "theology of liberation" or "political theology," Panikkar considers that religion should be political and cannot keep its distance from "problems of injustice, hunger, war, exploitation, the power of money, armaments, ecological questions, demographic problems."¹⁸

1.3 "Symbolic Difference"

Significantly, Panikkar's reevaluation of secularity is connected to a new understanding of what it means to be a human. *Animal rationale* (animal with reason) has been the traditional characterization of the human. But Panikkar's re-visioning of secularity indeed invites one to a fresh perception where human is symbolic or symbolizing being (*homo symbolicus*). The human is symbolizer, meaning that she/he is symbolizing the Divine in the Cosmos. Panikkar speaks of a "symbolic difference" which indeed portrays the fusion as well as the difference between the three dimensions of reality even to the extent that reality "discloses itself only as a symbol."¹⁹ It is worth taking note of Dallmayr's comment here:

With regard to human experience, symbolic difference entails that human "secular" worldliness is genuine only in an "ek-static" mode that reaches out to "the other pole, the other shore." This aspect inevitably puts pressure on secularization, revealing it as a "constitutively ambivalent" process, a process implying a change – for good or ill – in fundamental human and religious symbols: on the one hand, it can erode or destroy traditional forms of worship while, on the other, it can purify and renew them.²⁰

Panikkar's understanding of secularism should be seen against the backdrop of his "integral anthropology" which assists and enables one to see human personhood as ultimately symbolical or liturgical.

¹⁸ Panikkar, "Religion or Politics: The Western Dilemma," 55, 57-59.

¹⁹ Panikkar, "Philosophy as Life-Style," 58-63.

²⁰ Dallmayr, *Dialogue among Civilizations*, 192.

Another important point to keep in mind at the same time is that Panikkar's revaluation of secularity is indeed an invitation to a symbolic experience of reality, where the world is the foundational symbol, symbolizing the divine. Herein, we can redefine religion as: 'a search for the integration of the Human with the Divine in and through the Cosmic.'²¹ In the context of this new definition, it is certain that in the future the dialogue between religions will have to concentrate primarily on the relationship between humans and their world, and secondarily about their different understandings of the Divine. This remark is meant not so much to underestimate the importance of the Divine as to stress the manner of approaching the Divine."²² We can be certain that there will be migration from temple to the street, from sacred site to secular practice, from institutional obedience to the initiative of conscience. Progressively people will perceive hunger, injustice, the exploitation of people and earth, intolerance, terrorism and war, denial and abuse of human rights, etc., as the urgent religious problems.²³ These problems are cross-cultural in the sense that they are common to all. This commonality of problems could be a starting point for religions to join hands and forces to face them. Thus, these secular issues would lead to dialogue both in secular as well as religious levels.

2. Dallmayr's Concerns

2.1 "Sacred Secularity"

Dallmayr points out that "perhaps the most innovative contribution of Panikkar's work is his interpretation of secularity, where secular temporality emerges as the gateway to a possible deepening and enrichment of faith (a faith adequate to our *saeculum*)."²⁴ In a later text, Panikkar brings out the prospect of "sacred secularity" that would mark our time as the privileged place for the sacred event or epiphany. But Dallmayr has reservations exactly on that because the present age is more and more inhospitable to faith or the realm of the sacred. In fact it has led to more horrors like genocide

²¹ Cf. Francis X. D'Sa, "The Interreligious Dialogue of the Future. Exploration into the Cosmotheandric Nature of Dialogue" *Vidyajyoti*, Vol. 61. No.10 (October 1997), 703.

²² Francis X. D'Sa, 706.

²³ Francis X. D'Sa, 705.

²⁴ Dallmayr, *Dialogue among Civilizations*, 197.

or ethnical cleansing and certain social ills like a rapidly developing “technocracy and consumerist self-indulgence” especially in the wake of globalization.²⁵ To be sure, in Panikkar’s reinterpretation of secularity, secular temporality emerges as the gateway to a possible deepening and enrichment of worship and faith, adequate to our *saeculum*.²⁶ Dallmayr compares these notions of Panikkar with those of the great German thinker, Martin Heidegger, in the following manner:

Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, reveals some features that have distinctive bearing on secularization. For one thing, human existence for Heidegger was marked not only by ek-static openness but also by “fallenness,” that is, by the constant danger or proclivity to forget itself and its own deeper calling....In some of his late writings, Heidegger elevated this feature into a characteristic trademark of our time or *saeculum*, which he saw increasingly as an age marked by ontological oblivion and abandonment (*Seinsvergessenheit*, *Seinsverlassenheit*). In large measure, this oblivion was supported and buttressed by the triumphant sway of an all-embracing technology (*das Gestell*) bent on reducing the entire world including human beings to productive resources and targets of technocratic manipulation, thus jeopardizing the very premises of a proper human life-form or dwelling.²⁷

By this explanation Dallmayr points out that these notions suggest that the notion of “sacred secularity,” is inhabited by a deep rift or cleavage. This rift is not at all synonymous with antinomy or contradiction. For Heidegger, there is both disclosure and concealment (or withdrawing and retreating in our *saeculum*); both are mutually entailed and subtly entwined in a kind of sheltering the unexpected arrival of the divine. What emerges at this point is a tensional kind of secularity, one where the sacred is not simply manifest but rather sheltered, withdrawn or lying in wait – in a mode of resistance and quiet contestation. This is a mode of “waiting for God

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ L. Anthony Savari Raj, 3.

²⁷ Dallmayr, *Dialogue among Civilizations*, 197-198.

(*Erharren vor Gott*) which concurs with Heidegger's own explanation that contemporary philosophy's "turning away" is a "difficult kind of remaining 'with' the divine."²⁸

2.2 "Something more" of Heidegger and Panikkar Envisaged

Turning his attention towards the contemporary social and political world, Dallmayr holds that not every kind of secularism or secularization is equally conducive to the "arrival" of the divine or sacred; similarly, not every kind of religion or religiosity is equally attuned to the spreading infection of democratic principles in opposition to heteronomous domination. This leads to an acceptance of the fact of cleavage or cleft in the phrase "sacred secularity," despite the close entwining of those two terms. Herein, the observations of Panikkar are precise and contributive when he writes that there is a "symbolic difference" or differential relation between religion and politics. They are not "two independent and separate activities" but they are not identical either. There is "something more" (than mere doctrines or beliefs) in religion and "something more" (than *Realpolitik* or power) in politics as well.

At this juncture there is a need to uphold the relevance or need for the "something more" attitude (by both believers and non-believers) envisaged in both the stance of calling or beckoning and the stance of waiting or expectancy. These can be overcome by facing the realities of this social, political global age squarely and by perceiving the moral, political and social problems of humans as religious problems as well.²⁹ Dallmayr adds here, taking the cue from Panikkar, the "religion of the future" should move towards conciliation and contemporary religiosity should contribute towards the conciliatory efforts "between persons and peoples."³⁰

The "something more" of Heidegger and Panikkar sets the tone for Dallmayr's call to expound the urgent needs of persons and to address the analysis of our present scenario in the post-9/11 world polity. This needs, in our opinion, the movement of *doxa* to *praxis* by philosophers

²⁸ Cf. Heidegger, "Philosophische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles" (1922), in *Dilthey Jahrbuch*, 6 (1989), 197, as quoted in Dallmayr, *Dialogue Among Civilizations*, 198.

²⁹ See footnote no. 19 above.

³⁰ Panikkar, "The Religion of the Future, Part I," *Interculture* 23 (Spring 1990), 7-8, 11, 18-19.

of religion, social thinkers and political philosophers. The “something more” is to be in favor of the rights and dignity of humans, an urgent need to be spelled out in thought and action, keeping in mind the divergent social and cultural factors. This call and challenge would fill in the rift between religion and politics, between beckoning and waiting.

In another place, Heidegger quoting from the *Antigone* of Sophocles (verses 332-375) speaks of what it is to be ‘human,’ thus:

There is much that is strange (deinon), but nothing
That surpasses man [humans] in strangeness...
Everywhere journeying, getting nowhere,
He comes to nothing...
Rising above his place [city] devoid of place [city]...

Commenting on the observations of Heidegger on these verses, Dallmayr says that Heidegger has already talked about what is ‘human’ in his presentation of *Dasein*, as “being there” or as “being-in-the-world,” and yet humans seem to be not at home or homely (*unheimlich*).³¹ Hence “homecoming” (*Heimischwerden*) becomes the human’s concern in seeking a genuinely human “dwelling” that is the “something more” of “poetic dwelling.” Thus, Heidegger notes that the godhead or divine is the “measure” by which humans “measure out or define their dwelling, their sojourn on the earth beneath heaven (or the sky).”³² For this, Heidegger proposes friendliness (from Hölderlin’s “with or at his heart”) so that *Dasein* can “dwell poetically and properly humanly (*menschlich*) on this earth.”³³ It is a kind of combination of human and divine to make a happy dwelling for *Dasein*.

2.3 “Sacred Non-Sovereignty”: Power and Kenosis

During the Medieval Ages of Christendom, it was a well-known fact that Christian leaders were in competition for *suprema potestas* with worldly powers or kings. This gave rise to a long struggle

³¹ Fred Dallmayr, *Peace Talks – Who Will Listen?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2004), 193-194, 197, 202-204.

³² *Ibid.*, 202.

³³ Heidegger, “...Poetically Man Dwells” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 228-229; translation as quoted in Dallmayr, *Peace Talks*, 204.

between sacred and secular powers and led to many bloody wars and unsettling treaties like the European Peace of Westphalia. Then, aided by the Enlightenment, religious freedom gained momentum resulting in the retreat of religious faith into a 'private' affair and antipolitics as well. Thus anti-sovereignty was evident everywhere in Christendom.

In this context, Dallmayr discusses the age-old issue between Empire and Faith quite succinctly using the episode of conversation between Pilate and Jesus as described in all the Gospels. Dallmayr goes through the conversation in detail as told in the Gospel of St. John (Jn. 18:32-37) and points quite clearly to a possible *realpolitik* motivation of Pilate the questioner. As a devotee of *realpolitik*, Pilate was concerned with power (*potestas*), the supreme power (*suprema potestas*). He was quite indifferent to Jesus' religious faith or status.³⁴ His first question to Jesus was, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Subsequently, after continuously pressuring Jesus with the same question, Jesus' answer makes Pilate conclude with reluctance: "So then you are a King?" To this Jesus' reply is the focus and basis for our discussion here as it is in Jn. 18:37: "You say that I am a king. But I was born for one thing, and for this I have come into this world, to bear witness to the truth."

The traditional exegesis of Christians for many centuries had been that Jesus was speaking about "another" world beyond this world, thus advocating a metaphysical outlook that there are basically "two worlds,"³⁵ a spiritual or immaterial one and a worldly or material one. This leads to advocating two kinds of supreme power (*suprema potestas*): a sovereignty of God and a sovereignty of worldly powers. "In the view of metaphysical theologians, the two worlds and types of power exist side by side, but ultimately are – or should be – related in the mode of subordination: the world power responding or being subordinated to divine power – just like a provincial governor (say,

³⁴ Fred Dallmayr, *Small Wonder. Global Power and Its Discontents* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 199-200.

³⁵ The discussions on "two worlds" or "two cities" are pivotal in medieval philosophy and theology, carrying with themselves a great effect in theorizing and thinking in western philosophy. These are well articulated by Fred Dallmayr in earlier books. So also, Fred Dallmayr, "Tale of Two Cities: Ricoeur's Political and Social Essays," in *Critical Encounters between Philosophy and Politics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 159-164; refer also, Fred Dallmayr, *Dialogue among Civilizations. Some Exemplary Voices* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 21-22.

Pontius Pilate) was subordinated to imperial Rome."³⁶ But Jesus never in any of his teachings or at any time in the conversation between him and Pilate expresses the destruction of the power of Rome or the prevalent political life there. He did not even wish to establish a counter regime or an alternative *potestas* to the prevailing one of Rome. His vision backed up by his teachings and actions was for inaugurating a politics of sacred non-sovereignty. What does this phrase mean?

According to Dallmayr,

This does not mean that Jesus' life and ministry did not represent a genuine alternative to prevailing politics, but the alternative was predicated neither on competition nor on negation or destruction, but on transformation. Differently phrased: his ministry was designed not to trump the world (by establishing a worldly superpower), not to destroy or eradicate this world (along millenarian lines), but rather to salvage and redeem the world – redeem it through truth and divine grace. In political terms, his ministry inaugurated neither super-politics nor an anti-politics, but rather an "other" kind of politics of sacred or redemptive non-sovereignty."³⁷

This is the way in which Jesus showed that his *potestas* was the power of the cross. In other words, the power of the cross is the power of sacredness, a politics of "sacred non-sovereignty." Unfortunately, regrets Dallmayr, this call and vision of Jesus has not been taken to heart even now by the religious leaders in Christianity. At the end, the story of Jesus coming to a bitter end leads Dallmayr to reflect on this tragic King. This King is not a sovereign potentate to lead an insurrection. This King is nailed to a cross completely devoid of all power (*potestas*), "except for the power of sacredness," to bring the truth not of domination or power of empire but of grace and redemption.³⁸

In other words, the need for a new look at the western type of secularism should include the "sacred non-sovereignty" in all its

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 200.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

³⁸ Dallmayr, *Small Wonder. Global Power and Its Discontents*, 205.

political realm and action. In as much as the 'sacred' needs to include those things that are 'political,' so too, the 'political' needs to take seriously the 'sacred' aspects, without any domination or exploitation. Here again, securing a practical stand rather than a merely theoretical or "purely spectatorial stance" is to be safe-guarded.³⁹ This is more of a "thoughtful and responsible praxis"⁴⁰ and for Dallmayr it is "destined to be non-domineering, enabling, and liberating."⁴¹

2.4 Gandhian Sense of Transformation

Small is negligible in contrast to big or bigger which is noticeable. Dallmayr in his book, *Small Wonder* speaks of reticent modesty as the sign of the global age.⁴² In ordinary and in less remarkable situations and surroundings there are signs and symbols of the magnificent and supreme divinity. In realizing this enormous potential in multi-religious context of his own 'nation' Gandhi stressed the importance of intercommunal harmony and peace-building between Hindus and Muslims even in a small degree and in every conflicting situation that arises. For Gandhi, it was pretty clear that religious faith and politics should not and cannot be separated in the sub-continent. He spelled out his view consistently and wrote clearly in his autobiography: "I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."⁴³

It was very evident, from Gandhi's perspective, that religious faith and politics cannot be separated. As a strong Vaishnavite, he was a *karmayogin* and "his actions were always suffused with spiritual devotion (*bhakti*) involving self-restraint and self-transgression in favour of other's needs."⁴⁴ Margaret Chatterjee remarked that for Gandhi there was no clear demarcation between things of Caesar and God. She added that for Gandhi, political activity is a human activity

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.* In fact, in the concluding remarks of this essay Dallmayr supports the plea of critical theorists to present a more practical stance in view of life-world issues.

⁴² *Ibid.*, x.

⁴³ M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (London: Phoenix Press, 1949), 370-1 as quoted in Dallmayr, *Dialogue among Civilizations*, 222.

⁴⁴ Fred Dallmayr, *Peace Talks*, 135.

that can be purified through the infusion of a non-violent spirit.⁴⁵ Dallmayr observes quite strongly and with great sensitivity that “soul” for Gandhi “does not seem to be a metaphysical substance but a synonym for *soul-force seen as agency of transformation.*”⁴⁶

Dallmayr remarks that Gandhi acted as a “political leader...and as a spiritual leader and interfaith mediator among different religions.”⁴⁷ This was evident in Gandhi’s work for Hindu-Muslim unity already in South Africa in the form of “heart unity” and later on in a similar vein in India too. This “heart unity” is not mere tolerance of each other; Gandhi referred to it as affectionate respect that involved spiritual aspirations of each other. Dallmayr adds here quite inspiringly that participation or involvement in multi-faith community meant for Gandhi, not religious doctrines or dogmas, but is found “in personal piety and ethical conduct, that is, in *orthopraxis* rather than *orthodoxy.*”⁴⁸ Very appropriately Dallmayr quotes McDonough here: “Ghazali and Gandhi had both concluded that personal religious discipline was an essential basis for the sane and healthy transformation of the wider social order.”

Carrying these attitudes of Gandhi beyond the multi-religious context of India, especially to modern liberal political regimes and arenas, there are lessons to be drawn, especially on the nature of the relation between the modern ‘state’ and civil ‘society.’ Drawing deep-rooted reflective conclusions here, Dallmayr opines that “the two institutions of the state and the *Sangh* were to be neither entirely divorced nor to be conflated, but to function in a tensional entwinement...Hence, for Gandhi, some tension needs to be preserved to allow for constructive critique”⁴⁹ This tension can be willfully extended, not merely to “heart unity,” but to tensions between reason (mind) and heart as well, with a sort of “heart-mind unity” as its background. As Gandhi rightly puts it, “I have come to the fundamental conclusion that if you want something really

⁴⁵ Margaret Chatterjee, *Gandhi’s Religious Thought* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 120 as quoted in Dallmayr, *Peace Talks*, 135.

⁴⁶ As explained by Dallmayr in footnote 11 of Chapter 12 of *Dialogue among Civilizations*, 271.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 134. Italicized by E. G.

⁴⁸ Fred Dallmayr, *Peace Talks*, 148.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 149-150. The term *Sangh* can safely mean civil society, although it can be an association or movement known as *Loka Sevak Sangh*.

important to be done, you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also."⁵⁰ In the present context of ever-increasing ethnic conflicts, religious violence (as made famous with the phrase "clash of civilizations") "the world desperately needs a strengthening both of global norms and institutions and of intersocietal or cross-cultural goodwill."⁵¹ This is applicable equally to the problem of secularization and to the notion of 'heart-mind unity' (similar to the Confucian tradition (*hsin*) and to Erasmus' motto (*eruditio et pietas*) as explained by Dallmayr) which would ennoble the path between sacred and secular and *vice versa*.

3. Conclusion

As a conclusion, what is felt and needed now is that the ideals of secularism should be spelled out more clearly. The secular *potestas* and the sacred *potestas* need not be competitive but redemptive – to be one of grace. They can complement each other, leading to transformation. In this global era the dynamics of sacred-secular could play a vital role in ascertaining the inclusiveness of the realities of human life. The multiculturalism, rights-and-dignity-based-ethics and equal-opportunity-and-resource-based-politics should be the concerns of both religion and state.

As seen, secular concerns are to be registered more in terms of authentic human or political concerns. L. Raj puts it in focus, Panikkar's view of "sacred secularity" should pave the way for the concern of human and ecological welfare and lead to a shared concern and commitment by all religions for the welfare of the victims of the suffering earth. It is now up to us to interpret and take the cue from the thought of Heidegger, Gandhi, Panikkar and Dallmayr, to provide a hermeneutical foundation for the commitment to the poor and the marginalized, that is, to be more context-sensitive.⁵² Moreover, taking the concerns of Dallmayr into consideration we need to keep in balance the sense of tension between religion and politics and move for the "something more" of action, without loss of sacredness in the political, economical and social realms of the people. What is basically required of us now is to show concern for the collaborative efforts towards an inclusiveness of culture and respect for religious

⁵⁰ *Young India*, November 5, 1931 as quoted in Dallmayr, *Peace Talks*, 150.

⁵¹ Dallmayr, *Peace Talks*, 150.

⁵² L. Anthony Savari Raj, 4.

differences for the sake of ascertaining the dignity of the divine in *anthropos* and *cosmos*.

What is becoming more and more relevant in today's global political context is then a "dialogue of civilizations."⁵³ This "dialogue among civilizations" must include genuine mutual learning from other cultures, religions and languages. This dialogue leads us to learn and grow in understanding the 'other' through a peaceful process, not through domination and exploitation.⁵⁴ The problems concerning secularism in the global scenario need to be addressed in a similar way in order to enable humans to be humans. A renewed sense of "heart-mind unity" is to be applied to all that is religious, political, public and liberal.

⁵³ This term was coined and proposed by President Mohammed Khatami of Iran to the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation in September 1998. This later became the theme for two workshops in Teheran, in 2002 & 2003.

⁵⁴ Fred Dallmayr & Abbas Manoochehri, eds., *Civilizational Dialogue and Political Thought. Teheran Papers*, "Introduction" (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 3-5.

God in a Box: Salazaar vs. Buono and the Dialectics of Secularization

JOHN FARINA

What are the problems a liberal democracy faces when dealing with religion? To what extent is a liberal polity obligated to accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of its citizens? In what manner can it allow those citizens to bring religious motivations into discourse about public policy? What are the obligations of religious groups and citizens to the society? In 2005 Jürgen Habermas suggested in his debate with Joseph Ratzinger that a “twofold and complementary learning process” should take place between “secularized” citizens and religious believers in today’s society. In Part One of what follows, I would like to take up that suggestion and further explore what I would style as a dialogue between liberalism and religion, that in post-modern society implies new obligations for believing and secularized citizens in the future. In Part Two, I would like to reference that view of a post-secular society to a particular case involving the display of a religious symbol on public lands that in October 2009 came before the Supreme Court of the United States in *Salazar vs. Buono*.

Part One: The Dialectics of Secularization

The debate about the role of religion in liberal societies stretches back to the late eighteen-century with the coming of the transformative revolutions that reshaped modern western life. So much of the assumptions of the secularization thesis theorists like Weber is shaped by the assumption of a liberal state in which the powers of the state are limited, often by a written constitution, individuals are guaranteed certain liberties vis-à-vis the state with the expectation that similarly situated persons in the society will be treated similarly, and church and state are separated. That separation represents something quite distinct from the dualism imagined by Augustine in his *Civitas Dei*, which allowed the state and the church validity in their own realms and assumed interdependence between the two. In France, Italy, Russia, and other countries, revolution meant

displacing the power of the church to advance a vision of freedom and human flourishing.

In the current discussion, the field is populated by several different camps. There are the neo-Tocquevillians who follow in the footsteps of Alexis de Tocqueville, who in his famous *Democracy in America* argued that democracy required citizens to possess certain civic virtues – which he called habits of the heart – that would incline them away from seeking only their own immediate good to a concern for the common weal, which would take them from being partisans to citizens. Advocates of this approach today include Robert Putnam, whose concept of social capital is a modern version of Tocqueville, to the whole “values matter” school of thinkers like Laurence Harrison and Samuel Huntington.¹ For Tocqueviell, religion was among the most important forces in a society to nourish and sustain those habits. Sociologists like Robert Bellah or Peter Berger accept this premise and add their own spins.² They are joined by many others, often believers, who see in the breakdown of the liberal procedural republic an opportunity to take back territory lost to the anti-religion forces over the last two centuries.

In another camp are those who continue the aggression toward religion in public that characterized the revolutionary era. The Masons in France and Italy are fierce opponents of the Church’s involvement in politics, as are the majority of socialist and communist parties in Europe. In the academy, their allies include many who find in the writings of Kant or Marx the basis for establishing loyalty to the state in moral obligation or dialectic. In places like Italy, old tensions are kept alive through the antics of contemporary partisans. In spring of 2007 at a May Day concert in Rome’s Piazza San Giovanni, a performer, Andrea Rivera, worked up the crowd, spewing out

¹See for example, Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Renewal of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000). Samuel P. Huntington, “Religion and the Third Wave,” *The National Interest* (Summer 1991): 29-42. Lawrence E. Harrison, “Why Culture Matters,” in Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington, eds. *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp xvii-xxxiv.

²Robert N. Bellah, Steven Tipton, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of A Sociology of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

invectives against the Catholic Church and the pope. He declared: "The pope doesn't believe in evolution; the Church has never evolved." The Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* responded stating: "it is a contemptible and terroristic act to throw stones, this time even against the pope, while feeling protected by the cries of approval from an easily excited crowd."³ The next day, the left-leaning newspaper *La Repubblica* ran a story by Edmondo Berselli who was upset with the comments linking anti-clericalism to terrorism and who judged those comments more evidence that we are in a "new season of tension" between the anti-clericalists and the Church.⁴

In America there never was a church that meddled in the affairs of the state. There were no wars of religion, no doctrines of *plenitudo potestatis*, no integral-ism of the church or the state. Separation of church and state led to the flourishing of religion, not to its suppression. There was no dominant church, but rather many different religions, and Americans learned to not just tolerate religious difference but to celebrate it with their invention of the religious "denomination." A person could change denominations as easily as changing jobs or addresses, with little social stigma attached.

That is not to say that every American welcomed the large role religion played in American life. After World War II, a vocal minority arose and began searching for ways to restrict the role of religion in public life. Sometimes they were motivated by their fear of suppression by a majority religion, other times they were fueled by their hatred of members of other faiths, and in some cases, like their European colleagues, they simply were convinced religion and modern democracy were incompatible or, at the least, that religion's interaction with the state should be strictly limited. They found cool reception in American political parties. But they had startling success in bringing their concerns to the courts and claiming that various government actions violated the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: "Congress shall make no law concerning an establishment of religion..."

Today those battles still rage in the courts and find their way into the media which seems endlessly fascinated by those matters. The conflict is reflected as well in political issues – as distinct from parties

³May 2, 2007, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

⁴May 3, 2007, *La Repubblica*.

– such as gay marriage, abortion, and war and peace. Despite the high percentages of believers in the U.S. and relatively high membership in religious organizations, the non-believing minority constantly presses its case in public.

Given this field, the remarks of Jürgen Habermas in his 2005 dialogue with then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on these issues become an important starting point for our inquiry. Habermas would describe himself as a non-believer, committed to the project of creating a moral community based on reason not faith. Nevertheless, he realizes that questions about the sustainability of liberal societies and problems of the common good cannot be ignored. He acknowledges that the free secularized state exists on the basis of normative presuppositions that it alone *cannot* guarantee. He realizes that those presuppositions may be traditions of one particular worldview or of a religion that have a collectively binding character. This presents a serious challenge to a pluralist state committed to procedural neutrality in terms of its worldview.⁵

His acknowledgement of the difficulties of providing a secular justification of political rule that is nonreligious or post-metaphysical is not a renunciation of his faith in a Kantian republicanism; but it is a rejection of a liberal secular absolutism that disallows religion and its critiques of liberal society. Such an acknowledgement, however, should not be viewed by believers as an invitation to announce the return of religion as a challenge to the possibility of secularized citizens creating sustainable polities. Instead he suggests that we should understand secularization as a double learning process that compels both the traditions of the Enlightenment and the religions to reflect on their own respective limits. We should ask which cognitive attitudes and normative expectations the liberal state must require its citizens – believers and unbelievers – to have in their dealings with each other.⁶

Habermas stresses the importance of a balance, something that rejects integral-*ism* from the secular or religious side and holds instead the tension, allowing each element to play its role. Today the growth of large secular states with bureaucratic expansive powers and the

⁵ Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization*, Florian Schuller, ed; Bruce McNeil, trans. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), p.21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

growth of market economies and their individualistic assumptions threaten this balance. What is needed is that both sides agree to understand the secularization of society as a complementary learning process and take seriously each other's contributions to controversial subjects in the public debate.⁷ This requires that believers abandon intolerance and dogmatism. This also requires that secularized citizens acknowledge the validity of religious views not simply by relegating them to some form of private knowledge and tolerating them, but seeing that their own naturalistic theories in fact often owe their genesis to religious views and are never entirely separate from them.⁸ This means that the secularized citizens must not refuse their believing fellow citizens the right to make contributions in religious language to public debates. Extraordinarily, he states that believers need not do all the work in translating their faith-based notions into rational arguments, but that the secularized citizens must play an active role in understanding.⁹

His views on the post-secular society are distinct from those theorists of civil society who are suspicious of the role of religion. Civil society is a setting of settings, an autonomous realm in which "uncoerced" associates can function to meet the needs of the individual and the community. There is the sense of a kind of free flowing give and take of ideas and social "products" conveyed in the current formulations. Civil society provides a better answer to the problem of community and the building of a good society than does the procedural republic of liberalism or the nationalistic society of the patriotic regime. Those models miss the complexity of human society that civil society preserves. Conflict, diversity, and pluralism are built into civil society. It is the realm of fragmented struggle and conflict between competing interests, to be sure. But it is also the place of real social solidarity in which people are concretely joined in the process of seeking their mutual and individual good. In this model of civil society, all voices are included; none is preferred. Civil society relishes competition and conflict. This is why Adam Smith's thought played a

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

key role in shaping both Adam Ferguson's and Hegel's theories of civil society.¹⁰

The view of civil society as a marketplace of ideas, leads commentators like Lawrence Cahoon to question whether religion, or any other actor that makes authoritative claims, can contribute to the vitality of civil society. Civil society in his view ought to be understood as an association, a community of citizens, a *civitas*. Such a society is made up of thick associations that come from voluntary associations, localism, neighborhoods, and a respect for individual privacy. The state is dependent on such a society, not vice versa. Society, not any external source such as government, is the source of values. Religion, then, cannot be the source of civic values, because it claims to stand outside society and bring into the discourse values that trump all others. Any value system that makes such claims is unacceptable, because the main virtue of civil society is that no one is in charge, no one sits in the Messiah's chair. Each piece is part of a random whole.¹¹

For Maurizio Viroli as well, religion should play no role in engendering the values of citizenship. The secular republic may be sustained by an enlightened sense of patriotism that breeds self-sacrifice and concern for the greater good. Religion is too inclined towards integral-ism and clericalism to be of any use. Furthermore, religion is not welcome in the *civitas* because, rather than produce social capital, it fosters anti-civil habits. In Viroli's words: "civic virtue and the culture of republican citizenship do not bloom on the branch of cultural or ethnic or religious homogeneity. People who boast of an elevated degree of homogeneity in ethnic, cultural, or religious terms are often distinguished more by intolerance and bigotry than by their civic sense."¹² Habermas would not accept this excluding of religion from the process of value formation in society. Rather than excluding religion because of its authoritative claims, as seen, he insists that

¹⁰See Michael Walzer, "A Better Vision: The Idea of Civil Society," in Virginia Hodgkinson and Michael Foley, eds. *The Civil Society Reader* (Lebanon, NH: Tufts University, 2003), pp. 306-321.

¹¹Lawrence Cahoon, *Civil Society: The Conservative Meaning of Liberal Politics* (London: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 10-14.

¹²Maurizio Viroli, *Repubblicanesimo* (Rome-Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1999), p. 90.

secularized citizens join believers in doing the work of translating religious language.¹³

As does Charles Taylor repeatedly in *A Secular Age*, Habermas remains in the middle, insisting on the possibility of both secular and sacred elements of society co-existing in a new unity, based on mutual respect and on a deepened understanding of the ever-shifting borders between the secular and the sacred. In this light also, we must think of José Casanova's refinement of his critique of classical secularization theory made in his *Public Religions in the Modern World*.¹⁴ There he expanded his thinking to suggest that the dynamics of secularization should today be seen in a multicultural context in which no one theory of secularization or even of modernity would do.

*Excursus: A New Role for Religion in Society? Religion and Memory:
Porous Souls, Bifurcated Souls, Recollected Souls*

The question of how society creates and sustains the pre-political values necessary for its own continued existence may also be seen as a function of how a society structures its social memory. As Maurice Halbwachs has shown, memory is fundamental to the creation of a culture. The process by which we remember is in turn affected by the society. A society has what he calls a "collective memory," which uses "collective frameworks" to reconstruct an image of the past that comports with the predominant thoughts of a society.¹⁵ When a society changes, it must change its current memory. It can do this by deemphasizing some elements and emphasizing others, perhaps those that had been neglected before. Some memories can be re-ranked in new orders.

Religious memory may play a role in the process, because it claims to be grounded in certain aspects of the past that are crucial. Central to Christianity's memory, for example, is an anthropology that reminds persons of the inherent dignity of human nature and of the responsibility of the state to uphold that dignity. In our day, the place

¹³ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), and "Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective" *The Hedgehog Review* (Spring/Summer 2006): 7-22.

¹⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. Ed. and trans. with intro. by Lewis A. Corner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

of the religious memory within Western Christian societies has been challenged by new stories that have attempted to displace it. Modern science, liberal political theory, the new "psychology" of Freud and his followers, drove the religious memory further into its own domain, further from the public mind into its own world. The rise of counter histories occurred that bifurcated individuals. Moderns were forced to carry with them two versions of the origin of life, two versions of Christ's resurrection, two versions of the liberal revolutions that formed their modern state, and two views of their ultimate destinies. Today there is growing reluctance to carry sharply different memories. People wish to free themselves of what many sense is an unnecessary dissonance. As the memory of modernity itself confronts a new age, its claims of positivism seem increasingly absurd in the face of its palpable defeats. People seek an integrated memory, a seamless recollection; one story instead of sundry contradicting ones.

Religious institutions have also played a role in the bifurcating of sacred and secular memory by restricting the processes of the construction of frameworks. Historically, the growth of Christianity may have required that it constructed its collective memory as it did. Halbwachs explains that in most societies, the religious memory has grown distant from its formative events. The relationship between memory of the events of history and those of sacred history has been altered. Religious memories increasingly become cut off from the process of societal memory, as the religious institution seeks to interpret its own past in a special way. The religious institution substitutes the memories of a small hierarchy for the memories of the whole society; the religious elite claim to authentically remember the now distant events and guard its memory against all challenges. Like the larger society in which it finds itself, the religious institution modifies its memory over time in response to the new experiences of its members. But it emphasizes increasingly the difference between sacred and secular memory. That process masks the larger commonalities between the processes. The result are bifurcated selves, different to be sure from Taylor's conception of porous selves, open to the breaking in of magic, wonder, and terror, resembling more his

buffered selves.¹⁶ They are buffered from the fresh creative processes of memory creation that drive the larger culture. Their memory becomes fixed in a tradition, predictable and stale.

The memory of the religious group, in order to defend itself, succeeded for some time in preventing other memories from forming and developing their own mindset. It triumphed with ease over the old religions, whose memory was so far removed from its own object, which already for a long time had lived only on their own substance. The new religious memory assimilated all that it could incorporate because of its content, that is, all that was most recent in the older religions and that was imprinted by the same period in which Christianity was born – that which was most exterior in the old religions.¹⁷

But now that very process that sustained Christianity through its formative era may serve to distort and diminish it. The genius of Christianity is its willingness to experience otherness radically. This is one meaning of the central Christian mystery of the Incarnation. God becomes man. The radically *Other* embraces difference. God dies that he might live in the other. Christ's followers are called to the same death through the radical embrace of otherness. Institutions whose short-term comfort and political existence make them unwilling to engage in that process become anti-Christian in their fundamental dynamic. Religious institutions need to embrace the mode that Halbwachs describes as the habit of those institutions in their early days: It did not seem necessary for those who maintain this religious memory to leave their anchorage in time, to detach and isolate themselves from all thoughts and memories circulating within temporal groups. Why should the religious memory not function under the same conditions as a collective memory that is nourished and renewed by the society that develops it?¹⁸

Unless religion will do this, it will lessen its abilities to perform what Georg Simmel saw as the chief contribution of religion to society. For Simmel, religion brings together "that which is most common to

¹⁶ Charles Taylor, "Porous Selves" on the blog *The Immanent Plane*, Sept. 9, 2009, <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2008/09/02/buffered-and-porous-selves/>.

¹⁷ Halbwachs, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

all and yet the unique and most personal possession of every soul.”¹⁹ The great achievement of religion in society is to create, what Hans Joas calls in his study of the genesis of values, a “new synthesizing and vital unity.” In Simmel’s words: One of the great intellectual achievements of religion is that it draws together the vast spectrum of human ideas and concerns and concentrates them into single, unified concepts; unlike those of philosophy, these concepts are not abstract but rather possess the full vitality of being themselves in their immediacy and inner tangibility.²⁰

That combination of universality and particularity is precisely what every society needs to be a society. Its common values must enter the individual and there become personalized and familiar. Should they not resonate with the experience of the individual they will remain artificial and imposed. A person who embraces them will be inauthentic. The process by which the society’s values find a place in the individual represents for the person, an act of recollection in which those common group memories are re-collected. The person begins to tell her story in terms of the larger story of the society. The bifurcated self becomes the recollected self.

The liberal revolutionaries of the nineteenth century and secularist advocates of “civic virtue” today like Maurizio Viroli reject religion because of its link to a past they see as restrictive and oppressive. Religion was the force behind the economic, legal, and social conventions they feel held down the majority of persons and only maintain the power of a few. Yet in their zeal to reform society’s memory, they often lose sight of the fundamental dynamic between Apollo and Dionysius. Simmel reminds us of this in his discussion of the self-transcending quality of life: Life cannot be opposed to the concept of form. Life does not simply flow through individuals; life creates individuals from out of itself. Life is a continuous flowing and at the same time something contained in it carries and contains something formed around centers, individuated, and, for this reason, as seen from the opposite point of view, a forming that is always limited yet which continually surpasses its limitedness. The drawing

¹⁹ Georg Simmel “On the Salvation of the Soul” in *Essays on Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp 29-35, 29, as cited in Hans Joas, *the Genesis of Values*, trans. by Gregory Moore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 73. I am indebted to Joas for his introduction to Simmel.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

and the destruction of boundaries are interlinked. The moral sense is simultaneously both that which has been overcome and that which overcomes. A self that drew no boundaries would not be anything determinate at all; a self, on the other hand, that no longer recalled the character of its boundaries would be imprisoned in them and cut off from the stream of life. Life's self-transcendence is manifested as the unified act of constructing and breaking through its barriers, its Other; it is manifested as the character of its absoluteness, which makes life's dismantling of itself into independent and opposing entities perfectly conceivable.²¹

Joas reminds us that, for Simmel, this no longer refers to an other-worldly realm; still less is it constructed in terms of, or devalued by, a loss of faith in such a realm – it is immanent, so that this very immanence of transcendence is proclaimed as life's true essence. "Whenever we believe we have seized an absolute, life puts us right and once more "relativizes" this absolute. In this way, the transcendence of life shows itself to be a true absoluteness, in which the conflict between the absolute and the relative is sublated."²²

This function of "relativizing" the absolute is an essential task of religion in society. The integralism of the state is far more present than the religious counterpart in most contemporary liberal societies. Efforts to limit religious expression, to restrict religious groups' functions, to marginalize religion to the private sphere are common in today's liberal democracies, despite significant *de jure* protection of such rights. They are grounded in a liberal ideology that cannot see religion as anything other than a remnant of an oppressive age or, at best, a personal opinion that must be kept out of public discourse. Religion must, as it were, give its life for the world by abandoning its insistence on restricting the processes of collective memory that passes its absolutes from generation to generation. It must demonstrate how value and universality can be maintained without closing off contemporary experience and ossifying memory into fundamentalism. A willingness to do something like this allowed Christianity to move from being a small renewal movement within the small religion of the Jews to the force that reshaped the Empire and became the ground of Western culture. St. Paul's insistence that the revelation of

²¹ Joas, p. 73, quoting Simmel, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

²² *Ibid.*

Christ was not limited to Jews was an assault on the collective memory of Judaism, as expressed in all of its major branches in the first century. Sadducee, Pharisee, and even the Hellenist held to this idea. Paul had to fight with Peter, James, and John to persuade them of the validity of his new insight, which he constructed in terms of remembering the tradition, emphasizing its universal qualities. The sayings of Jesus that comported with this view were given new importance, whereas those that did not were relegated to lesser roles. Without dying to its insistence on a certain view of the uniqueness of the Jews in salvation history, the early Christians would have had no way to effectively spread the gospel to non-Jews.

Religion, Identity, and Recollected Selves

Religions must respond to the current challenge by modifying their understanding of identity. The Italian political leader, Luigi Bobba, rightly defines the problem with the current conceptions of religious identity: "It is when community collapses that the invention of identity takes place."²³ He warns that in today's complex society in which so much is pressed into the flat plane of secularity, religious identity can become a fetish, a fake construct that groups or individuals build in the place of a dynamic reality. That false construct can become a pretext on which injustice, persecution, and violence are founded. If we want to avoid the massacres of the past, justified in part by appeals to religious identity, we have to struggle to preserve what Amartya Sen calls the "undeniable plural nature of our identity."²⁴ If we do not modify our conception of identity in this way, we are better off putting it aside, Bobba thinks.

If it is true as Bauman says, that identity "grows on the tomb of community,"²⁵ religions can only escape this identity of the dead by active participation in the emerging culture, avoiding retreats into the past as remembered by them alone. Their memory must be opened to a new past to assure their place in the future. The recollected self is thus connected to a past that constantly is refocused by the present. The recollected self lives in the dynamic moment but has constituted itself on the basis of a memory that contains within it the moment of

²³ Luigi Bobba, *Il posto dei cattolici* (Turino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2007). (My translation.)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5, quoting Anartya Sen, *Identita e violenza* (no further citation given).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, quoting Bauman, *La societa individualizzata* (no page given).

epiphany. It carries with it the answer to alienation and meaninglessness, the spark of hope, the ray of dawning. That memory is ancient yet new and its beauty is compelling and integrating.

Part Two: Problems of Accommodating Religion in a Liberal Society: The Case of Salazar vs. Buono

On October 7, 2009 the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in the case of *Salazar vs. Buono*.²⁶ The Mojave National Preserve is a 1.6 million acre parcel of federally and state owned land in Southeastern, California. In 1934 a small wooden cross was built on a section of the Preserve known as Sunrise Rock, adjacent to an obscure secondary road about eleven miles from the Interstate I-15, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), a private organization of retired servicemen. The cross is constructed of two 4" diameter metal pipes. A plaque, which over time deteriorated and was removed, designated the cross as a memorial to fallen servicemen. The current version of the memorial, constructed in 1998, is a five foot tall Latin cross bolted at its base to a rock. In 1999, the National Park Service (NPS), administrators of the Preserve, received a request from a private citizen to build a Buddhist *stupa* near the cross. The NPS refused the request and stated its intention to remove the cross, something that the person seeking permission for the *stupa* did not request.

The announcement by the NPS sparked a public debate about whether the cross should be removed because it putatively violated the First Amendment's prohibition against an establishment of religion. A battle ensued, between the U.S. Congress, as the representative branch of government, and the courts, that has continued to this day. In December 2000, Congress enacted Pub. L. No. 106-554 § 133 that stipulated no government funds could be used to remove the cross.

Frank Buono, a retired employee of the NPS, filed a suit in March 2001 claiming that the cross violated the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution. The trial court agreed.²⁷ The court entered an order preventing NPS from permitting display of the cross. The government responded by requesting that the court's order be stayed while it

²⁶Oral arguments before the Court involve a brief exchange between the Justices and lawyers for the parties. The decision of the Court on this case is pending at the time of the composition of this paper.

²⁷ See "Buono I," *Buono vs. Norton*, 212 F. Supp. 2d at 1215-17.

appealed the court's ruling to avoid the permanent removal of the cross. The government offered to comply with the court's order by covering up the cross while the case was pending. The Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit agreed and granted the government's request. As a result, the NPS built a wooden box around the cross.

The Congress again acted to stop the court removal of the memorial. In January 2002 it passed a law designating the cross a national memorial and appropriating funds to install a replica of the original plaque on the memorial. The cross was designated by the law the White Cross World War I Memorial. In October 2002, the Congress then passed a law forbidding the use of any federal funds to dismantle national memorials commemorating U.S. participation in World War I. To further assure the future of the memorial, in September 2003, the Congress enacted a bill that authorized a land exchange.²⁸ The government gave the one acre plot on which the memorial sits to the Barstow, California VFW. In return, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sandoz, private citizens of California, gave to the United States five acres. The government appeal of *Buono I* came up to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. In June 2004 that court affirmed the district court's permanent injunction, concluding that the presence of the cross was an unlawful government endorsement of religion.²⁹

The government nevertheless began moving ahead with the land exchange. *Buono* moved to enforce the court's injunction, and on April 2005, the district court granted the motion and deemed the land exchange invalid. It ordered the government to comply with the injunction.³⁰ The government appealed that decision. In *Buono vs. Kempthorne*³¹ the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the district court's ruling in "*Buono III*." It endorsed the lower courts reasoning that the transfer of the land on which sits the "sectarian war memorial" "carries an inherently religious message and creates an appearance of honoring only those servicemen of that particular religion."³² The government appealed to the Supreme Court which took the case, now called *Salazar vs. Buono*.

²⁸ See Pub. L. No. 108-87 § 8121 (a)-(f), 117 Stat. 1100 (2003), codified at 16 U.S.C. §410 aaa-56 (note).

²⁹ "*Buono II*," *Buono vs. Norton*, 371 F.3d 543 (9th Cir. 2004).

³⁰ "*Buono III*" *Buono vs. Norton*, 364 F. Supp. 2d 1175 (C.D. Cal. 2005).

³¹ 502 F. 3d 1069 (9th Cir. 2007).

³²*Buono III* at 1182.

Legal Reasoning vs. Public Reasoning: The Court's View of Sacred and Secular in the Buono Cases

The *Buono* cases present a glimpse into the world of legal reasoning and illustrate how restricted the analysis of the larger questions of religion in society or the dialectics of secularization becomes when translated into the gritty world of law and public policy. U.S. courts are bound to follow the concept of *stare decisis*. This means that new cases must be judged in light of earlier rulings that the court let stands in an effort to create continuity and predictability in the common law system that relies more on case law than do code based systems in other countries. The analysis then becomes one of reasoning by analogy from the present case to past cases. If a case is similar, the court should rule similarly.

In *Buono II* Judge Alex Kozinski stated that the *Buono II* case was like an earlier Ninth Circuit case, *Separation of Church & State Committee vs. City of Eugene* [SCSC].³³ In SCSC, plaintiffs alleged that a fifty-one foot concrete Latin cross with neon inset tubing, located at the crest of a hill in a city park in Eugene, Oregon, violated the Establishment Clause. Like in *Buono II*, private individuals had erected a succession of wooden crosses in the park, one replacing another as they deteriorated. In 1964, private individuals erected the cross at issue. In 1970, that cross was designated as a war memorial and deeded to the City of Eugene. Beginning that year, the City of Eugene illuminated the cross during the Christmas and Thanksgiving seasons, as well as on Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Veteran's Day.³⁴

Significantly, the holding in that case chose to ignore the legal theory that has been used by the Supreme Court in cases of public religious ceremonies and in certain display cases such as one involving a challenge to the Great Seal of the U.S.'s words: "In God We Trust." The historical argument that reasons that: "establishment" had a more restricted sense for the framers of the Constitution; and their original intent was not to ban religion from the public square as evidenced by the many provisions for religion in public life, such as government paid chaplains in the Congress and military, or the invocations of God's help made at the beginning of each

³³93 F. 3d at 617 (9th Cir. 1996).

³⁴*Id.* at 618.

Congressional and Supreme Court term, or the granting of tax exemptions to churches. The historical argument assumes that religion is part of the history and culture of Americans, who have been from the beginning, as Justice Douglas's stated in *Zorach vs. Clausen*, "a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being."³⁵ Instead Kozinski used other legal theories the Court has developed in dealing with display cases. A legal theory from a case entitled *Lemon vs. Kurtzman*,³⁶ has played a central role in religion cases over the last thirty-eight years. The theory develops a test that states in part that a government action implicating religion must have a "valid secular purpose," and that the effect of that action cannot "advance or inhibit religion."

A second test that has become popular in recent cases is the endorsement test from Justice O'Connor's concurring opinion in *Lynch vs. Donnelly*.³⁷ That test claims that a government action represents an unconstitutional establishment of religion when it sends the signal to an outsider that he or she is excluded from the political community. Related to that is another O'Connor test that states that display cases must be judged by reference to a "reasonably informed observer" who would know something about the background and pertinent facts concerning an issue at bar. For instance, in a case that involved the display of a cross by a private individual on a plot of public ground near the Ohio Capital building in Columbus, a reasonably informed observer, O'Connor thought, would know that it was a long standing custom for that area to be used for political gatherings, and demonstrations. Placing a cross there was no different from any other act of political speech made by a private citizens and did not imply a state endorsement of Christianity.³⁸

In the *Buono II* case, Kozinski reasoned that Buono felt excluded from the political community and made to feel like an outsider by the presence of the cross on once federal land and by the fact that the government had made an accommodation to keep the cross memorial up. A reasonably informed observer would assume the land was part of the national preserve that surrounded it. The judge further

³⁵ 343 U.S. 306 (1952).

³⁶ 403 U.S. 602 (1971).

³⁷ 465 U.S. 668, 687 (1984).

³⁸ *Capital Square Review Bd. vs. Pinette* (O'Connor, J. concurring), 515 U. S. 753 (1995).

reasoned that the effect of the government's action to allow the display to sit on what was formerly government land had the effect of promoting religion.³⁹

The final test that has been used by Kozinski to judge display cases comes from the majority opinion in the Supreme Court case, *Lynch vs. Donnelly*.⁴⁰ In that case, a holiday display in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, sitting on public land, contained a cross, statues of the baby Jesus, and nativity figures. It also contained a menorah, a Christmas tree, reindeer, Santa Claus, and a Teddy bear. The Court reasoned that the context made it plain that the display was not an endorsement of Christianity, and as such did not have the effect of promoting religion and was, therefore, not unconstitutional. In contrast was *Alleghany County vs. A.C.L.U. of Greater Pittsburgh Chapter*⁴¹ in which a crèche display in a county courthouse was found to violate the Constitution because it lacked a valid secular purpose and had the effect of advancing religion. The difference between the cases was the context in which the religious symbols were displayed. In *Alleghany County*, the crèche appeared with a banner "Glory to God in the highest." Evergreens and a Christmas tree completed the display. Apparently for the Court this was too stark a picture of Christ on the courthouse steps without Santa Claus and his reindeers.

In the *Buono II* case, Judge Kozinski noted that the Park Service had not opened the cross site to other permanent displays, nor were there other religious displays nearby. In 1999, the Park Service had denied a request to erect a Buddhist stupa near the cross. He disallowed the argument that a sign, which was to be placed on the cross, designating it as a war memorial, would change the context and provide something akin to the Teddy bear in *Lynch vs. Donnelly*. Further, he rejected the argument that the remote location of this monument in the midst of a vast desert could not present a context in which any government endorsement of religion could be reasonably assumed. What was significant for him was that that the Sunrise Rock cross, like the SCSC cross, sat on public park land. For him National parklands embody the notion of government ownership as much as urban parkland, and the remote location of Sunrise Rock does nothing to detract from that notion.

³⁹ *Buono II*, 371 F. 3d at 549-50.

⁴⁰ 465 U.S. 668 (1984).

⁴¹ 492 U.S. 573 (1989).

Does the Ninth Circuit's battle with the Congress over the White Cross World War One Memorial reflect a new religious pluralism in America? Some may see the situation in terms of the growing number of persons who do not attend religious services weekly or in light of the fact that many of the recent immigrants to the U.S. are not Christian but Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist. Despite those trends, participation in organized religion in the U.S. remains relatively high and the number of people who say they believe in God is consistently upwards of 90%.⁴² So the argument that America may once have been a religious nation, but now is a secular nation, in the sense of either Taylor's secularization 1 or 2, is not so easily made as it might be in England, for instance.

A more accurate portrayal of the current situation is that since the 1940s a secularist minority has pushed an agenda in the courts to interpret the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution as requiring the removal of religious symbols from public space. It has relied on the judiciary to obtain results that would be very difficult to have realized through the political process. It depends on the willingness of courts such as the Ninth Circuit to resist the political will of the people as expressed in legislative actions out of a concern for upholding the rights guaranteed by the Constitution, even if that means extending the role of the courts to its maximum.

The secularist minority has resisted the use of tax dollars to directly or even indirectly aid religious institutions. It has opposed aid to school children in the form of subsidies for school bus travel, textbooks, special educational services in secular subjects, funding to religious hospitals, tax exemption for religious institutions, prayer in schools, reading of the bible in schools, allowing private religious student groups to meet in school buildings, providing student activity funds to religious student publications on college campuses, reciting the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, including the words "in God we trust" on the Great Seal of the United States, allowing crèches to be displayed on public lands at Christmas, displaying in public monuments any religious symbols, including the

⁴² A recent Gallop poll revealed roughly 9 in 10 Americans believe in God or a universal spirit, while fewer than 10% are firm in their belief that there is no God. Eighty-one percent of Americans believe in heaven. At the same time, 7 in 10 profess belief in the Devil and in hell. These updates of Americans' beliefs were measured in a May 10-13, 2007, Gallup poll survey.

Ten Commandments, and private citizens displaying a cross in a public area at a state capital used for political demonstrations, to name only some. The minority is represented by groups such as the A.C.L.U, a lawyers group that styles itself as the champion of civil liberties. They are joined by the Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, an organization that started early last century as Protestants and Others United for the Separation of Church and State. That group had as its main purpose to stem the influence of the Catholic Church in America. In the person of its leader, Paul Blanchard, it carried the long tradition of American anti-Catholicism into the second half of the twentieth century. To those may be added People for the America Way, the creation of a Hollywood producer Norman Lear turned social critic that for the last twenty-five years has opposed religion in American public life, but especially Catholic and Evangelical advocacy of family values issues.

This seventy-year battle has had mixed results. The secularist minority has been successful in removing prayer, bible reading, and the display of the Ten Commandments from schools and some public buildings and lands. It has lost in its efforts to stop indirect funding of religious groups, dramatically demonstrated by the *Zelman vs. Simmons-Harris*⁴³ 2002 Supreme Court decision allowing state money to be used to fund a program that gave poor parents of children in failing public schools in Cleveland, Ohio money in the form of vouchers that they could use to send their children to religious schools, if they wished. Despite the many advances in thinking about the role of religion in contemporary liberal democracies advanced by thinkers like Habermas and Taylor, the legal system is held hostage by the amateur opinions, musings, and statements various Supreme Court justices have made about religion in American public life over the years. A remark about Americans being a “religious people” or about there being a “wall of separation between church and state” though appearing neither in the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, nor any law becomes more important than statements about the role of religion in society made by competent scholars of religion, philosophy, or sociology.

Much of the language and thinking about religion and its place in society is imported from disputes from the 1960s and earlier and is

⁴³ 536 U.S. 639 (2002).

completely out of line with current sociology of religion or secularization theories. For instance, in *Buono II* the court referred to the White Cross World War I Memorial as a “sectarian war memorial.” The word “sectarian” is right out of the long history of religious bigotry aimed at American Catholics over much of the history of the Republic. By referring to Catholics as a “sect,” Protestants denied Catholic claims to be the historic church, founded by Christ and the Apostles. Puritanism was unquestionably among the most anti-Catholic Protestant movements, so much so that even the Anglican *via media* was far too “popish” for it. That Puritanism formed the warp and woof of American culture is, as Sydney Ahlstrom has so brilliantly shown, beyond doubt. Beginning in the mid nineteenth century and stretching until today, a battle between Catholics and Protestants over public schools raged. Until the mid-twentieth century, Protestants enacted anti-Catholic schools political measures, such as the Blaine amendments in many state constitutions and very nearly in the U.S. Constitution. Those amendments, rather than speaking of “Catholic” schools, used the euphemism “sectarian” schools and barred giving public funds to aid those schools. That language, not surprisingly, found its way into the Establishment Clause cases of the 1940s, 50s, 60s, 70s, and 80s. In 2000 Catholic Justice Thomas stated in his opinion in *Mitchell vs. Helms*,⁴⁴ that “sectarian” was code for “Catholic” and part of a disgraceful history of prejudice. For the time being, at least on the Supreme Court level, that bigoted stereotype has fallen out of favor. But in the mind of the Ninth Circuit, where anti-Catholicism has joined forces with virulent anti-religion in the *Buono* affair, “sectarian” forces still threaten our Republic.

It is difficult to move the courts beyond those 1960s style notions to more complex ideas about religion and society that reflect the best current understandings. New ideas have no direct way into the system, unless some bold Justice decides to think very differently about the issues at hand and cite Charles Taylor, for instance, rather than a past Justice of the Court. Of course, were he or she to do so, it would be considered a *dictum* and as such would have no authoritative weight going forward. What must happen is that, informed by ideas such as Taylor’s, a legal argument that would be recognized by the Court and would convince a majority of Justices

⁴⁴ 530 U.S. 793 (2000).

must be offered. That process is not unlike what happens in other areas of the law, but here, as is often the case with religion, Justices, like most people, think they can figure it out just as well as anyone else. They would not make such an assumption when dealing with a case involving medical malpractice, for instance, where they would eagerly take the testimony of medical experts into account in reaching a finding.

A Post-secular Theory of Neutrality

What would a legal theory look like that would more accurately reflect Habermas' double learning or Taylor's complex secularity? I would argue that it would involve a redefining of the concept of neutrality. During the sixty-year re-examination of the meaning of the Religion Clauses in the Constitution, there has been widespread agreement that the Establishment Clause means government should be neutral in matters of religion. Certainly, most would agree, that would mean not favoring one religion over another, not establishing a state church, not placing religious tests for office, and not giving or excluding public benefits from anyone based on his or her religious beliefs, affiliations, or actions. Where the disagreement centers is on whether or not neutrality always means the government should be neutral between religion and non-religion, though perhaps it would be better to coin a neologism and speak of "Unreligion." *Unreligion* here does not mean indifference to religion. It does not mean religious torpor, dissent, heterodoxy, or innovation. Nor does it mean an absence of faith. It means an active opposition to religion in public life as a matter of principle. It may derive from a host of psychological motivations including atheism, but what engenders it is not important in this formulation; how it behaves in public is. So *unreligion* is not characterized by wishing to put a menorah next to a Christmas tree in a holiday display in the town center; rather it is wanting to prevent any religious symbol from being displayed by a government entity. It is not characterized by desiring to make sure a textbook lending program does not have the effect of unfairly awarding government funds to Catholic school parents while excluding others; it is wanting never to acknowledge an equity argument that would lead to government reimbursing religious citizens for services provided to the state by religious groups, such as by the running of Catholic school systems that save the state funds it would otherwise spend – funds it

in part gets from taxing those same Catholics for services they do not receive. *Unreligion* is characterized not by wanting to allow a Buddhist *stupa* to stand next to the cross at Sunrise Rock; rather it is wanting to remove the cross, even though it is no longer on public land. *Unreligion* means no accommodation of religion, no secularization³, no double learning. It means a public sphere denuded of all religious symbols, a place where religion is only allowed in private. To avoid this extreme result courts must make clear that neutrality does not mean neutrality between religion and *unreligion*, but to do that it will have to face the fact that that will mean government may, and in fact should, act to endorse religion in a neutral way, because of the traditions of America, and also because of the realities of our post-secular age.

In this analysis “religion” cannot mean everything, or the opposite of subtraction theories of secularization. If religion includes every personal belief, every act of conscience, every opinion on an important question, then the system of offering special Constitutional solicitude to religion, as distinct from speech, assembly, or other rights, breaks down. The Framers of the Constitution specifically refused to recognize rights of “conscience,” even though that language was urged by some in the drafting process. No, “religion” must mean religion with all the dimensions that Ninian Smart articulates when he speaks of the seven dimensions of religion: Doctrinal, Mythological, Ethical, Ritual, Experiential, Institutional, and Material.⁴⁵

Any religion, including minority religions with unpopular practices, should enjoy as full a measure of freedom as is possible and should be restricted only to the degree necessary to maintain the tranquility of order in society. So Santeria church members should be allowed to sacrifice animals, Christian scientists should be free to refuse medical care for themselves, and Catholics should be free not to perform abortions in Catholic hospitals that may receive government funds in the form of Medicare payments. This view of granting special solicitude to religion is in keeping with both the thinking of Habermas and Taylor and with the historic traditions of our Republic. As Tocqueville claimed, religion is still key in producing habits of the heart that allow a government to grant greater individual

⁴⁵ Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1969).

liberty and to restrict its sphere of influence in favor of private initiatives.⁴⁶ The state may favor the practice of religion because of the benefits religion brings a society in terms of providing the pre-political moral basis for sustaining a liberal democracy.

The state should support religious liberty and should favor religion, because that benefits society by promoting public order. This resembles claims made by American advocates of religious liberty in the founding generation, most notably James Madison in his *Memorial and Remonstrance*. There, Madison acknowledged that man has a duty to worship God that is “precedent, both in order of time and in degree of obligation, to the claims of civil society.” Because of that the state cannot legislate about religion or favor one religion over another. Neither can it coerce belief, which can only come through free inquiry.⁴⁷ Frequently commentators favoring strict separation of church and state cite the second part of Madison’s argument, without taking seriously his premise. The duty of persons to worship God is precedent to all other duties imposed by the state. The state must, therefore, encourage the fulfillment of that duty just the way it must encourage its citizens to fulfill other duties that precede the state. The duty a person has to preserve his life, to protect his kin, to enjoy the fruit of his labor, to reproduce – all are pre-political obligations which any just state must accommodate and encourage. Similarly, the state must accommodate the person’s religious duties. What Madison insists on is that the state must do so without coercing belief or favoring one religion over another. This allows for dissent on religion, which can take the form of disbelief and of a refusal to take part in religious ceremonies. But that is a choice made freely by the person, which choice cannot have the effect of changing the larger policy of the state to encourage the fulfillment of religious duties.

This is not dissimilar to how the state treats the pre-political right to bear offspring. The state encourages marriage through its laws, tax policies, provision of education, etc. Yet it does not prevent those who chose from not having children. The state acts to encourage the fulfilling of pre-political obligations while at the same time attempting to allow individual choices concerning those obligations. In contrast,

⁴⁶ Cf. Robert C. Morlino, “The Dictatorship of Relativism.” Address given to the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast, April 7, 2006.

⁴⁷ James Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments” (1785).

when the state decides that Unreligion has the same rights as religion, *unreligion* trumps. Even a government connection with religion as remote as in the *Buono* affair is impermissible. The government goes from neutrality to placing God in a box.

In the recent Supreme Court case of *McCreary County vs. ACLU*, Justice Souter displayed such an attitude toward neutrality. He reached back nearly four decades to an understanding of government neutrality in matters of religion that reflects the secular biases that dominated the Court during the 1960s. In citing a 1968 case in which the Court nullified an Arkansas law regulating the content of science textbooks on the origins of human life, the Court stated: "Government in our democracy, state and national, must be neutral in matters of religious theory, doctrine, and practice. It may not be hostile to any religion or to the advocacy of no-religion; and it may not aid, foster, or promote one religion or religious theory against another or even against the militant opposite. The First Amendment mandates governmental neutrality between religion and religion, and between religion and non-religion."⁴⁸

Souter applied this to mean that a claim by a citizen who favors no display of religious symbols in county courthouses in Kentucky must be given more weight than the claims of the county officials and the majority of citizens that elected them who wanted to post the Ten Commandments in courthouses to show the historic significance of the Decalogue for American law. Souter repeats the error of *Epperson* and reads the government's obligation not to coerce belief as an obligation not to promote religion, even indirectly, in any form. Clearly for Souter "non-religion" includes *unreligion*.

In his dissent, Justice Scalia picked up this point, arguing that the First Amendment does not require the government to be neutral between religion and *unreligion* in the manner the majority suggested. It, moreover, does not require that the state not promote religion. All it does is mandate that no one religion be favored over another and that no person be coerced to believe a particular religion or any religion at all. He makes an historical argument that the U.S. system, unlike France's after 1906, never mandated that religion not be part of public life. The prayers said at the commencement of the terms of the

⁴⁸ *Epperson vs. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97 at 103 (1968). Souter in *McCreary County vs. ACLU of Kentucky*, 545 U.S. 844 quotes the last sentence only.

Supreme Court and Congress, the presidential proclamations of national days of prayer or thanksgiving, the references to God in the presidential oath all indicate the intentions of the framers not to exclude religion. They show those who wrote the Constitution “believed that morality was essential to the well-being of society and that encouragement of religion was the best way to foster morality.”⁴⁹

This rejection of neutrality toward *unreligion* would mean that governments recognize the constitutionality of laws that correspond to religiously-based moral principles. While the state may not enact laws requiring belief in the Trinity or attendance at Sunday mass, for instance, it may pass laws embodying the pre-political values, contained in some unique ways in religions. Those laws should also be reasonable to the non-believer and somehow serve the common good. But laws about the family, the unborn, or marriage, for example, cannot be rejected on a *de jure* basis because they comport with religious teachings. Of course this does not settle the difficult issue of what to do when values conflict. A recent case illustrates this. Tufts University in Massachusetts has a policy against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. A Christian student who was a non-practicing lesbian joined a student Christian group on campus. Upon joining, she told the group about her sexual orientation and her practice of living chastely. The group welcomed her and made her chairperson of the outreach committee. After sometime, she changed her mind about chastity and decided to engage in homosexual acts with other women. She informed the club, and the club told her she must resign as outreach chairperson. She complained to the University. The Tufts Community Union Judiciary stripped the Tufts Christian Fellowship of its campus financial support after the student charged that it discriminates against gay people. After threatened litigation and media debate, the University reversed its decision and welcomed the Fellowship back.⁵⁰

In a case like this, how would a court balance the right of the young woman to equal treatment under the law with the rights of free exercise of religion and of free association of the club members? Clearly it could not simply ignore those rights of the club members. One could argue that the woman was not discriminated against based

⁴⁹ *McCreary County vs. A.C.L.U.*, 545 U.S. 2722 (2005) (Scalia, J. dissenting).

⁵⁰ *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Oct. 23, 2000.

on her sexual orientation. She, like any member of the group, was bound to observe chastity. She was punished for her failure to do so, just as a heterosexual would be. The University did not, however, respect the religious liberty interest of the club members who have a right to believe what they wish to about sexual behavior. Furthermore, they have the right of free association to chose, based on certain discriminations, with whom they will associate.⁵¹

In fact, courts are accustomed to balancing one right against another and do it all the time in other matters of the law. A fuller appreciation of the double learning necessary in the age of secularity³⁵² would mean a court struggle more to remain, as it were, in the middle, to more finely parse the questions of rights without resorting to the absolutism of Unreligion. In the Tufts case, that would mean allowing the Christian club to make judgments about sexual morality that may run counter to those championed by the university administration.

In the 2009-2010 Supreme Court term Catholic Justice Sonia Sotomajor has replaced Justice Souter. That may make a difference, should she have sympathy with Roberts, Alito, Scalia, Kennedy, and Thomas who on doctrinal grounds upheld the validity of the display in *Van Orden vs. Perry*,⁵³ or even with Breyer who took a more practical approach, eschewing an exact formula for display cases. It remains to be seen what difference her presence might mean or if the six member Catholic majority will find a more balanced approach to the Religion Clauses instinctive.

Conclusion

I have argued that post-secularity calls for a new tolerance, a new awareness of the possibilities for society containing as it does believers and the secularized. That new awareness has to work its way into the structures of public order, including the courts. Despite the difficulties such a transition might entail, it is only in fact reflecting the current

⁵¹ See David French, *FIRE's Guide to Religious Freedom on Campus* (New York: Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, 2004) (<http://www.thefire.org/article/5061.html>).

⁵² By secularity 3, Taylor means the new conditions for belief wherein "to believe" is simply one option among many. See the "Introduction" to his *A Secular Age*, especially p. 3.

⁵³ *Van Orden vs. Perry*, 545 U.S. 677 (2005).

moment. Torino's Giovanni Filoramo speaks prophetically of what he calls "the ways of the sacred." He claims that the "sacralization of politics" is a phenomenon that is working in society to contradict the process of secularization. The decline of religious institutions in the political life of Europe has opened the door for the return of the sacred into the public sphere. Religion is reinhabiting the public realm and communicating differently than the religious institutions did in the past with their particular histories and interests. The sacred, freed from those institutional grounds has undergone a diaspora. But rather than continuing to wander in the wilderness, now the sacred has permeated the interstices of contemporary society. The deconstruction of religion has freed the sacred to return in fresh and unexpected forms. The supposedly secularized realms of society – politics, the arts, sexuality – are now disposed to becoming "carriers of religious metaphor."⁵⁴ That process will continue not just in Europe or the U.S. but throughout the global society and it will require fresh responses from governments, the courts, the religious institutions, and both secularized and believing citizens.

⁵⁴ Giovanni Filoramo, "La sacralizzazione della politica tra teologia politica e religione civile," in Gianni Paganini and Edoardo Tortarolo, eds. *Pluralismo e Religione Civile* (Torino: Bruno Mondadori, 2004), pp. 202-212, 202. See also, Giovanni Filoramo, *Le vie del sacro* (Torino: Einaudi, 1994).

11.

Time: Ruptures and Re-Sacralization in a Secular Age

RICHARD KHURI

- I -

There are countless ways to express origins. The only valid reproach for those who attempt such expression is therefore not that it has been said before – for how can it be otherwise? – but that they fail to approach Origins originally, through their own encounter with the ground of the problem. When it comes to *time*, we all know what it is in some sense, and most of us know that our thoughts about and attitude toward time give rise to many problems and contradictions, not all, nor necessarily the most interesting among them, conceptual. What is often lost in our concern for these is our awareness of time's relationship to the eternal, or the interplay between sacred and profane time. Part of this loss is precisely owed to the systematic obfuscation of the sacred/eternal in the rhythms that impose themselves on contemporary life, reinforced many times over with an intellectual dogmatism. This too is well known, but these are motifs well worth repeating if, in laying them out genuinely, more insight can be gained, and more impetus for living better amid all the rush and noise.

- II -

In the general contemporary run of things, the experience of time has become strange. It is as though time were collapsed into the form of simple electric circuits, where devices are placed either in series or in parallel. So it is with time, carved up into ever more precisely measured and supervised sequential parts or spread over parallel sequences through multitasking. As people play along more and more seriously with the pretense that it is really so with time, we run out of time in two senses: It seems impossible to compress all that we think we must do into the linear temporal sequence we are allotted, whatever our optimism regarding the capacity of modern medicine to extend that sequence, however many parallel sequences we are able to generate through multitasking within our allotted sequence; and

Earth languishes under the invasive consequences of human lives driven to government as far as possible by the relentless quantification of time.

There is something mythical about the mostly unforeseen effects on Earth of the disfigurement of time in general, and human time in particular. We shall have occasion to reflect on that mythical dimension in some of what follows. For the moment, let us consider a simpler matter. Any human being is in principle capable of observing that the rigorously quantified conception of time is not only a drastic distortion when viewed as a measure for the rhythms of life, but is a theoretical extreme. The mere capacity to make such an observation suggests awareness of qualitative time. Such awareness *ipso facto* precludes quantifiable expression. It is rather disingenuous when certain individuals demand this, for either they know about the circularity of their demand (If the quantifiable alone were admissible, then surely everything would seem quantifiable for those who disregard all that is thereby “inadmissible”), or they are so mired in the practice of equating rigour with quantity that they have become blind to the fundamentally question begging nature of such an equation. It gets weirdly ironic when those who affirm the non-quantifiable are themselves accused of question begging. Every attempt to think and dwell beyond certain limits will predictably be seen as dubious by those incapable of transcending them. For some such situations, we may enjoy the good fortune of reference to an experience that is very widely shared. Surely awareness of time’s qualitative aspect is just such an experience. And this would be one way to proceed: We move progressively from wider to narrower circles of shared qualitative experience, until the discussion turns on time primordially, fundamentally, perhaps from the viewpoint of eternity.

From Pythagoras, Parmenides, Plato and Plotinus to Schelling, Whitehead, Rilke and Heidegger, that ascent has been possible. Beethoven’s last string quartets were thought to be unplayable when they were first composed. The circle of those able to appreciate this music, let alone perform it adequately, will never be very wide, but it has grown robustly since the 1820’s. Those quartets are now valued as a lasting peak of composition, so incomparable as to defy the usual period categorizations, on the border between the classical and the

romantic with a presentiment of music composed up to a hundred years hence.¹

The shift to music is not random. Like artists, we need to disregard contrived notions of rigour and clarity that serve only to obscure what really matters.²

- III -

Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, canonical as it has become at the highest altitudes of modern literature, is unlikely to be widely read in times that glorify haste. Nevertheless, it contains a powerful reflexive affirmation of the depths of time accessible to those willing to take their time: The temporal rhythms and layers it imposes mercilessly induce a growing awareness of precisely those rhythms and layers and their ingression into the life of the reader. With senses not too dulled by the pervasive visual and aural distractions, one is then able to partake of the lushness concealed within potentially every moment, obscured by the obsessive beat of our precise clocks:

An image presented to us by life brings with it, in a single moment, sensations which are in fact multiple and heterogeneous. The sight, for instance, of the binding of a book once read may weave into the characters of its title the moonlight of a distant summer's night. The taste of our breakfast coffee brings with it that vague hope of fine weather which so often long ago, as with the day still intact and full before us, we were drinking it out of a bowl of white porcelain, creamy and fluted and itself looking almost like vitrified milk, suddenly smiled upon us in the pale uncertainty of dawn. An hour is not merely an hour, it is a vase full of scents and sounds and projects and climates, and what we call reality is a certain connexion between these immediate sensations and the memories which envelop us simultaneously with them...

If reality were indeed a sort of waste product of experience, more or less identical for each one of us, since when we speak of bad weather, a war, a taxi rank, a

¹ Bela Bartok's string quartets come to mind.

² Yet another irony comes from the self-appointed enforcers of such contrived notions, for they dismiss what really matters, which they obfuscate rigorously, as itself obscure.

brightly lit restaurant, a garden full of flowers, everybody knows what we mean, if reality were no more than this, no doubt a sort of cinematographic film of these things would be sufficient and the “style,” the “literature” that departed from the simple data that they provide would be superfluous and artificial. But was it true that reality was no more than this?³

Existential philosophers from Kierkegaard to Marcel have distinguished between the kind of experience that belongs indifferently to all human beings, such as the performance of simple arithmetic or logical operations and the resulting truths, and that which belongs uniquely to the individual. In no way do they mean this as an endorsement of subjectivism. The uniquely experienced is “subjective” in the sense that it must be well and truly experienced by the concerned individual. It is not transferable from one individual to another, as one is able to transfer the experimentally established facts of natural science. The appreciation of an artistic masterpiece is not transferable, yet qua recognized masterpiece, the appreciation is shared, sometimes very widely.⁴

A writer like Proust has the ability to transform the reader’s sensibility so that the hitherto dim and narrow awareness of various dimensions of experience becomes illuminated and broadened. It is

³ Proust, Marcel. *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. by Moncrieff and Kilmartin (New York: Vintage, 1982), Vol. 3, 924-5.

⁴ At every stage of the case I am making, there is potential “interference.” Here, one may fuss endlessly over what constitutes a masterpiece. Suffice to say that certain works of art stand out and some have done so canonically for a long time, very long in the case of the artistic highlights of the ancient world. One may then fuss over the genesis of the canonical. And so on. Canons are not fixed forever, but it is preferable to devote one’s energies to the appreciation of great works, the discovery of greatness in those not yet properly recognized, and – may one say it? – the possibility that those works may inspire one to a higher level. Those who reject this attitude (especially if they be incapable of it) can most definitely argue their way out of it. But unlike what superficial readers of Plato might imagine, it is not a matter of “winning” an argument – certainly not for Plato, nor for Socrates, never mind their most illustrious predecessors among the Greeks whose method, if it was argumentative at all, was so at a level altogether invisible for those who, dogmatically, clinically, habitually, or temperamentally, limit themselves to “mechanical” argumentation. It is enough to have made this point once, and so we may proceed in cheerful disregard for such interference from here on.

therefore not Proust's experience that is being "transferred," but his talent for inducing a similar depth of experience in others. Surely every human being who has lived long enough for some years to have passed between a cherished moment and its involuntary reawakening can potentially notice, for instance, how much more there is to a movie once seen than what actually happens on the screen. This does not even require the kind of movie that itself transforms our experience substantially. The movie may indeed be thin in content, linear in construction. But it may have been seen during a period of one's life when much else was going on,⁵ much of it perhaps tender, happy, intense, pleasant, so that these become intermingled with the viewing of the movie. And it is the totality of the experience that is later recalled when the movie – or just a scene from it – is viewed again many years later, particularly if this happens fortuitously, after the "vase full of scents and sounds and projects and climates" which had been its two-hour running time during the first viewing has since been forgotten.

Every moment in clock-time is at once tied to so many levels and layers of temporal flow that it leaves one speechless to see them fall away into the oblivion of contemporary pressures and rhythms. Reality itself is filtered through the quality of our experience of time. The more the quality is peeled off for human time to fit tightly into clock-time, the more reality shrinks to "a sort of waste product of experience." As the threat of such a radically mechanized environment finally degenerated into the first great mechanized war, to which Proust was witness, it became an act in the direction of the sacred to reaffirm the integral relation between the flow of time with the memory that envelops it,⁶ and the reality emergent within that enveloped flow, coloured for humans by perceptions and emotions that, while personal, unique, individual, are so far from solipsism that songs, poems, novels, paintings, films, and other works that express, sustain, and shelter them are not only appreciated by countless human

⁵ We should note that Proust believes *every* moment is multi-dimensional in this way, with its own special "ambience," and need not stand out, certainly not at the time it is first experienced.

⁶ The metaphysical role assigned by Proust to memory calls up the mysterious presence of *Mnemosyne* in Greek mythology, which we shall have occasion to examine presently.

beings over many generations, but through such appreciation call up a similarly full and variegated reality for them.

How this reality is brought to life in a work of art is its “style” for Proust. Style is how reality is saved from its appearance in a world governed by clocks. Style is also how each one of us opens up time to the variegated polyrhythmic layers of its qualitative flow, and ultimately how, if one still cares about it, time might be re-sacralized in one’s life and, whenever relevant, one’s work.

- IV -

There are echoes of Epicurus and his followers in Proust’s attitude. While one could with a touch of humour allude to their shared affinity for culinary delights, the association of Epicureanism with the shallow pleasures of life turns out to be unfounded. Like many in ancient Greece and Rome, Epicurus was concerned with salvation.⁷ For him, we find our salvation in the present moment just because when experienced with utmost clarity and intensity, the reality and infinitude of existence impress themselves upon us forcefully. The present is when we partake of the unfathomable power⁸ in and through which existence is real. The spiritual exercises preached by the Epicureans prepare one for such existential depths. As such, one connects with what an infinitely long temporal sequence would be unable to span, just as no torrent of words written in analysis and criticism can stand for the inner world of a late Beethoven string quartet – or any other outstanding work of art, even when its chosen medium is words.

Epicurus, as always, was concerned with alleviating the anxiety of people troubled by regret and their unavoidable mortality. He taught that the bare reality of existence, when experienced properly within the present moment, has more life in it than anything one fears one might never attain far into the future or wishes one had done in the

⁷ The work of Pierre Hadot has become our best contemporary source for the proper appreciation of Epicurus and the Epicureans. The reader may initially consult *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. by Michael Chase (Oxford, UK & Cambridge, MA, USA: Blackwell, 1995), 222-226, and then follow this up with pages 113-126 in *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*, trans. by Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Harvard, 2002).

⁸ This power is not explicitly divine for Epicurus.

past.⁹ The phrase “the pleasure of existence” thus has a spiritual meaning. It is existence for those who have learned how to live in the most radical sense of the word, by partaking of the very life of the universe.¹⁰

Here is one example of lived existential intensity as expressed by Epicurus’ most illustrious follower, Lucretius:

...[N]o fact is so simple that it is not harder to believe than to doubt at the first presentation. Equally, there is nothing so mighty or marvelous that the wonder it evokes does not tend to diminish in time. Take first the pure and undimmed lustre of the sky and all that it enshrines: the stars that roam across its surface, the moon and the surpassing splendour of the sunlight. If all these sights were now displayed to mortal view for the first time by a swift unforeseen revelation, what miracle would be recounted greater than this? What would men before the revelation have been less prone to conceive as possible? Nothing, surely. So marvelous would have been that sight – a sight which no one now, you will admit, thinks worthy of an upward glance into the luminous regions of the sky. So has satiety blunted the appetite of our eyes...

[T]he mind wants to discover by reasoning what exists in the infinity of space that lies out there, beyond the ramparts of this world – that region into which the intellect longs to peer and into which the free projection of the mind does actually extend its flight.¹¹

Whether it is the mind taking flight into the infinite or finding joy in the wonders of a world long taken for granted or rediscovering the richness of vanished moments, the goal is to save time from the

⁹ And if there were such present moments in one’s past, then there would be no regret!

¹⁰ Like almost all the ancients, Epicurus believed in a living universe. Modern thinkers like Leibniz, Schelling, Bergson, and Whitehead have also had a similar belief. And some of what is going on in the contemporary natural sciences is making it progressively easier for those so inclined to say so without fear of universal opprobrium.

¹¹ Lucretius. *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. by R.E. Latham (London, UK: Penguin, 2005), 63, II: 1025-1040, 1043-1048.

banality of the clock, to resensitize oneself to what endures and the knowledge that it comes through only in a lived moment, in the present – even if for Proust it must be regained through memory and (as we shall see) the imagination. It is a crucial step on the Epicurean way of reassuring oneself that one has not lived in vain.

The difference lies in Proust's emphasis on the personal whereas the world, its power and sparkle, are "impersonal" for the Epicureans. It could only be so given how natural philosophy had metamorphosed and almost faded before it has been renewed by more recent scientific developments, beginning with thermodynamics and evolutionary thought, and later passing through the two dominant physical theories of the twentieth century: relativity and quantum mechanics. When natural philosophy connected with a living universe that, while the ancients theorized about it, had to be *experienced* as such, we can say that there was no great urgency for the personal to come to the fore. The world in the eyes of the ancients covered both what for us is personal and impersonal. They merged seamlessly, so that to apply this distinction in any way is an anachronism and maybe even a kind of reductionism. Once the distinction became established and the natural world was thoroughly impersonalized, however, there was no recourse other than the personal for those who sought to save time – and their own lives – from the monotony and linearity of ticking clocks and the universe formed in their image.

We may note in passing that Lucretius' so-called materialism has nothing to do with what our self-proclaimed materialists mean. In a living universe, nothing is "dead" (or "inanimate" matter). For the ancients, nothing alive lacks in spirit. For a poet like Lucretius, the integration of what we call "matter" and "spirit" was given. Moreover, the entire thrust of his physics, again utterly different from what 'physics' had come to mean in the 19th century (a meaning to which contemporary materialists remain attached, happily heedless of how physics has recently taken a dramatic turn back towards its ancient meaning), was salvific: Knowledge of physics paved the way for the contemplative union with nature/the universe. It made one more receptive to the unity and infinity of nature as it comes forth instantaneously, more prepared to become illuminated with the totality of being in a single moment and so to brush regret and fear aside as the present sweeps through both sides of time and lifts it to eternity's embrace.

- V -

Everything opens up as we consider the present moment far beyond its mathematical vanishing point and time freed from the grasp of the clock. Physics, nature, and being were related in the ancient world. When Heraclitus wrote “Nature loves to hide,” the Greek word translated as ‘nature,’ Φύσις, is actually connected to physics, being, appearance, emergence, coming to be, and passing away in a complex, subtle and shifting way that led both Heidegger and Hadot to devote book-length works to it.¹² It was inconceivable for the ancients that nature could become a machine and time a rhythmic routine, together setting dead matter in motion.

- VI -

The Stoics, often presented in contrast to the Epicureans, had precisely the same concern for the infinite potential of the present moment. They too took to the study of physics as a means for achieving union with nature through proper contemplation, namely one informed by the use of reason (another term whose range of meaning has shriveled in the name of “rigour”). Stoic physics and logic reached a high standard, and so they were able to explicitly make a distinction that has emerged in our discussion so far. There are two different attitudes toward the present:¹³

1. *The mathematical*: The present is here defined as the boundary between past and future. Since time is mathematically infinitely divisible, the precise location of that boundary can never be pinpointed. As soon as one says “now,” no matter how quickly, the present has already become the past. Mathematically, the present does not exist.

2. *Human consciousness*: The present has a “thickness” according to the depth and richness of the moment in relation to the attention given to it. We have already seen an example in the quotation from Proust and some of what followed.¹⁴

¹² Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959). Hadot, *The Veil of Isis*, trans. by Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Harvard, 2008). I will have the occasion to discuss Φύσις in forthcoming publications.

¹³ Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 227.

¹⁴ There is a thoughtful discussion of the stretch and variable span and datum of time, opening up to its ecstatic aspect, in Heidegger, *Basic Problems of*

Were we to cherish the narrowest conception of rigour that equates it to the mathematical, then all that matters in life, indeed life itself, would be extinguished. With the present literally impossible, all one can do is get caught up entirely in prevalent mechanisms. No human being ever could, of course, and so we have the strange situation in some intellectual circles and sub-cultures of knowingly living a life that is denied by one's criteria and methods. There is the further irony of the aesthetic beauty of mathematical engagement at a high level, a contemplative phenomenon reported by every prominent mathematician who ever wrote or spoke about his practice. It happens with tedious regularity: a narrowly defined domain within the vast field of life/existence/being seduces influential individuals under certain circumstances (historical, political, psychological, ethical perhaps, possibly *aesthetic*) to the illusion that therein lay universally applicable norms and methods. And so the tragicomedy begins.

The Stoics had no time for tragicomic diversions. They were concerned with how to live, a concern given greater urgency by the troubles and vices of the Roman Empire. Life is short anyway, but it could be made shorter still by betrayals and imperial impetuosity amid the constant infighting and conspiracies. The Stoics were thus inspired to combine emphatic liberation from such vicissitudes with the highest moral standards in their conception of the present moment as gateway to the eternal. How is the study of physics moral? Hadot writes:

Moral good...for the Stoics...has a cosmic dimension: it is the harmonization of the reason within us with the reason which guides the cosmos....At each moment, we must harmonize our judgment, action, and desires with universal reason. In particular, we must joyfully accept the conjunction of events which results from the course of nature. At each instant, we must therefore resituate ourselves within the perspective of universal reason, so that, at each instant, our consciousness may become a cosmic consciousness. Thus, if one lives in accord with universal reason, at each instant his consciousness

expands into the infinity of the cosmos, and the entire universe is present to him.¹⁵

And so, one can say:

The instant is our only point of contact with reality, yet it offers us the whole of reality; precisely because it is a passage and a metamorphosis, it allows us to participate in the overall movement of the event of the world, and the reality of the world's coming-to-be.¹⁶

The present moment fully lived entails an expanded consciousness for which everything becomes present all at once. For the Stoics, this was by means of a holistic intellection of the full rational sweep of the universe and the inner conviction that one has at such ecstatic moments been drawn into that sweep entire. It is a mystical experience with an explicitly intelligible aspect.

- VII -

One of philosophy's perennial Archimedean points is the shift from the "outer" to the "inner." With our glance at the Epicurean and Stoic vision of the present moment, we see the extent to which time can metamorphose from what lends itself to measurement to what gives measure. Time, hitherto seen as one of the lineaments of life's formal receptacle, potentially apportioned in precise fragments that are manipulable, say, in the name of maximum efficiency, becomes lived time. For the two most illustrious Hellenistic schools, it is time lived so forcefully that one literally partakes of the being and flow of the universe, in short of Φύσις.

The initial rupture through which there was the original coming-to-be, ever after driving and shaping the stream of existence in which we potentially swim with skill and purpose, reverberates not only outwardly, as the background radiation discovered by Penzias and Wilson continues to send echoes of the Beginning throughout the universe, but within us. It is at the heart of our lives and awareness. Through it, we are integrally woven with the unfolding of time from its innermost source. From Anaximander to Schelling, the most

¹⁵ Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 229. Note the use of 'reason' throughout the passage.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 229.

visionary and poetic thinkers have been struck by how we dwell in and through that initial rupture. *We were there at the beginning*. But before we venture so far, it is wise to hold back and gather further impetus for scaling those higher ranges of human thought and being.

- VIII -

The Stoic and Epicurean drama of placing individual human beings at the center of cosmic emergence and flow is hardly a fanciful flight to extremes in the ancient world (while the commendable effort of German idealists to reinvigorate that drama and cast it in modern terms is all too often dismissed as fanciful when it is not collapsed into the misleadingly explicit and reductively closed system formulated by Hegel). Aristotle, the most cautious among the ancients, believed that it is through us that the universe and everything in it are brought to fruition or, in his terminology, actualized. For this, we have a succinct entry through Jonathan Lear's inspired overview of the culmination of Aristotle's project:

The inquiry into nature revealed the world as meant to be known; the inquiry into man's soul revealed him as a being who is meant to be a knower. Man and world are...made for each other. But now, as man comes to understand the broad structure of reality, there is no longer any firm distinction to be made between 'subjective' mind inquiring into the world and 'objective' world yielding up its truth. For now the order of our knowledge and the order of reality co-incide: there is...no longer any gap between what is most knowable *to us* and what is most knowable. The world is constituted of essences and, when we are doing metaphysics, so is our thinking: indeed, it is the very same essences that constitute world and mind. We are now at a point where it becomes possible to understand that understanding itself is not a part of reality, but plays a constitutive role in the overall structure of reality. At the same time, we can see that our inquiry into the world is...an inquiry into ourselves. For the essences that we discover there are the essences we become. This is where the desire to understand leads us. The opposition between the essential structure of reality and what is essentially

human begins to disappear...[W]e come to see how man...becomes something more than mere man.¹⁷

This is pure ecstasis, intellectual only in form, but informed throughout with noble, relentless passion. For Aristotle, physical and biological “research” (one must use the word guardedly) conducted with an ethical impulse, rigorously examined logically and guided throughout by fundamental and dynamic metaphysical concepts and principles, propels us, in a contemplative moment that enables us to survey the whole and be moved by its meaning, to full awareness of our oneness with the being of the world at its core, to wit essentially. It is the scholarly, scientifically minded, ethically wise and virtuous, metaphysically thoughtful and deep philosopher who becomes well positioned, after years of painstaking but purposeful application, to finally reach a moment in time when his time attains such fullness so as to become integrated with the whole. Such a philosopher will experience the eternal present in a special way: His combined pursuits, thanks in large measure to their ground and the attendant attitude, prepare him for active and dynamic union with the world “from within,” Φύσις-nature naturing creatively, *natura naturans*. One cannot state too often that this is not a “view” of the inner life of the world, but participation in the full sense of the word. Time hence no longer passes for the Aristotelian philosopher, who in his hard earned contemplative stance finds himself in the thick of the very *generation* of time. In the time that we are allotted, we partake of the irruption of time. We live in “pure time.”

- IX -

The foregoing may sound too abstract, too remote, to our modern sensibility. And so we turn to Proust again, for he has worked tirelessly in order to impress upon us the possibility of breaking free from the grip of clock-time through awareness of the richness of the present moment as we saw earlier, and through the persistence of such moments, in all their richness, in memory. Moments doubly freed from clock-time in this manner are linked to a level of being similarly freed in turn. In an era that identifies time with clock-time, and under

¹⁷ Aristotle: *The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 248-249.

the sway of a late transposition of Platonism, Proust is forced to assert that time opened to its higher dimensions is actually extra-temporal. In any case, what we have here is a personal rendition of the Aristotelian vision of essential unity between knower and known as well as the Stoic and Epicurean quest to experience the reasoned flow of cosmic infinitude in the present moment. With Proust, these are realized through how one experiences one's personal life:

The truth surely was that the being within me which had enjoyed these impressions had enjoyed them because they had in them something that was common to a day long past and to the present, because in some way they were extra-temporal, and this being made its appearance only when, through one of these identifications of the present with the past, it was likely to find itself in the one and only medium in which it could exist and enjoy the essence of things, that is to say: outside time.¹⁸

In particular, Proust associates essences not with some abstract core, but with the endurance of resonant moments, which bring forth and nurture the individual's own essence – and, in some sense, immortality. We may call this an “aesthetic” notion of essence:

The being which had been reborn in me when with a sudden shudder of happiness I had heard the noise that was common to the spoon touching the plate and the hammer striking the wheel, or had felt, beneath my feet, the unevenness that was common to the paving-stones of the Guermantes courtyard and to those of the baptistery of St. Mark's, this being is nourished only by the essences of things...¹⁹

The following passage makes very clear Proust's belief in the convergence of the recrudescence of forgotten resonant moments and the eternal face of the human self:

Let a noise or a scent, once heard or once smelt, be heard or smelt again in the present and at the same time in the past, real without being actual, ideal without being

¹⁸ Proust, 3:904.

¹⁹ Proust, 3:905.

abstract, and immediately the permanent and habitually concealed essence of things is liberated and our true self which seemed – had perhaps for long years seemed – to be dead but was not altogether dead, is awakened and reanimated as it receives the celestial nourishment that is brought to it. A minute freed from the order of time has re-created in us, to feel it, the man freed from the order of time.²⁰

However, among the pages within which the foregoing passages occur, Proust refers to “a fragment of pure time.” Our first impulse is to wonder whether there is some conceptual confusion here. Probably not. The personal, aesthetic, sensory, memory-driven account of the essential unity between knower and known sought by Aristotle unfolds in Proust as one partakes of time “from within.” To relive a moment in its entire fullness after years of clock-time have passed is to be gifted a direct, intuitive immersion in the overall universal flow articulated rationally by Aristotle, the Epicureans and the Stoics. It is a more immediate way for us to be at the center of the overall flux. The flux is not one where all vanishes, but where the true source of persistence emerges. For Aristotle and Proust, it is a flux with essences, for the Stoics and Epicureans, with structure and reason. Within this flux, time is generated. Only when we are far removed from such experience or awareness, looking from the outside, do we conceive of time as something to be measured. Insofar as time is measured, Proust writes coherently indeed “of the man freed from the order of time;” but as time that one partakes of from within, it is also “pure time.”

- X -

Proust’s metaphysics rests on the duration of moments lived with their full resonances, superficially past but still alive through memory. In Greek mythology, the quasi-divine role assigned by Proust to memory (from which our true, enduring self receives “celestial nourishment” as he put it) had been explicitly and dramatically divine. Perhaps there, we can retrieve an attitude that encompasses both the universal philosophical and the personal aesthetic ascents to

²⁰ Proust, 3:906.

the inner flow of time and the convergence of essences beyond subjective and objective, an attitude that allows receptivity to the experience of the beginning of time, its original and originary effusion.

In a brilliant essay called *Mythic Aspects of Memory*,²¹ Jean-Pierre Vernant elucidates not only the earliest awareness of time, but he reminds us that for Homer and Hesiod, such awareness was actually a kind of *witness*, a way that poets were thought to be there at the beginning:

Mnemosyne is a Titan goddess, the sister of Kronos and Okeanos; she is the mother of the Muses...and presides over the poetic function...

The poet, through being possessed by the Muses, is the interpreter of Mnemosyne, just as the prophet, through being inspired by Apollo, is the interpreter of that god...

The bard and the diviner share the same gift of "second sight," a privilege for which they had to pay with their vision. They are blind in the light of day, but they can see what is invisible. The god who inspires them shows them, in a kind of revelation, the truth that eludes the sight of men. This double vision relates in particular to the parts of time that are inaccessible to mortal creatures, namely, what happened in bygone days and what is yet to come...

The poet has an immediate experience of these bygone days. He knows the past because he has the power to be present in the past...

Memory transports the poet into the midst of ancient events, back into their own time. The organization of time in his account simply reproduces the sequence of events at which he is somehow present, in the order in which they occurred, from the beginning.²²

However strange it may sound to us, however estranged we are from such possibilities, the beginning in Greek mythology is not a theory or hypothesis in our sense. *It is an eyewitness account*, in symbol and metaphor, of how the world came to be and metamorphosed

²¹ See *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, trans. by Janet Lloyd and Jeff Fort (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books/MIT Press, 2006), 115-138.

²² Vernant, 116-117.

through its various stages. The poet is initiated, has visions, and beholds the emergence of Earth and Sky (Gaia and Ouranus) from the primal Chaos (itself not “chaotic” in our modern sense, but rather the Unnameable beyond any conceivable order or Cosmos encompassing all possible worlds), then the emergence of Old Love (Eros), and so on, through Giants, Titans, and Olympian Gods, until humans populate the landscape. The Titans are the sons and daughters of Gaia and Ouranus, but their release into the world from Gaia’s bosom requires a crime that we shall turn to later as we contemplate the falling away of time from sacredness. Each level of being has its own time. Even right at the beginning, time is not immobile, but has its own order, different from each succeeding order down to the temporality in which humans ordinarily live. Yet all orders of time are there *simultaneously*. It is only owing to the limitations of ordinary mortals that this remains generally unknown, that the past seems past. In reality, known directly to divinely inspired poets, “the past is seen as a dimension of the beyond” and is

an integral part of the cosmos. To explore it is to discover what is hidden in the depths of being. History as sung by Mnemosyne is a deciphering of the invisible, a geography of the supernatural.²³

Since Greek mythology depicts the successive orders of time as a process of decline from the time of origins, so that humans are the “race of iron,” preceded by “races” of bronze, silver, gold, and furthest back by gods, Titans, and the original divinities emerging from the (super-divine) Chaos, the poet chosen to witness the beginning is transformed by the experience. He does not only come to “know” what was there at the origin, but he is lifted up from the comparative wretchedness of the temporality of the iron race to primordial time. This is the “truth” that blessed poets brought to the ancient Greeks. Again, we should note that while the time of origins is duly exalted, the present time is not denied. The transformed poet is not required to escape from his quotidian world, as Plato would later insist. He remains within the world, his time now steeped in the highest temporal order to which he has been privy.

²³ *Ibid.*, 121.

The shift from the Homeric-Hesiodic view to the Platonic was fateful, for it would lay the ground for the radical scission of human and primordial time. This rupture has evolved into our present situation, with time run by fearsomely accurate clocks and running off on its own, toward oblivion as foreseen by the ancient Greeks and more recently beheld by the likes of Hölderlin, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. It would thus be instructive to linger with Vernant and try to attain a provisional understanding of that shift.

From the beginning, Mnemosyne was associated with Lethe (oblivion, forgetting). The poet had to forget the present time in order to be initiated into the time of origins. In later language, this would be expressed as “dying to oneself” in order to have true, eternal life. One had to *temporarily* leave the diurnal world behind for the sake of induction into the nocturnal. But one always returned to the world of daylight, now illuminated by what one had visited at night. One need only recall the frequent passages between the Underworld and the world above in Greek mythology, most notably with Persephone, Dionysius, Odysseus, Theseus, Hercules, and Aeneas. Sometime later, however, we no longer find Mnemosyne singing through her chosen bards of the Beginning, but of the *afterlife*. The emphasis shifts to reincarnation and ultimate salvation. Life on earth is seen as an exile from celestial life, which is thereby forgotten. Lethe is no longer the passage to the time of origin, but to quotidian life, which in its very appearance entails oblivion. Human time is thus seen as a condition from which one must be liberated without return. The final goal is for the cycle of birth and death to end, for re-incarnation to come to a close as the seeker has finally risen to dwell *permanently* in the celestial sphere.²⁴

With Empedocles, therefore, remembrance becomes a spiritual exercise that enables the initiate to extend the bounds of his life beyond the biological limits of life and death, limits within which “men of short destiny” dwell. He becomes aware of past incarnations, as the ancients claimed Pythagoras had been, and so can see whether he is ascending towards the point where an end to the chain of reincarnations is imminent. For a sage or a poet or a king, the signs are promising.²⁵

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 122-124.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 126-127.

What we observe in the foregoing is movement away from living a present profoundly and momentarily animated by the Beginning to escaping from an essentially oblivious present into a permanent afterlife. Plato came to embody this later attitude. He transposed the progression of the seeker to that from ignorance to knowledge, which corresponds respectively with that from a transitory and pointless life on earth to an eternal and meaningful life in the beyond. What Mnemosyne leads us to is the Forms or Ideas, real and *recollected* (remembered) knowledge, which is what the sage enjoys forever after his biological death. With Aristotle, the situation is less clear. While memory fades into a role far from divine, the union of knower and known at the level of essences can be interpreted to evoke a state akin to the Beginning. In any case, Aristotle was not one to deny the value of this life, but rather endeavoured to raise it to its divine potential. While far more arid and abstract than its mythological counterpart, Aristotle's philosophy does raise the sage to the center of what makes the world what it is, through which the sage becomes what he is. This convergence of essences is not in the future. There is something timeless about it and as such, it is consistent with the presence of the past.

- XI -

With the movement away from living a present profoundly and momentarily animated by the Beginning to escaping from an essentially oblivious present into a permanent afterlife comes greater attention to time and the emergence of Chronos alongside Mnemosyne. The Divine Time signified by Chronos is no longer the highest form of *movement*, but everlasting and imperishable time. It is a time that is *always the same*,

enfolding the world and binding it together, [making] the cosmos a single sphere, despite the appearances of multiplicity and change.²⁶

Chronos thus becomes a "radical negation of human time."²⁷ This negative perception of human time would be reinforced by the lyric poets a century later, when they sang about the affective life and how

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

all its joys and sorrows, its beauties and pleasures, its sights and sounds are crushed by an overpowering and irreversible flux. Human time by then was viewed as unequivocally evil. Salvation was only through complete liberation from time to an eternity now correspondingly viewed as unequivocally immobile. With the widening of the abyss between the human and the divine came the estrangement of the soul from the body. And so, we wound up with bodies caught up in the flux of the time of suffering and evil, and souls potentially delivered into the constant, changeless bliss of the hereafter. Time could no longer be experienced as sacred. Only the denial of time assured passage to sacredness.²⁸

- XII -

So was the circle of sacred time broken. Originally, time had been sacred within, the Beginning forever present, forever renewing itself. As Eliade puts it

Sacred time is indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable. From one point of view it could be said that it does not "pass," that it does not constitute an irreversible duration...With each periodic festival, the participants find the same sacred time – the same that had been manifested in the festival of the previous year or in the festival of a century earlier; it is the time that was created and sanctified by the gods at the period of their *gesta*, of which the festival is precisely a reactualization. In other words the participants in the festival meet in it *the first appearance of sacred time*, as it appeared *ab origine, in illo tempore*.²⁹

Eliade was writing about primordial culture all over the world. This applies to Homeric times in ancient Greece. The change then took place toward an increasingly linear conception of time and an attendant movement of time away from the sacred as the break in its circle became more firmly consecrated. In the beginning and right up to the heroic age, the sacred dwelled deep within time. With time, the sacred withdrew into a steadily immobilized and separate, ex-

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

²⁹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959/1987), 69-70. See also 71-113, *passim*.

temporal realm. And so it was that, still as envisioned by the sages of ancient Greece, oblivion became

intimately linked with human time, the time of the mortal condition, whose “never-ending” flux is synonymous with “inexorable necessity.”³⁰

The shift that occurred in ancient times has left us ever since with two fundamentally different metaphysical-spiritual stances toward human time: Either it is envisioned and experienced as enveloped with the (primordial) time of origins, thus ensouling and sacralizing human life; or it is the time of evil and exile, from which the only escape is through flight into a divine realm entirely other. This second stance is clearly dualistic and would reverberate through all forms of dualism, for what is Cartesianism other than the flight from the deception and illusion generated by the senses to eternal truth and reality established by the mind with God’s help? In relation to what follows presently, this scission is the *second* rupture, one that German idealism attempted to overcome with a post-Cartesian renewal of the more holistic and layered approach of the ancient Greeks before Socrates and Plato, so that there are no radical breaks, but rather a poetic-intuitive-spiritual ascent back to the living sacred heart of time.

In our own time, the oblivion envisioned by sages in ancient Greece has become self-contained within the enclosures of commercially and technologically driven structures and rhythms. Still with the faded memory of what once moved within the heart of time, the energy originally devoted to engagement with the sacred spilled over into the “inexorable necessity” of human time named by the later ancient Greeks. This inexorable necessity has become a widespread fact of life in our time, often unfolding without the least hope of delivery into loftier realms, often enough without even the possibility for the recognition of such realms.³¹

A motive hitherto turned toward and instinctively drawn to the sacred has recently been transposed into a radically secularized domain within which it can never be realized, no more than artistic inspiration can find adequate expression in the language of corporate

³⁰ Vernant, *op. cit.*, 129.

³¹ This of course is how Kierkegaard foresaw things in *The Present Age*, taken from a longer work called *A Literary Review* published in 1848 and translated in a recent Penguin edition by Alastair Hannay (London, 2001).

memos or pre-programmed music boxes. A powerful motive with severely limited means for realization, means restricted to an altogether inappropriate level, will drive those means toward a hopeless frenzy of activity. And so we have what has been called “the acceleration of time,” now at the point where technologies that have become intertwined with daily life become obsolete before they have been fully appropriated. Humans caught up in this frenzy seem to have no choice other than to get carried along with that current with minimum sensitivity and awareness, as though in a constant sleepwalk. As they sleepwalk, many are engaged in the mysterious act of progressively making themselves redundant.

- XIII -

It may seem to the reader that the original movement in ancient Greece (and presumably elsewhere) away from primordial sacred time and its ever-renewable dynamic presence is an unfortunate and perhaps unjustified or even unwarranted development. Yet quite apart from the anxieties that accompanied political and social changes, there had been an enduring metaphysical impulse (and psychological motive) for that kind of movement, for the tendency to regard human time, perhaps all time, as evil. This goes back to the darker side of the emergence of time evident in many ancient mythologies, the Greek emphatically among them.

There is a sense among the ancients of time being torn from eternity. The Bible also begins with the unimaginably momentous and instantaneous transition from the Godhead alone with Itself, abiding with Itself, to the primordial creative outburst or effusion. The epochal and epoch-generating violence of that transition makes one shudder. Among the Greeks, the ancient imagination tried to find words for the rupture or “rift” that first appears within what is there alone with Itself in a kind of sacred enclosure. For them, the emergence of Gaia and Ouranos from the Chaos just happened. It was the next stage that was problematic. Since Ouranos could only be entirely wrapped around Gaia in the beginning, their offspring had nowhere to go. They were permanently trapped in Gaia’s womb. The only way that space could be made for a cosmos was through the castration of Ouranos, an act carried out by Gaia’s youngest son, the Titan Kronos, with her connivance. Appearance and life required extreme violence. A crime

was needed for beings to appear, to have room for their appearance. This was the mythical Greek modality of the *first* rupture.

Yet a penalty had to be paid for that crime. If an early Aphrodite came from the semen of Ouranos' dismembered organ floating on Pontus (primordial water), then from the blood came the Furies, who would forever see to it that all wrongs are righted, especially if committed against one's kin. An order of retribution, at once metaphysical and moral, was established. The joy of coming to be, of life, always came at the price of passing away, of death. Albert Camus' lamentation is timeless: The living are like condemned men. So we can read Anaximander's surviving fragment, which in single quotes follows the first part of the sentence that comes to us through Theophrastus:

And the source of coming-to-be for existing things is that into which destruction, too, happens, 'according to necessity; for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time.'³²

Here we need not worry about the subtle differences between 'Kronos,' which names the offending Titan who set free the succeeding generations of the cosmos, and 'Chronos,' which also becomes a divinity and is Greek for 'time.' It may confuse us when the offender sits as judge in Anaximander's fragment. It is best to retain the flavour of the tragic demeanour of the ancient Greeks, their sense of a darkness, or an injustice that accompanies life's coming to the light of being. Dionysius' wild, ecstatic dance leads to violent death. He himself had been born from Semele, tricked by Hera into requesting the sight of Zeus that would burn her. And Dionysius would go under and then return, resurrected festively every spring. Persephone in her youth was also destined for an eternal annual cycle of autumnal descent into Hades and vernal reappearance when she would be gratefully received by her grieving mother, Demeter, a later incarnation of the Earth Goddess. Demeter, Persephone, and Dionysius would always be there with initiates going through the secret underground Mysteries ceremonies at Eleusis, the holiest site of

³² Kirk and Raven. *The Presocratic Philosophers* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 117.

its time in Greece. It is only through such initiation that the youth (Kouros) became a man, wise and knowing.

At many levels in ancient Greece, there was a sense of tragedy, of life coming at a price, the more so the greater its intensity. The crime that released life from Gaia's womb became a shadow that lengthened over Time. On the one hand, life would be tainted with death. On the other, time would move progressively away from its original sacred circle until its moorings in Eternity were at last severed. If one must live without a sense of tragedy, then one is condemned to oblivion. And so we see it today: The oblivion of those who are wired every waking minute, protected from the mere hint of tragic thought, of any thought.

- XIV -

However, the ancient Greeks were never content to let things rest with a one-sided view, however rich and layered it may have been. There were Aphrodite and Apollo, eliciting the ways of love and beauty. Against the merciless, intractable workings of Fates and Furies, there were visitations by Graces and Muses. There were arrows shot by Eros. There was a luminous aspect to time, under which life could be resolutely celebrated, away from the darkness and violence of its origins. This would eventually work its way back to a transformed vision of the beginning, which with Plato and, later, Plotinus, would be seen in more luminous terms, more the product of Love than Strife (Eros and Eris).

- XV -

Plotinus saw what was there at the Beginning as an all-encompassing, unnamable totality beyond Being, which he often called the One, sometimes the All, the Alone, or the Good, the Godhead of the mystical philosophy developed after Christ. The Beginning, when the One is no longer strictly alone with Itself, at which the Universal Intellect issues forth from the One, is what is most decisive. No sooner is Universal Intellect there than it can regard the One and through that look bring forth a Third, the Universal Soul. The archetypes/eternal ideas become manifest in the Universal Intellect which, when regarded by the Universal Soul, brings forth Nature – or the world as we know it. The primordial stirrings within the One can themselves be regarded as an outward movement, a Gaze that sets off

the procession of Second, Third, Fourth (Nature), and eventually the many, each level looking back in turn at its immediate Origin, all aflame with the First. Some would recognize that initial movement as the ultimate act of Love. It is the steady transition from Pure Inwardness first to Pure Outwardness and then progressively in the direction of the emergence and shaping of our world.

In parallel with that mystical ontology, Plotinus defines time and eternity in relation to one another. Eternity is associated with Universal Intellect as it actively manifests unchanging life (archetypes/eternal ideas) oriented toward the One and dwelling within It.³³ Such purely intelligible movement finds its temporal analogy at the next level. As Universal Soul stirs from its rest within Universal Intellect (keeping in mind that all levels are nested within one another successively, with the One encompassing them all), as its gaze at what is higher and the archetypes within kindles the movement that eventually becomes our world, time is born.³⁴ Time is the activity of Universal Soul as it tends toward the production of the sensible universe while regarding toward Universal Intellect.³⁵

Not content with leaving his account at a level that is likely to seem too abstract for most of us, Plotinus then goes on to illustrate how starting with our own experience, in a simple way, we may set ourselves on the path toward awareness of the origin of time:

Take a man walking and observe the advance he has made; that advance gives you the quantity of movement he is employing: and when you know that quantity – represented by the ground traversed by his feet, for, of course, we are supposing the bodily movement to correspond with the pace he has set within himself – you also know the movement that exists in the man himself before the feet move.

You must relate the body, carried forward during a given period of Time, to a certain quantity of Movement causing the progress and to the Time it takes, and that again to the Movement, equal in extension, within the man's soul.

³³ Plotinus. *The Enneads*, trans. by Stephen MacKenna (Burdett, NY: Larson Publications, 1992), III:7.6, 258-259.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, III:7.11, 265-266.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, III:7.12, 266-268.

But the Movement within the Soul – to what are you to refer that?

Let your choice fall where it may, from this point there is nothing but the unextended: and this is the primarily existent, the container to all else, having itself no container, brooking none.

And, as with Man's Soul, so with the Soul of the All.³⁶

Our own bodily movement has an outer and inner aspect. We hear music, feel its rhythms within, and dance. The rhythm within is part of our experience. But internal time, as we have tried to emphasize with Proust, cannot be measured with clocks. At some point, relative to our ordinary outer sense of measure, what is inner vanishes. What "contains" may no longer be considered to be a "container." Wittgenstein ends his *Blue Book* with a similar insight:

The kernel of our proposition that that which has pains or sees or thinks is of a mental nature is only, that the word "I" in "I have pains" does not denote a particular body, for we can't substitute for "I" a description of the body.³⁷

Wittgenstein made a habit of showing how what matters most vanishes from the standpoint of what is outwardly ascertainable, measurable. In his milieu, however, he almost always stayed with that minimalist negative stance. Modernity had lost the confidence shown by Plotinus in appealing explicitly to our soul, let alone the continuity between the individual human soul and Universal Soul. A century or so before Wittgenstein, Schelling also expressed that continuity, through which our inner experience of time, at one end linked with the most humble among our daily activities, at the other opens up to the origin of time.

- XVI -

Schelling's vision of the Beginning retains the spirit of Plotinus, albeit rendered in his own way and with a Christian colouring, especially as rendered in St. John's Gospel. He speaks of a first yearning within the Godhead, the "first stirring of divine existence"

³⁶ *Ibid.*, III:7.13, 269-270.

³⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein. *The Blue and Brown Books* (NY: Harper Colophon, 1965), 74.

that echoes the movement from the One to Universal Intellect in Plotinus. As Schelling sees it, corresponding with that movement, an inner, reflexive representation is generated in God himself through which, since it can have no other object but God, God sees himself in an exact image of himself. This representation is the first in which God, considered as absolute, is realized, although only in himself....This representation is at the same time the understanding – the *Word* – of this yearning and the eternal spirit which, perceiving the word within itself and at the same time the infinite yearning, and impelled by the love that it itself is, proclaims the word so that the understanding and yearning together now become a freely creating and all-powerful will and build in the initial anarchy of nature as in its own element or seed.³⁸

In a consistently stunning treatise, Schelling invites us to partake of a flowing, dynamic vision of origins, partly shaped by his avid readings in the most innovative scientific thought of his time, above all with regard to magnetism, electricity and the emergent notion of fields together with developments within the biological sciences. Throughout the same long passage from which the foregoing quotation has been selected, Schelling keeps returning to that first stirring or yearning within the Divine, referring to it as “a resplendent glimpse of life in the darkness of the depths” or “a hidden glimpse of light” and the understanding that would become embodied in Nature as “light placed in primordial [anarchic, *chaotic*] nature”³⁹ Significantly, he links the fundamental forces that emerge from the primal movement with the body while

the vital bond which arises in division – thus from the depths of the natural ground, as the center of forces – ...is the soul.⁴⁰

³⁸ F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. by Love and Schmidt (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 30.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

The emphasis is in stark contrast with what we have found in Greek mythology. The first stirring is profoundly luminous, and we remain bonded with it through the soul, *which is in fact that bond*. Ontologically and spiritually, the continuity between individually experienced inner time and the origin of time is given its foundation in Schelling. And so we should not be surprised that in his own way, he also tells us that we were there at the Beginning, which lives on within us all, not only as eternity but as eternal freedom, for in this sense we are coeval with the first stirring and so partake of the absolutely free First Act:

Man, even if born in time, is indeed created into the beginning of the creation. The act, whereby his life is determined in time, does not itself belong to time but rather to eternity: it also does not temporally precede life but goes through time (unhampered by it) as an act which is eternal by nature. Through this act the life of man reaches to the beginning of creation; hence through it man is outside the created, being free and eternal beginning itself. As incomprehensible as this idea may appear to conventional ways of thinking, there is indeed in each man a feeling in accord with it as if he had been what he is already from all eternity and had by no means become so first in time.⁴¹

The translators, in their extended commentary through footnotes appended to Schelling's text, provide a helpful interpretation that applies to the question at hand the ancient insight that the beginning or first principle that enables a process or structure cannot itself be justified within that process or structure. It was there among the Eleatics. Aristotle had already pointed out that what is most important is how we find the first principles with which we must begin. His commentators in the Arab Muslim world extended that insight by claiming that it bespoke the gift of prophecy. Kant appealed to it in order to found transcendentalism, for how else can we speak intelligibly about *all possible* experience, how else do we think about a world as though we could also somehow think *beyond* it? The insight spreads in diverse and ever more interesting ways through much

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

post-Kantian thought, for example in Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, and Gödel. So Schelling's translators-commentators tell us that

while it does seem manifestly wise to be cautious about the ontological intent and plausibility of Schelling's claim, it is fair to say that a founding act of the nature Schelling contemplates cannot by definition belong to time if it indeed is in a very strong sense responsible for the governing interpretation of, or attitude to, time that is one of the basic constituent elements of a self or character, of whatever is created through this central act. And it is likely fairest to say that a self or character or life is only expressed in a narrative, in a time-bound form which, to be founded as a narrative, however, must also be outside time to that particular extent. For all narratives must have beginnings, and these beginnings to be beginnings cannot be subject to the rules or terms they create, to use discredited language [sic], they must transcend the narratives they found; if this were not the case, there could be no narrative at all.⁴²

The hidden beginning or possibility of time, narrative, nature, rigour, reason, experience and so much else to which we ordinarily confine thought bespeaks transcendence. It is hidden only from what is transcended. Our confinement to the ordinary habituates us to the hiddenness of transcendence. Such habit has become frozen within highly complex structures and methodologies, the more complex the further they reinforce the habit of trying to make do without transcendence. Heidegger would grow so alarmed at the consequences he would define thought exclusively in terms of what *breaks* our habit.

- XVII -

We have tacitly seen another way for distance to grow between the Beginning and ourselves. The first rupture leaves humans with awe before the Sacred. Awe later becomes more explicit awareness, then consciousness, then self-consciousness. The finite, individual self at last obscures the sacred, infinite Self (which the Hindus had also

⁴² *Ibid.*, 163-164.

identified in ancient times and placed at the center of their thought and spirituality). We have called this the *second* rupture. German idealists sought to recover the rootedness of self in Self together with that of time in eternity in our secular, modern world. Some, like Hegel, made the mistake of positing an ultimate equivalence between self and Self, whereby all individual subjects are raised together at the end of history to the level of (Absolute) Self in a utopian polity. Schelling avoided that error. He beheld the life of self in Self more dynamically, more organically than Hegel and believed this to be an endless possibility. Time does not end and dissolve in the eternal but moves on, always, yet open to eternity at every moment. Consigned to time, we are nevertheless invited to resacralize it through the availability of the experience of our own depth. To reject the invitation is to fall into time spinning off on its own, decoupled, senselessly fading into faster and more dispersive technologies ever more demanding of our attention and invasive of our senses.

In language as well, a wall has arisen between the beginning and modern life. Words and gestures used in ritual, initiation, incantation and spiritual exercises, magical words, became words in poetry, at first still connected with their magical origins, then further removed, slowly settling into the discursive, and so submissive to the rules of grammar and logic. The grammar forged by the sacred origin of words broke free from its origin and came to rule over words. The style of the modern writer is an attempt to recover the lost resonance of words. Proust was very careful with how he expressed himself; as we have seen, he was also someone who tried to restore the connection between time and eternity through personal experience, through the magical endurance of the past with all the particular resonances it has had for the individual.

This is also the reason why it is difficult to read philosophers like Schelling. Their language does not result from a limited talent for writing. Quite to the contrary, Schelling had the talent for keeping words alive in his texts, inflamed by the intensity and momentousness of what he tried to bring to the word. The combination of such original thought with the special kind of spiritually and metaphysically significant introspection emphasized by Proust provides us with the wherewithal for the awareness and experience of time that reverberates from somewhere deep within ourselves, depths where the self comes closer to Itself, to the Beginning.

Religion as ‘Friend or Foe?’ to Solidarity in a Global Age: Charles Taylor on the European Union vs. United States

JONATHAN BOWMAN

Taylor poses what he terms *the* most daunting problem for secularization theory (SA 522, 530): If European societies and the United States are so close in their comparative histories of liberal democratization, why are they so far apart in how they deal with religion in the public? While he concedes that by posing such a question, we are already gravely at risk of over-generalization, he nonetheless considers how it is that citizens on both sides of the Atlantic could agree on the self-authenticating autonomy characteristic of secularity 3 (the secularization of human flourishing) while greatly differing in the distinct realm of secularity 1 (God’s displacement at the center of social life and public space).

In addition, while much of secularization theory regards sociological evidence for secularism 2 (comparative data on indices of belief and practice) supporting the exceptionalism thesis on both sides of the Atlantic as tied back to secularism 3, I would like to address the unexplored implications of contemporary differences in secularism 1 – that is, post-Age of Mobilization – as perhaps the real origin of the wide differences in *both* secularisms 2 and 3.

This is certainly no easy task, since the modern notion of the self must fit within a socialization context that extends in at least three directions, including communion with God (or lack thereof), membership in nation, and participation in global society. With respect to the first two of the three axes – God and nation – Robert Bellah points out that this offers one preliminary site of political differentiation between US and EU that starts the discussion immediately in the context of secularism 1:

‘While America – perhaps uniquely in the Western world – seems able to keep God and nation together as predominant ideas together with Self, in Europe today neither God nor Nation musters deep loyalty among a

significant majority. Instead we see the emergence of the individual Self as the primary moral focus' (Bellah 2008).

Since Taylor's conception of contemporary religion is largely informed by the latent background conditions of how the self becomes fully integrated via processes of socialization, differing responses to secularization and democratization are much more deeply rooted in differences with respect to secularism 1, particularly as embedded in a contemporary globalizing context, than he initially lets on. Once I articulate this overlooked insight, I will move to the impact of this recognition on global society as the third axis of solidaristic communion.

While his most intriguing remarks on this topic are buried in the footnotes of *A Secular Age*, in his essay 'Religion and European Integration' (2006) differences between secularization in the US and EU boil down largely to questions of moral and political identity, which I will evaluate in terms of his discussion and critique of the array of available political forms for displacing God's role in the public domain. Even in what Taylor has termed the nova effect of the radical pluralization of believing and unbelieving positions (primarily placed in the domain of secularization 3), these differentiations are ultimately informed by the degree to which the cultural innovations of social elites spill over, disseminate socially, and then become challenged and/or adapted into the broader political public (secularization 1) at mutually reinforcing national and global levels.

One alternative response to the growing pluralization of religious forms that Taylor considers at length, such as that held by Jurgen Habermas, has been to steer social integration via public law and its democratic institutionalization via what has been called moral constitutional patriotism (Bowman 2006). While I agree with Taylor's critique of Habermas's position, Taylor does not fully articulate the implications of his critique of Habermas for answering the original question he raised, specifically as the analysis bears on the role of God in a globalized domain. In addition, although perhaps he does not want to be seen as playing favorites, there seems to be good normative reasons and epistemic reasons not just to seek out an adequate description of the US and EU differences. As an amendment to his proposals, I will provide an epistemic scorecard for what seems to work best in the competing accounts as we consider where

secularization theory must go beyond the EU and US comparisons and into a more global context. In this respect, I agree with José Casanova's observation that

An impasse has been reached in the debate. The traditional theory of secularization works relatively well for Europe, but not for the United States. The American paradigm works relatively well for the U.S., but not for Europe. Neither can offer a plausible account of the internal variations within Europe. Most importantly, neither works well for other world religions and other parts of the world (Casanova, 2006b, p. 9).

Once I set up Taylor's critical remarks of moral constitutional patriotism as applied to both the US and EU, I will defend his notion and the more Rawlsian overlapping consensus as a better model for fostering solidarity in an increasingly postsecular political environment (SA 532). As a concluding litmus test for the extent and scope of political solidarity in a democratic community, I will assess the competing US and EU epistemic merits for the accommodation of new identities via the public articulation of an overlapping consensus that potentially includes an ever-wider scope of world religions as part of a more comprehensive theory of secularization 1, specifically focusing on Muslim immigrants.

I. Moral Constitutional Patriotism: Two False Exceptionalisms

Taylor initially defines the notion of constitutional-moral patriotism, as 'the reigning synthesis between nation, morality, and religion,' characterized most fully in the early secularization histories of the US (and to some extent Britain) (SA 526). On such a view, which one could situate quite well in the domain of secularism 1, the constitution via its norms, principles, and schedule of inscribed rights offers citizens a focal point of political identity among many sources of moral solidarity and identity (RNE 2, 9, 16; SA 526). However, Taylor challenges the very basis of what he terms the Habermasian approach to political identity, since by circumscribing political inclusion and exclusion in terms of national citizenship, constitutions always contain the inherent philosophical tension of having universalist norms as inscribed within a particular political culture and a unique historical realization of these norms (RNE 9). Therefore,

for Taylor, adhering strictly to constitutional norms and principles as the primary locus of social identity runs the risk of masking religious forms of identity that might equally well be the true motivating moral source for commitment to universalistic norms we hold.

In reply, as historical support for his *Verfassungspatriotismus* thesis, Habermas characteristically points to the translation of religious principles into constitutional norms. Classical examples include the person as created in the image of God translated into the inalienable dignity of the person enshrined in universal declarations of human rights (Habermas 2006, p. 45). Or, consider the Pauline notion of universal solidarity translated into a common concern and compassion for all humankind. In this respect, he has even amended some of his early views that place the epistemic burden on non-believers to aid in the translation of religious insight into public language. However, even with this amended view, Taylor would not remain fully convinced given the tendency of what he terms 'ancestralism' to lead to the problematic elision of one's national state and church divide as *the* proper threshold for secularization 1 (RE 16).

However, to argue that Habermas's affinity for democratic constitutional law makes him an enemy of religion would certainly be to overstate the case. While Taylor certainly would concede the aforementioned forms of translation as possible with notions like inalienable rights, his remarks on Christian *agape*, incarnation, and resurrection in *A Secular Age* (pp. 739-42) seem to agree with Martin, that the neo-Kantian fetishism of rule and norms can only see contingency as an enemy and as a threat that must be reduced to a minimum:

But the priority of faith, hope, and love – above all love – cannot be translated into civic and constitutional terms. Such priorities are laid on human beings by religious commitment in a manner that cannot be articulated as constitutive of the state or as a matter of policy in the public realm. No more can incarnation and redemption be reduced to secular discourse, or churches converted into art galleries and concert halls or civic spaces, without some aspect remaining unfulfilled. Such space is not there for social functions, but for the specifically human, and for griefs and joys unmet and unconsidered by other kinds of meeting place. How you treat that specificity and

acknowledge it as a presence in the public realm is partly a matter of whether you view religion as archaic survival condemned to continuous erosion by social evolution, or as a constitutive language that is primordial in its way as reason, and with its own coherence and continuing relevance (Martin 84).

In this manner, Taylor would seem to agree that the limits of the public encroachment into religious forms of self-authenticating expression cannot be breached. However, compare these pronouncements of potential ideologies to similar remarks made by Habermas that seem to move Habermas's more typically pragmatic appeals to social solidarity out of the constitutional realm alone and a lot closer to the appeal to the objectively shared existential human condition defended by his intellectual counterpart:

[S]omething can remain intact in the communal life of the religious fellowships – provided of course they avoid dogmatism and the coercion of people's consciences – something that has been lost elsewhere and cannot be restored by the professional knowledge of experts alone. I am referring to adequately differentiated possibilities of expression and to sensitivities with regard to lives that have gone astray, with regard to societal pathologies, with regard to the failure of individuals' plans for their lives, and with regard to the deformation and disfigurement of lives that people share with one another (2006, pp. 43-4).

Therefore, both pose the intriguing insight that increasing the range of possible expressions of spiritual influence over the public sphere could at least negatively uncover truths about the nature of man that lead persons away from damaged forms of social solidarity. But again, in what follows, Taylor wonders if national constitutions themselves can remain insulated from the more deeply entrenched politicized ideologies that he associates with constitutional patriotism.

A. Constitutional Patriotism – Ideologically Construed as American Exceptionalism?

Taylor concedes the relative historical successes of an American civic religion under a moral-constitutional patriotism that was largely made possible by its emergence in the Age of Mobilization, bypassing the Ancient Regime stage. Taylor finds the US political culture seeking to maintain a neo-Durkheimian social imaginary that constructs a tight psychological connection between faith and political identity.

As far as the U.S.A. is concerned...there was a strong reaction against loosening the ties of religion, political identity and civilizational morality. Indeed, the mode of American patriotism which sees the country as essentially a nation under God, and certain “family values” as essential to its greatness, remains very strong (SA 526).

However, he finds it increasingly dangerous to appeal to American exceptionalism as the basis to profess a unique sense of cosmic purpose in a radically interdependent world. Therefore, Taylor finds the biggest area of concern for overemphasizing US constitutional patriotism is with mistaking successful cases of the political institutionalization of a thick overlapping consensus with the moral norms themselves that comprise such agreement (RNE 16-17). In other words, back in the domain of secularization 1, potentially mistaking the background justification for a particular norm with the particular legal basis from which the given norm derives, for Taylor, can be morally and politically disastrous. Since under an overlapping consensus, neither institutional forms nor background justifications need to hold as the sites of normative consensus, the same error of seeking consensus in the wrong places can also occur with respect to the moral-ethical justification of norms (SA 532, 693, 701).

For instance, in a simple illustration, the worst possible form of constitutional patriotism would run as follows: we American Judeo-Christians practice the mercy and compassion requisite for a strong basis of communal solidarity; therefore, for any political society to reach these ideals, they must become Judeo-Christian too. To wed this error to the notion of cosmic purpose guiding one’s constitutional patriotism would then add that it is God’s will that we use whatever

we find within our political capacities to ensure that others become merciful and compassionate Judeo-Christians too.

Of course, Habermas is no stranger to such a dilemma and in the wake of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, has devoted a great deal of attention to moral constitutional patriotism gone awry, which in the particular instance of the US, he calls hegemonic unilateralism. Such a political mentality assumes the moral uprightness of a hegemon can bypass the constraints of international institutions (DW, 2006, p. 116). However, the irony in his solution is to trade off one constitutional patriotism for another, whereby in good Kantian fashion, the higher level of universalization trumps the lower. And not only does he call for the constitutionalization of regional regimes like the EU across multiple continental regimes, he wants to embed these structures in a cosmopolitan constitution, given historical and cultural content via the emerging global civil society. However, the precise role of religion in such a cosmopolitan regime, Habermas has yet to articulate (unless, of course, it is a religion). While the global level will certainly remain relevant, we must turn to the regional level of the EU first.

B. European Exceptionalism Ideologically Contrived as Euro-Secularity?

In secularization theory, the American exception has its own flip-side that deals with another such claim often evoked in debates on the other side of the Atlantic:

Reference is often made to "American exceptionalism" (sometimes favorably, sometimes not so). America is undoubtedly exceptional in many ways, but *not* when it comes to religion. Most of the world is religious, as is America – *Europe is the exception...and it is that exception* which begs for explanation (Berger 86).

As far as the European case goes, Taylor makes two general recommendations concerning the political dangers of this additional form of exceptionalism. First, he calls for a resolution of EU legitimacy deficits via the public articulation of an overlapping consensus rather than an appeal to Habermasian Euro-secularity as its own unique form of constitutional patriotism. Secondly, given the concomitant public acknowledgment of the increasing role of religious pluralism, since everyone's position in public matters become a minority viewpoint, he finds this as carrying the epistemic benefit of leveling

'an uneven but many-sided playing field' for all parties considered (SA 533).

With respect to the first, he observes the difficulty the EU has had in claiming some thick and substantive basis for social solidarity beyond a common market and currency. The most glaring of impasses on this front was the outright rejection of any explicit mention of a shared Judeo-Christian heritage as a basis for moral and political solidarity in the most recent drafts of its failed constitution:

Up till now, we have been comparing the U.S. with European societies, but perhaps another aspect will emerge if we compare it with the European Union; because this, in its gradual self-definition, has taken steps of its own in the direction of secularity 1, most notable the refusal to integrate God in the new, highly contested constitution (Taylor SA 831).

While Taylor does elsewhere unabashedly claim that 'Europe's roots are Christian and there is no way getting around it' (RNE 13), he would agree with Habermas that the constitutional enshrinement of such a recognition, to him, seems to be a violation of basic principles of justice in a plural society by 'not keeping an equal distance from different faith positions' (SA 532). However, an outright rejection of any religious-moral constitutional patriotism in Europe he counterbalances with the simultaneous rejection of Eurosecularity as the converse form of a presumptive EU constitutional patriotism. Therefore, the EU (even if accepting its treaty framework as a constitution in form if not explicitly named such; DW 79) also fails to this opposite end by falsely accepting the elite ideological contrivance of the purported Europeaness of secularization norms that must invariably abstract from national models that are themselves already radically plural. The fallacy would run something as follows: For instance, we as French republicans hold to a norm of 'laicite' given our history with French Catholicism. Therefore, for any religious group to be dealt with adequately in a European wide public, they must adhere to this same Europeanized institutional norm (RNE 9-10; RNE 16).

Taylor's verdict on European cases concerning the failures of moral constitutional patriotism as either a rejection or confirmation of religion in a European public of publics seems to indicate that Europe to this point is less mature in carrying out the last stage of what he

terms the nova effect: the radical pluralization of buffered identities he finds characteristic of a secular age. He finds that Europe has successfully gone through the first two stages, including 1) buffered identities experiencing intense cross-pressures and 2) the civilizational crisis for Christianity as the presumed bedrock for social solidarity. However, he finds that the EU has not fully completed the third and last stage, in which 3) elite forms of novel moral and ethical expression spillover to the broader popular public that not only reproduce the elite forms but also begin introducing their own novel expressions.

European societies have tended to follow along behind their elite cultures more than America, we said above. But this effect is magnified at the "European" level, where the running has been made entirely by these elites – with consequences which have emerged recently in referenda in various states on the Continent (Taylor SA 831, note 46).

Ultimately, for Taylor, it would beg the question to remedy the deficit in this last stage with the explicit constitutional reference to a shared locus of values in the absence of a European wide public articulation or outright rejection of the hegemony of the Eurosecularity narrative. Anything less would be to lapse back into an over-reliance on elite direction in EU affairs that has led to public outcries bemoaning the the EU democratic and legitimacy deficits since Maastricht. While one of Habermas's recurrent solutions to such a legitimacy deficit has been the explicit founding of a European constitution, in the absence of a European-wide will to do so, and with the concession to the Lisbon Treaty temporarily to resolve the constitution impasse, the democratic legitimation of such a transfer of authority must remain incomplete, only transferred second-hand via the elite direction of nationally-elected bureaucrats.

So the original question reemerges: why would Europe be less mature along this particular stage of secularization? Taylor argues that since within the formation of nation-states in the EU prior to the age of mobilization religion was often misused and maladapted to national-political aims, post-age of mobilization, the historical baggage of suspicion and/or apathy towards religion seems still to prevail, especially given Europe's (and the EU's) greater comfort in

following elite forms of unbelief (SA 525; 831). While he concedes this is not a sufficient blanket summary, as the unique cases of Poland and Ireland suggest, nonetheless it is certainly a general trend. For instance, despite a long and rich history of Judeo-Christian influences on European culture, the EU and its elitist structure tends to produce a cascade effect of self-fulfilling prophecies by reproducing, encouraging, and reinforcing forms of unbelief in many, yet certainly not all, of its own internal member states.

Comparing the two political structures, we can say that for many Americans the neo-Durkheimian link between God and nation is strong; whereas for Europeans, not only is the link discredited in individual countries, but on the continental level, the plurality of confessions in which the older patriotisms were embedded poses an additional obstacle. In this way, "God" can be seen to threaten European integration, while still fostering American patriotism (Taylor SA 831).

In the next section, I will examine the democratic features of such an imposition, leading to a further look at the status of Europe's growing immigrant and minority populations: those most potentially marginalized by the narrative social imaginary of Eurosecularity, most effectively captured in the domain of secularism 1.

II. Secularization and Integration of Religious Minorities: Islam as Lithmus Test?

In brief summary, by including religion in the public articulation of an overlapping consensus, instead of via appeal to a moral constitutional patriotism, *on the American side*, Taylor can consistently maintain that religion will still play a crucial epistemic and political role in US policy debates without falling prey to the myopic conventions of its own ideological mantra: one nation under God. In addition, *on the side of European exceptionalism*, as diverse European voices continue to challenge the previous hegemony of secularization, the democratic articulation of a wider fusion of horizons might produce pacifying effects that counteract the political marginalization of its religious minorities and immigrants. In this respect, we can take Roy at his word in finding 'The religions of today are no longer the expression of cultures or societies. They are reconstructions made on

individual and voluntary basis. Today, all religions are lived as minorities, even when they represent the majority' (Roy 140). The question then of the best way to integrate them publically and democratically, in the absence of the cosmopolitan appeal to regional and/or global constitutionalization, will be tested in these respective American and European contexts.

While Taylor offers differing specific recommendations for the US and EU concerning their respective Muslim minorities, he does see the general hope of including distinctly Muslim-based ideals in the future articulation of an overlapping consensus. As yet another illustration of the moral motivations behind the formation of identities produced as a byproduct of the nova effect, Taylor calls for continual reinterpretation and reappropriation of concepts within religious traditions themselves, such as his references to the constant invocation of the mercy and compassion prior to almost every surah of the *Qur'an* (CUCHR 156). However, once exposed to the nova effect, one might expect something akin to the American ('Judeo-Christian') historical experience with the concept of grace as it takes on various iterations that given the fragility of the concept may produce mutually incompatible social interpretations.

On top of that, these different pictures of grace and its substitutes are rivals. We can take our stand in one in order to reject the others. Because each of them is vulnerable, as we shall see later, because each can be brought to crisis, a complex interplay arises in which each can be at the same moment strengthened by the weakness exposed in the others. The belief in a unilateral process called 'secularization' is the belief that the crisis affects religious beliefs, and that the invariable beneficiaries are the secular ones. But this is not an adequate view of our situation (Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 1989: p. 413).

Applying this example to the case of Islam, while one might in other contexts merely evoke images of pacifying divisions internal to Islam, in this context for a hypothetical Muslim nova-effect, in the context of pervasive fragilization, the attention to compassion and mercy can also be read as petitions for forgiveness from the inside and outside. Since his notion of overlapping consensus works towards a Gadamerian fusion of horizons from both ends, Taylor's general idea

would *also* place some of the epistemic burden of transformation on repentant non-Muslims in American *and* European civil societies. Granted the clear affronts against Islam by the US in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and the general European exclusion of Islam from a political voice in EU politics, there is *also* the reflexive challenge for Muslims of its diverse historical forms to undergo the simultaneous internal transformation of grace and its transformative effects upon their own religious-political identities in the direction of a moral motivational source for the universal solidarity he calls for in the closing arguments of *A Secular Age* (SA 695-96; 701).

A. United States: Stretching the Limits of a 'Civic Religion'?

Taylor continues with his more detailed expositions concerning some of the historical and political sources for religion to flourish (and continue to do so?) in the US, while it has waned in Europe. One such source was that in immigrant cultures, Taylor believes that religious identity often becomes a very important source of social and political solidarity. In addition, he finds that the US had parsed religion and race in such a way that immigrants could achieve solidaristic inclusion via their religious identities into the American civic religion when coming from otherwise marginalized races and ethnicities (Taylor ASA 524; Casanova 33). Given the two factors mentioned above, post-mobilization plus immigration leads to a context whereby Taylor believes the US has had much more comfort with something like a civic religion that has the ongoing capacity for internal reflexive self-transformation.

From these general comments, given huge differences with respect to secularization 1, the comparative US and EU narratives begin sharply to diverge in reference to the status of Muslim minorities in each. In addition to the differences in sheer numbers of Muslim minorities (US – between 1 and 3%; EU as high as 10%), there is yet another generalized difference: the trend seems headed toward the increased incorporation of Muslims into political society in the US while moving toward greater exclusion in European contexts. Since the United States, as compared to Europe, never held the real prospect of falling under the rubric of what he calls an ancient regime, Taylor finds that its origins post-Age of Mobilization present more fruitful possibilities for authentic religious expression of its current racial and religious minorities. For example, in the case of the US, Taylor finds

that the US civic religion might be undergoing expansion with the most recent inclusion of Muslim imams at national prayer breakfasts and at public expressions of mourning post 9/11 (SA 454; 524). In addition, as just one of many such examples, public schools and universities in the US have recently begun setting a precedent of providing footbaths for the ritual observance of daily prayers to accommodate growing contingencies of Muslim immigrants. Given too, the market-like competitive culture of various religious forms of expression in the US, one might expect enhanced competition for congregates in any given community would reflexively modify the 'fragile' internal structure of all denominations of a particular community or region, including Muslim communities. This might also be taken as an additional reason why comfort with religion in the political sphere has been higher in the US, since what one might see is constant competition from the beginning between many minorities instead of falling from a past ancient regime history as evidenced in the history of many European nation-states.

B. The European Union: Immigrant Nations as the Missing Constitutional Referendum?

What was perhaps the greatest bane for the US case, in terms of the potential dangers of overemphasizing cosmic purpose, becomes the essential virtue of the European case. Given its long history of wars of religion, he finds that European nations have completely severed any sort of possible connection between tight moral bonds of social solidarity and ethno-national turned political identity.

The lack of public consensus over a sense of cosmic purpose in European societies can even bolster the democratizing potentials of including religious language to a greater degree in public discourse. Taylor observes that these religious voices in the EU may have reason for optimism since he finds it is often easier for a religious source of identity to become more vocal in its political activism when it has lapsed to a minority political position (SA 532). He cites in particular the increasingly vocal role of the Anglican Church in the UK which paradoxically had become more vocal under the Thatcher administration, or put in Taylor's terms – post moral constitutional patriotism – once Anglicanism had become a minority voice in British society.

However, the optimism only runs so far. In contrast to the greater trends of inclusion in the US public sphere, Muslim immigrants in the EU are doubly characterized with otherness in many European societies. Their otherness occurs with respect to both race and their religion, and leads not just to deficits in social solidarity but to doubly intense forms of democratic and political exclusion (Casanova RNE 32).

The core of the phenomenon of pluralization [due to immigration], clearly resides in the massive Islamic presence in several European countries, which is a common bond between European countries facing the problems of reciprocal acclimatization of quite separate religious and cultural worlds. At the same time, this necessitates the wholesale reassessment of the relationships between religion and culture in the societies concerned (Hervieu-Leger 52).

With respect to this vastly growing immigrant population, Taylor advises that the EU draw upon its shared transnational institutional context and work to promote a pan-European Muslim identity as the basis of an initial overlapping consensus between diverse Muslim groups in various European publics. This seems to him to serve two mutually reinforcing purposes (RNE 19). On the one hand, he thinks it could lead to something akin to a Muslim humanism that might adapt its background justifications to the schedule of basic norms/rights defended by EU courts and treaties (RNE 19). On the other hand, he also notes that this could go some distance in resolving democratic deficits not only suffered European-wide by religious minorities and immigrants, but also internally within various European national publics.

Islam has long been an important part of Europe and has shaped its cultural identity. Europe too has been a significant presence in Muslim societies, and has shaped their identity as well. Each has been the other's other, its cultural interlocutor. Their sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile relations have bonded them far more deeply than they realize or acknowledge (Parekh 121).

Although there has been steadily growing numbers of Muslim immigrants to the European continent that comprise the largest constituency of some 30-60 million immigrants EU-wide, they have often not been particularly successful and in many cases seem to citizens of individual member states to lack the requisite political will to integrate into the given nation-state of residence since they are unwilling to drop their religious identities. As a way to challenge some of the ideological basis of its assumptions concerning secularity 1, the best strategy would be to pursue available political channels of national and European-level political participation that might produce a pacifying effect as a wider overlapping consensus becomes articulated, in the absence of any vane hope for a final constitutionalized political closure. Assuming that the ensuing nova effect would produce new plural and hybrid beliefs of Muslim expression, it would also be fair to expect that this could disclose hidden assumptions concerning the religious heritage of all Member States affected, carrying moral and epistemic justifications of religious nature to the forefront of the public social imaginary, perhaps de-constitutionalizing political cultures instead of re-constitutionalization.

For instance, Turkish minority and immigrant groups in the EU have drawn on both legal juridical institutions and the emerging institutions of civil society to organize politically European-wide. However, outside of political participation of any particular national form, Turkish minorities and immigrants in many cases have mobilized beyond the traditional networks recognized by Member State political cultures, forging the nascent origins of a transformed social imaginary (Gole 2006, pp. 124-26). Reflexively, such a transformation would extend outward to a regional scale, while also radiating back to the individual actors that participate in this transformative perspective. Gole takes Taylor's individualization trend to the next extreme by postulating that often when Muslim immigrants come to Europe, there is relatively nothing remaining of the Islam they had left at home. For instance, they seek out and adapt into socially disembedded forms of religiosity that may even serve to de-constitutionalize their own national traditions 'in spite of the historical distinctions between spiritual Sufi and canonized Shariat Islam, Shia and Sunnite Islam, and conservative Saudi Arabia and revolutionary Iran that constitute a newly formed horizontal social

imaginary (Gole 124), tending towards Taylor's earlier call for the public articulation of a transnational Muslim humanism.

III. Taylor's Concluding Recommendations

While Taylor does not go so far as taking an explicit stance concerning which side of the Atlantic demonstrates a preferable model for dealing with religion in the public, it seems like at least in terms of advancing secularization theory, more positive points have been scored on his docket for the US side than the European one, particular with respect to secularism 1. As a principled defense of such a verdict, one could read the stages of the nova effect as a pragmatic test for secularization maturity, where the EU falls short on the plural transmission of elite novel forms of belief and unbelief to common citizens. However, according to Taylor, given the growing number of issues that tread at the bounds of religious concerns (for instance, non-traditional marriages and/or civil union, new bio-medical technologies [Hervieu-Leger 57], and a growing Muslim immigrant population), the EU's inability to accommodate religious perspectives into its elite discourse as adeptly as its US counter-part renders the EU so much the worst off morally *and democratically* than its counterpart since 'religious discourse will be very much in the public square [and] Democracy requires that each citizen or group of citizens speak the language in public debate that is most meaningful to them (SA 532). [e.g French headscarf case in (RNE 10); French suspicion towards any non-Catholic expression of belief (SA 529); and the Franco-German disturbance in light of any new cults and/or home schooling (SA 529)]. However, given the constantly changing historical matrix that goes into the diverse nova effects produced by secularization and desecularization movements, such a contemporary judgment would certainly not preclude that things will remain this way.

Perhaps in a counter-intuitive move though, in describing what he only gestures at as a supernova effect of plugging world religions, new-age, and atheist/agnostic post-religion movements in the secularization narrative (SA 300), in what elites have begun to call the onset of a postsecular age in Europe, the growing pluralization trend will increase rather than decrease the significance of religion in the global public. However, with this comes the challenge of creating new forms of solidarity as prior forms of political identity undergo radical reconstruction (RNE 15). While a more intensive treatment of the

cultural and religious factors at stake for immigrants worldwide would certainly extend outside the immediate scope of this discussion, these more adaptable public standards of enforcement also do not immediately foreclose experimenting with moral motivations of a religious orientation entering into openly democratic debate, thus running directly counter to the predominant secularism of characteristically cosmopolitan justifications (Taylor 2006, pp. 19-21; Gole 2006, pp. 125-26). Akin to rights proposals made in a different (albeit related) context by Charles Taylor, in regimes oriented toward the expression of an overlapping consensus, background justifications might widely differ across cultures as well as their administrative implementation, which in the end, may enhance rather than detract from the epistemic and moral quality of our rights justification and implementation for immigrants (1999, pp. 124-25).

While these remarks might seem to push the limits of speculation beyond any verifiable epistemic position, José Casanova details how such an identity construction might be expected to proceed in a *post-supernova US* embedded in a global context:

American religious pluralism is expanding and incorporating all the world religions in the same way as it previously incorporated the religions of the old immigrants. A complex process of mutual accommodation is taking place. Like Catholicism and Judaism before, other world religions, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism are being 'Americanized' and in the process they are transforming American religion, while much as American Catholicism had an impact on world Catholicism and American Judaism has transformed world Judaism, the religious diasporas in America are serving as catalysts for the transformation of the old religions in their civilizational homes (RNE 34-5).

In a global society, this mutual accommodation process would thereby be expected to transform religions such as Islam in its various forms as they are experienced not only in the US, but internationally, and not just politically but also ethically and morally from within.

While Taylor remains skeptical of Europe importing denominational models that have been successful in the US (SA 529), we might instead expect an internal process of expressive democratization

whereby the religions themselves undergo change that reflexively guides their reintroduction and mutual adaption into European contexts and stirs on pluralization trends elsewhere. Such speculation carries us into what Taylor postulates as the *future of secularization in the EU*: 'we may be creating societies with an unprecedented degree of openness and inclusion' (RNE 21) which is therefore why 'we follow the attempts of Europe to widen its boundaries even beyond the borders of former Christendom with fascination and excitement' (RNE 21).

[T]oday, we seem to be set for a century of the Islam-West line. The political integration or incorporation of Muslims – remembering that there are more Muslims in the European Union than the combined populations of Finland, Ireland and Denmark – has not only become the most important goal of egalitarian multiculturalism, but is now pivotal in shaping the security, indeed the destiny, of many peoples across the globe (Modood 110).

Given that Taylor believes shared institutional forms and common background justifications are non-essential in forming an overlapping consensus, we might agree also with Casanova and surprisingly expect international institutions in a global society to become *more* religious in character rather than less (2006b, p. 22). Perhaps this trend has been reinforced even in EU institutions that are already suggesting hints among European elites of various stripes as having become *postsecular* (SA 534, 831 n. 46). The goal of European citizens themselves in contributing to this move would be actively to participate in the ongoing pluralization of public forms of religious expression and simultaneously work towards the public articulation of the scope and extent of an overlapping consensus tending in the universal direction, maybe even surreptitiously closing European-wide legitimacy *and* cosmopolitan democratic deficits along the way.

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The Sacred and the Secular: From Conflict to Complement

GIAN LUIGI BRENA

Taylor's revisionist account of secularization is focused on the evolution of exclusive humanism in Latin-Western Christianity. This radically secular conception of life expanded from elites to the whole of society, inducing a conflictual situation between believers and nonbelievers. But the immanent conception was also constantly criticized by its own followers. This suggests that we consider this conflictual adventure from a deeper point of view, that of the quest for an authentic human fullness for the whole of society, so as to be able to find a common basis of cooperation.

I think that Taylor's position is an interesting and viable proposal that should be tried out in European society as a unifying factor. At the same time it is somehow surprising for me that this radically secular problematic is not considered relevant for many scholars. The American situation is remarkably different from the European one; we could say that America is simultaneously secular and religious, and, as José Casanova suggests, it is probably the rule not the exception vis-à-vis the European situation. In the process of modernization, secularity and religion need not be antagonistic and mutually exclusive.

So I would (1) outline the perspective of a reconciliation between radical secularity and religion as I find it in Taylor's *A Secular Age*, (2) try to appreciate different ways of practicing and seeing the relation between the sacred and the secular, and (3) outline a new way of practicing philosophy in this sphere of sacred/secular interests.

Quest for Fullness between Humanism and Religion

As Charles Taylor has shown the sacred and the secular are indeed *conflictual* if we consider the genesis of the secular stance as that of a practical atheism consisting in a conception of human fullness excluding God and any sort of transcendence. The secular came about through a critique refusing the Christian way of living, as irrational, authoritarian, and mortifying, so that a pagan self-assertion was

preferred to Christian self-denial. But Taylor points to the persistent critique of exclusive humanism not only from the religious point of view, but also from a secularized one.

The Romantic movement kept challenging the Cartesian mechanicism and English empiricism because they had an atomistic view of the self, cutting it off its deeper roots, from the wider living nature and from the community of fellow humans. More radically, Marx criticized liberalism and Nietzsche mocked the idolatry of science, democracy and morality. But also less radical thinkers like Alexis de Tocqueville and Max Weber found modern democracy too empty and leveling down.

All these forms of objections were leveled against exclusive humanism *from within* the immanent frame of mind and show that the search for a higher fullness has not come to rest. But why interpret exclusive humanism as a search for fullness? My reasoning is that Taylor does not find satisfactory the idea that secularity came about as a subtraction process, eliminating the illusory *ideas and values* of religion and finding out the real *facts* of science. On the contrary, science acquired its high reputation in society, even in the minds of people who do not understand science, because of the values it carried in itself.

Certainly the intellectual *honesty* and the moral *courage* of accepting reality as it shows itself, even when correcting or renouncing cherished religious beliefs. This coming of age of humankind was exalted. Also the critiques of religion and ecclesiastical power and teaching were often justified, even if they didn't imply a radical rejection of religion. A more positive stance toward bodily pleasures became the declaration of their innocence, and then the exaltation of them as unique real persons. The universal equal human rights, independent of religious input, is also a positive achievement and could hardly have been reached from within a religious confession.

And while tracing the evolution to exclusive humanism, Taylor underlines the stage of Deism, in which God was relegated to the origin of the universe, without any direct or new intervention in its evolution. That could be interpreted only as an imperfection in the work of creation. But Taylor insists even more on another strand of evolution, regarding the conception of human society. This was conceived as the result of a merely human contract serving mutual prosperity, and only the success of economic and public organization

could provide confidence in the possibility of a better society. But Taylor sees the necessity of another essential element for the upcoming exclusive humanism: the idea that human nature is endowed with a sentiment of sympathy and spontaneous benevolence toward human fellows. This moral resource could be cultivated, so as to grant the societal link, but without God.

So one can see the undergirding values of exclusive humanism but the question may arise: where does the tendency to build a perfect society come from? The Protestant striving for the sanctification of everyday life according to the universal calling of the gospel comes immediately to mind. But Taylor retraces its origins much earlier in the Middle Ages, and so suggests considering a thousand year long movement that attempted to ameliorate the whole of society, by embracing the life and preaching of the orders of medieval friars. This movement had great impact until the European political revolutions in France and Russia and, eventually, the twentieth century totalitarian regimes.

The failure of the secular revolutionary projects to build up an irreversible just society and the horrible experiences of totalitarianism have imposed the tendency to discipline, to organize, and to impose certain ways of behavior that ignore the limits of human nature and oppress it, instead of transforming it. If we admit that there was an excessive one-dimensionality and that we are all to blame for it, we come one step further. We should then take up a common responsibility for the future. If we admit that in our situation, believers and nonbelievers alike, are faced with two major dilemmas. First we cannot fully enjoy the body pleasures (as the earlier exclusive humanism wanted) and at the same time overcome, and change for the better our present situation. We have to make choices and thus, we are brought to the modesty of accepting our limits.

Second the sex and the violent outbursts are a drag on our societies and the old Christian reform movements, highlighted by Taylor, have not dealt effectively with those problems. This was because at first the Christian point of view insisted on moral rules and prohibitions, and later on exclusive humanism tried to discipline people through revolutionary ideologies and violence. Instead we need to accept the limits of humankind and try to transform (through conversion or real sublimation) ourselves at the service of a richer spiritual fullness.

In this perspective of the common search for human fullness, the present secular condition, labeled by Taylor secularity three, can be viewed as a cross-pressured one: belief and unbelief are perceived as a double challenge at a mass level. This ambivalent secularity characterizes a *condition* common to all, believers and nonbelievers alike, and the search for fullness-authenticity doesn't necessarily favor a trend towards a religious choice rather than a nonreligious one. However, on this basis, Taylor thinks that religion and nonreligion can be complementary, even though, in his view, the Christian attitude is more promising in dealing with these issues than a secularized one.

I think that this orientation, if widely accepted by religious people could meet halfway the latest conceptions of Habermas and the idea of public reason, as revisited by Rawls. These positions are widely accepted on the secular side. This possible reconciliation is important for this situation of radical opposition.

Europe Is Not the Rule

Edwin George, in his paper, in this volume, focused on the Indian traditions. There, he considers the sacred and the secular as originally not only complementary, but reciprocally enriching and almost inseparable and indistinguishable.¹ So I wondered if this was the same sort of secularity Taylor speaks of in the context of exclusive humanism. I thought I could understand it better interpreting this form of secularity as not exclusive but rather inclusive of a religious horizon. When we live in such a horizon, we understand that religion embraces not only worship, prayers and meditation, but also everyday life, which is indeed "secular" as a lay experience, but does not exclude an atmosphere of Transcendence. Now this, what might be called, *weak* secularity is in principle acceptable from a religious point of view and could perhaps be maintained even in a society that is capable of modernizing itself without conflicting with or even rejecting religion, and could even restore a relation with it.

But from a broader point of view the paper of Indra Nath Choudhuri insists on the logic of complementarity and identity that characterize the Indian traditions. I must confess that I cannot attribute plausibility to this "logic" without situating it at a different

¹ See chapter above by Edwin George.

level and of experience. Trying to understand a Hindu traditional perspective, I thought I had to have some experience of yoga. However, I must admit that I never went far enough on that path. Nevertheless I found it a new and deep sort of experience centered on the embodied subject, and one different from the empirical experience that has been the focus of Western philosophy.

In this perspective I can make better sense of the logic of complementarity and identity as referring to a different and more concrete and deep level of reality. Saying this I do not claim to have found the 'secret' of Eastern Philosophy and Religion, but only to say that the path of experience is indispensable and more telling than just reading. And surely I would add that in trying to understand the new logic, one has to understand it according to the interpretation of those who live these experiences from within, rather than interpreting them in one's own way. But I would submit that if Western people take this Indian or Asian experience of reality at face value, i.e. as if it was referring to empirical experience or scientific theory, they become only more confused, instead of learning something new and important.

In a similar way, when Sayed Hassan² spoke of the rationality of the Qur'an perspective, I thought that I also would maintain that in the Bible and in the Gospels there is a form of rationality, or better of wisdom (to speak in the terms of Saeed Anvary). And I also believe this wisdom to be superior in comparison with the philosophical one. But I think also that this wisdom is not the sort of rationality we can find in modern western philosophy. I think it is not even the rationality we find in the whole tradition of Western Philosophy.

So I tried to indicate the differences, calling to mind the mutual accusations between Catholics and Protestants in the age of the European religious wars. They both considered the others' theological arguments as invalid, because such arguments were based on authority, tradition, or claims to mystical experience. All these sources of religious wisdom were considered not rational and so invalid. They are not part of a Cartesian or of an empirical modern rationality. In this form of reason there was also no place for human feelings and values or for subtler *experiences* like the aesthetic. But I would affirm

² See chapter below on Islamic culture by Sayed Hassan.

that this rationality is too narrow for a philosophy seeking to make sense of other cultures and religions.

Looking to find a place for religious wisdom, I think we ought to accepting the critique that Heidegger and the whole current of existential phenomenology formulated against the rationalistic and empiricist stance. Charles Taylor too has greatly contributed to the recovery and rehabilitation of the wisdom tradition of pre-philosophical and pre-scientific experience, considering them as a wider form of rationality.

Taylor insists repeatedly on the point that religion cannot be treated as a theory, nor can the existence of God be considered exclusively as the result of a demonstration (although that was the rule in Western philosophical traditions). Religion and belief are first of all *experiences* of the same type as the experiences of fullness. And every experience comes prior to asking questions and giving demonstrations. This is equivalent to affirming that Western reason and especially *modern* reason is not sufficient for a philosophical discourse in which Religion can have its due place. I would argue that the same point applies to the understanding of cultures in general.

It is well known from the history of colonization and from the development of cultural anthropology that no other culture could be understood and appreciated on the basis of the Western enlightened form of reason. The enlightened reason claimed to be the source of the only civilized culture in the world, and so thought to be justified in civilizing other cultures and peoples.³ The other cultures could be considered at best as more primitive forms of the same unique reason, but most of their content was judged irrational, as compared with the Western standards.

I think the effort to widen the Western conception of rationality so as to include in it also the living experience should become a main task of Western Philosophy. Only then will it be able to make sense of other cultures, including Religion. People's everyday experience is their living culture. Describing the diverse living sense of each culture and accounting for it should be of paramount importance for a worldwide dialogical Philosophy.

Therefore an enlarged philosophical conception of human reason suited to making sense of Religion does not invoke an *ad hoc* form of

³ Cultural relativism is often criticized as incompatible with logical rationality.

reason, only to serve a religious interest. More generally such an enlarged and enriched form of rationality will be indispensable for making possible an adequate understanding of other cultures, and the 'other' and so to ground a real dialogue between cultures in the perspective of an overlapping consensus.

If we are invoking a form of rationality which is not separated from religious experience and wisdom, we must criticize the whole Western philosophical tradition, because it was based on a rejection of pre-philosophical, pre-conceptual opinion. Normally, Western thinkers claim that only in the West do we have *philosophy proper*, defining philosophy as against myth, tradition and popular religion. But why should it be so? Is it so?

Perhaps we can say that other cultures do not have a philosophical tradition if we maintain that Philosophy is the same as Western Philosophy. But this is admitting only a very limited form of Philosophy, which is not apt either to make sense of other cultures or to make a place for their self-interpreting and self-theorizing potentialities. Rather we ought to enlarge the scope of Philosophy in a global age. There are questions we simply cannot avoid: what kind of rationality is there in a living culture, or a living Religion? What are the dimensions of rationality we need to develop in order to make sense of different cultures and religions?

I think we have to accept a very liberal concept of experience admitting *prima facie* all that claims to be experienced by other humans (or aliens if this be the case). But, we should also try to make out the inner sense of this from a conceptual point of view. I do not think that this requires essentially a break with religious or cultural traditions. I am now faltering trying to imagine what could be a symbolical description of the figure of Semar, in the paper by Armada Riyanto.⁴ We could see in him the personification or incarnation of a style of life. A living being can provide us not only an icon or image, but, centering on him, also a rich repertory of narratives, regarding the best attitudes and behaviors in different situations of life.

But what is the central content of this figure? Perhaps we could describe the form of this wisdom as that of a positive attitude to life in the awareness of its limits. It seems inappropriate to speak of humor, as though there is a relativization of values, taking the easy way out.

⁴ See chapter by Armada Riyanto.

Rather, with the attitude of companionship and service the highest values can be affirmed. Nonetheless, the awareness of the distance in our striving for them, we should perhaps say that it is the tension that is encouraged, with the awareness of limits, and perhaps the ambiguity of a claim to perfection. So a great tolerance for imperfection does not prevent or discourage the tension or the hope to the best.

Supposing this is a somehow pertinent description, a philosophical question is whether such an attitude to life could be expressed in a new concept that could come to enrich the common philosophical conceptuality, in a manner similar to, *yoga mana* or *bhakti* which are usually accepted as valid concepts, at least in the Philosophy of Religion. I think it is nonsensical to try to separate religion and reason in these 'new' concepts. Why should we deny that a religious tradition is giving us new ideas if we thank other concrete human beings for an inspiring conversation or for expressing something more correctly?

My insisting on pre-scientific experience is not meant to argue against scientific method and knowledge, as Gadamer would have it. I think that the scientific method should rather be enlarged to cope with *human sciences* and even with Philosophy and Theology;⁵ it could be a new source of knowledge and not only in the natural sciences. I fully approve of the titles of the most famous works of Rawls and Habermas both of which use the word *Theory*.

Enlarging the Basis of Consensus

Neither Rawls nor Habermas develop the philosophical presuppositions of their conception of a possible complementarity between secular and religious viewpoints, whereas Taylor through his whole philosophical work has set a wide basis for that. He pays attention to the living experiences, to the common space of language.

The term "experience" should be understood not in a formal but in a broad sense, including everyday life, common sense, and also the peak moral and religious experiences. All of these forms of experience are ways of *immediate* knowledge by acquaintance (or tacit knowledge), they are *comprehensive* ways of knowledge, more of the sort of "knowing how" than of "knowing that," they are usually *non-*

⁵ As I argued in G.L. Brena, *Forme di verità. Introduzione all'epistemologia* (Edizioni San Paolo: Cinisello Balsamo, 1995).

problematic. And so they are prior to every questioning philosophy but should not be ignored by philosophy as a previous source of sense.

Admitting the limits of Western Philosophy which was mainly a work of conceptualization and argumentation, I would not neglect or refuse this aspect, but only refuse to consider it exclusive of other forms of meaning and rationality. Therefore other traditions too should develop their own conceptual devices. But this is not possible without having first carefully *described* and pondered the pre-philosophical wisdom traditions.⁶ This conceptual research is more traditional for philosophy and should go hand in hand with the increasing communication between different cultures and religions, trying mutually to understand, to translate, and to conceptualize the meaning of their deeper experiences. If we give experience its place, then cultural experiences (Religion included) may come to the forefront of our interest and the human sciences will also have to be revisited and rethought. Taylor has made important contributions on all these matters.

Here, I propose a sharp distinction (which is not an opposition or separation) between the *description* of experiences and *asking questions* about them. Concepts, classifications, analysis, interpretations, and theories are all on the side of questioning and research. I contend that when we *ask questions* about our experience something new is happening: there is an *epistemological break*. We put ourselves into an attitude of *research about* experience and so we pre-suppose the experience we are asking about and the context from which we detach it, and the features from which we select only the one in which we are interested. Even the simpler classical questions: *What is it?* or *Why is it so?* cannot be the starting point of philosophy because they presuppose a previous experience which cannot be overlooked. Experience is the necessary starting point of a philosophy conscious of itself and we ought not only to explicitly admit our presuppositions, but also to give a *description* of them before asking questions about them.

The human being as a self-interpreting animal. First of all we need to pay attention to the living experiences and traditions that were always

⁶ So we will be able to enrich our conceptual vocabulary and eventually we will be able also to cooperate in understanding and conceptualizing central meanings and values of other cultures and religions (for example: Bhakti, or Islam, etc.).

presupposed but also *ignored* by an exclusively rationalizing philosophy. Still more important, we must grant the *right of self-interpretation* to the people who are actually living in the first person those different cultural traditions. Experiences are lived by the people who inhabitate them. So one should learn from the people who are having a first-person experience what, for them, is the inner sense of a given behavior or story or cult in the context of their tradition. I cannot judge it according to *my own* experiential presuppositions. My pre-comprehensions must be modified so as to adopt the right point of view, the point of view of the other in his/her self-interpretation.

A basic task in intercultural dialogue is that of giving the first place to living experiences. This implies the task of describing and articulating in philosophical reflection the inherent sense of these experiences. They may be everyday experiences or special ones. Of course they are relevant and philosophically interesting only if we recognize the dignity of other persons and the meaning and values they are living by in different cultures. These are to be considered as different ways of life, and even better, as different ways of being human. This makes all the difference vis-à-vis a Western philosophical tradition which excluded from its very start the *opinion* (*doxa*) of ordinary people, and meant to find the real meaning of reality *only* in concepts and not in images, stories, or symbols.

The philosophical retrieving of ordinary language and everyday experience enables a recognition of the reasonableness of pre-philosophical and pre-scientific experience including popular religion i.e. *actual* religion, which is part of common people's everyday life. But even in the religiously dedicated lives it is *experience* that matters and not primarily religious concepts or a would-be scientific explanation of religion. Western Philosophy should become conscious of its limits and try to overcome them, becoming sensitive to symbolic language in order to understand other cultural and religious traditions. This enlargement of philosophical rationality is absolutely indispensable, although not frankly admitted in the present Western Philosophy. Taylor is a minority voice in the present philosophical discussion, but his work articulates a future more open conception.⁷

⁷ I would criticize the present fashion of 'post'forms of philosophy. They are narrowing the scope of existential and hermeneutical philosophy. M. Zarader's article shows *how* the latest French phenomenological philosophy tried to

Cultures as self-interpreted experiences. Research for ‘fullness’ presents much tension. It leaves questions open for answers. In this sense it could be criticized as not underscoring the essential transcendence. But matters have become more complex and we should accept starting from afar to clarify them. It is well known from the history of colonization and from the development of cultural anthropology that no other culture could be understood and appreciated as reasonable on the basis of the western enlightenment form of reason. The enlightened reason claimed to be the unique source of civilized culture in the world, and therefore was considered justified in civilizing other cultures and peoples.⁸

We can better understand this if we situate the genesis of this form of reason. With the Lutheran theologian W. Pannenberg, I think that there was a sort of “historical necessity” for the origin of the modern western form of reason and this led to a very narrow form of reason. Cartesian philosophy is embedded in the confessional wars between Catholics and Protestants, and more exactly in the context of the controversial debates between the theologians of both Confessions. The Protestants accused the Catholics of grounding the truth claims of their faith on *tradition* and on (papal) *authority* and not on (rational) *evidence*, whereas the Catholics accused the Protestants of having *no truth criteria* at all, except the *subjective* faith experience of anyone who claimed to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

So it became somehow “necessary” to establish a new common form of reason that was grounded only on basic evidence, excluding faith claims. Such is the rational evidence of the clear and distinct ideas that was central for Descartes. And such is also the empirical evidence of sense data that became central for the empiricist set of mind. In both cases faith was set aside and so privatized even before the privatization of Religion as a consequence of *public tolerance*.⁹ In this

“enlarge” the concept of phenomenon, only making it more *abstract and formal*. So we can have an even more sophisticated philosophy, speaking an ever new jargon. This is a technically highly elaborated way of reflection, but finally a form of Western Philosophy changing only its cloth, but not its voice.

⁸ See comments above and footnote 4.

⁹ The wisdom of the Bible was criticized in virtue of the strength of these criteria and I wonder if the rationality of Quran will be able to avoid or to stand up to these kinds of objections. Therefore I think we should differentiate among the forms of rationality and criticize the narrow exclusive forms.

modern form of reason there was no proper place for religious experiences, but neither for human feelings and values, nor for subtler *experiences* like the aesthetic.

The contributions of existential phenomenology led us to adopt a new and wider conception of reason, prior to the abstract conceptual form, a layer of sense and meaning which is inherent in different forms of *experience*.¹⁰ Taylor has come to articulate these global, or more compact, experiences showing how in them fact and value are inseparable, and how they include also interpersonal, affective and esthetic dimensions.

One is invited to pay attention to a dimension of reality in which things are met at a deeper level, where they come together, or are bound together in other ways. Paying attention to this diversity, one can reach a better understanding of the “epistemology of *complementarity*” that obtains between the sacred and the secular in an “Indian” perspective. If in a dialogue between “Indian” and Western thought we do not make explicit this different access to reality and to different levels of experience, we do not really understand each other and are in a confusing and misleading relation.

As noted above, experiences are lived by people who inhabitate them. So one should learn from the people who are having a first-person experience what is *for them* the inner sense of a given behavior or story, or worship in the context of their tradition. We cannot judge another culture or religion according to our *own* experiential presuppositions. Our pre-comprehensions must be modified so as to adopt the right point of view, the point of view of the other in his/her self-interpretation.

A basic point in intercultural dialogue is that of giving the first place to living experiences as self-interpreted. This implies the task first of *describing* and then of initially *articulating* in philosophical reflection the inherent sense of these experiences. They may be everyday experiences or special ones. Both of them are relevant and philosophically interesting if we recognize the dignity of other persons, in their different cultures and the meaning and values they are living by. These are to be considered as different ways of life, and even better as different ways of *being human*. This is quite different vis-

¹⁰ Taylor reminds us of them criticizing the presuppositions of the death of God theory of secularization, ch. 15

à-vis a western philosophical tradition which excluded from its very start the *opinion* (doxa) of ordinary people, and meant to find the real meaning of reality *only* in concepts and not in images, stories, or symbols.

The complementarity between the sacred and the secular in the Indian perspective is embedded in an horizon of transcendence. It is not the secular of exclusive humanism as described by Taylor. Now sometimes because of this non-separation between the sacred and the secular it is said that the Indian culture did not develop a real philosophical (secular) tradition. But if we have such a thesis we are maintaining that philosophy means by definition *western* philosophy. Of course this may have a good historical meaning, but if we take seriously the claim of philosophy to be in principle *universal*, we have no reason to maintain that philosophy has to reject cultural or religious traditions as mere “opinions” with no philosophical relevance.

On the contrary, a philosophy which intends to remain *universal and global* is now faced inevitably with the task of widening its scope into a multicultural perspective. Otherwise we are admitting a very limited form of philosophy, which is not apt either to make sense of other cultures or to make a place to their self-interpreting and self-theorizing potentialities.

We must enlarge the scope of philosophy in a global age. The question we cannot avoid is to establish what kind of rationality is that of a living culture, or of a living religion. Consequently we would have to ask ourselves which are the dimensions of rationality we need to develop in order to make sense of different cultures and religions. We should be able to articulate the symbolic dimension of life, and our capacity to cope with the inherent sense of nature.

Some Concluding Remarks

Now if we accept the perspective suggested by José Casanova about the probable different ways of change and modernization according to the different cultures and religions, we could think that other ways to modernity need not pass through the conflictual experience between the sacred and the secular provoked by an exclusive form of humanism like the European one. The American Revolution could be considered, even by Taylor, as a more normal way to modernity in comparison to that of the French or Soviet

revolutions. I think it desirable that this be the future of Asian and also of Muslim voyages to modernity.

But, will be possible? All will admit that no people or no society nowadays is able to survive without technology and science. I am afraid that in the long run this could become a treacherous fifth column for non- western cultures, carrying within itself a radical secularism. Therefore, I think it important, first to find a way of reconciling exclusive humanism and religious traditions, and second to re-think the methodology and scope of the human sciences in order to make space for other cultures and for a sense of religious transcendence. It is important that the western cultural and philosophical tradition become able to understand the living sense of other traditions. This will help western secularity become less conflictual and more open to other cultures and religions.

Self-Consistent Liberalism and the Sacred

PLAMEN MAKARIEV

Introduction

The thesis of this paper is that from a *self-consistent* liberal point of view, morally justified relations between people whose self-understanding is based upon a relationship with the transcendent and those who seek the ultimate ground of their behavior in themselves (i.e., between religious and secular persons),¹ can be established only through a procedural and not through a substantivist approach. In other words, the people who differ in this respect can arrange their co-existence in a positive way only by keeping to rules which regulate their interactions-as-different in a non-conflictual manner, and not by achieving unity in their worldviews, i.e., to one extent or another overcoming their differences. The latter may be desirable and partially possible to achieve (for example, in the form of the mutual enrichment of views), but it cannot be the way to establish morally acceptable relations in this realm.

By “*self-consistent liberalism*” I mean a critically-universalistic theory about society which has as its main methodological principle the avoidance of self-contradiction – both in itself and in the models of social organization which it works out and recommends as the basis of developing public policy.

In order to substantiate this thesis I will offer an interpretation of the conceptions about religion, morality and politics of several outstanding liberal thinkers: J. Locke, I. Kant, J. Rawls, J. Habermas, as well as some alternative views: Charles Taylor, John Henry Newman, Hans Kung and others. The logic of the transitions from one theory to another will be the “struggle” with inconsistencies. Each time I will present the newer theory as an attempt to eliminate the inner contradictions of the former. I will do this even in the cases in which there is no historical evidence (to the best of my knowledge) that the later author has publicly criticized the former. This paper is

¹ I make this differentiation following a formulation of Charles Taylor. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 15-16.

not about the history of philosophy, but about the ways in which philosophical thinking has been and is trying to deal with a great conceptual and moral challenge.

John Locke's Position

I will start with the famous thesis of John Locke that religion and politics should be separated, which has contributed to the historical separation of the church from the state, i.e., to the secularization of public life. In the *Letter Concerning Toleration* Locke begins his argumentation with the claim that persecution and unchristian cruelty should not be justified by "a pretence of care of the public weal and observation of the laws"² and, more generally, that "none may impose either upon himself or others by the pretence of loyalty and obedience to the prince, or of tenderness and sincerity in the worship of God."³ The use of coercion is admissible only in the case of defending a just civil order. "It is the duty of the civil magistrate, by the impartial execution of equal laws, to secure unto all the people in general, and to every one of his subjects in particular, the just possession of these things belonging to this life."⁴ If anyone presume to violate the laws of public justice and equity, established for the preservation of these things, his presumption is to be checked by the fear of punishment, consisting in the deprivation or diminution of those civil interests, or goods, which otherwise he might and ought to enjoy."⁵ And, as no one would willingly endure such punishment, the magistrate may use coercion in order to defend the rights of the citizens.⁶

This justification of coercion is not valid, however, in the sphere of religion, because "no man can so far abandon the care of his own salvation as blindly to leave to the choice of any other, whether prince

² John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), p. 15.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ By "these things belonging to this life" Locke means the goods to which everyone is entitled merely because of being human: "life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, land, houses, furniture and the like," John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, p. 15. He calls them "civil interests" but the meaning of "civil" in this context is different from the later one, associated with "citizenship." Here Locke regards "civil" as related to "this life," i.e., as secular.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶ See *Ibid.*

or subject, to prescribe to him what faith or worship he shall embrace. For no man can, if he would, conform his faith to the dictates of another. All the life and power of true religion consist in the inward and full persuasion of the mind."⁷ Even if the person to whom the practicing of a religion, to which s/he is not genuinely committed, is imposed by coercion, does obediently what is required from her/him, this will not be an act of faith, for "faith is not faith without believing."⁸ What would be achieved, would be mere hypocrisy.

We find here a claim which has been maintained by liberal thinkers up to our days: that coercion is morally acceptable only for the enforcement of a just social order. This means that coercion has no place in the sphere of religious belief, including also the relations between secular and religious people. Otherwise – and here the criterion of self-consistency comes into play – it would be an enforced faith, which is a contradiction in terms. From these considerations it follows that religion must be expelled from public life: (a) for its own good, since it should not get involved in coercive relations, and (b) (if we "stretch" our understanding of Locke's argumentation a little, perhaps ascribing to him later liberal views), because religious faith is so intimately bound up with one's personality and conscience that no one can require that it also conform with civil justice (which is a necessary condition, from a liberal point of view, for any system of beliefs in order to have the right to exert influence on the patterns of public life). If it follows from my faith that something should be done, I will do my best that this is done, even if it would disturb the balance of civil (in Locke's meaning) interests. Therefore it is better not to allow religious considerations to motivate our public actions.

Critique of Locke

However, in spite of Locke's devotion to justice and self-consistency, his theory about the stance of religion with regard to public life – as well as other similar theories, most of them related to the Enlightenment – has been criticized precisely for being self-contradictory. Common among these conceptions is the notion of justice in public life as a balance of civil interests, the latter being understood as entitlements to a concrete range of goods of the type

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

enumerated in Locke's list cited above. In other words, this is a substantive view of justice, one which is engaged in a concrete selection of the values which are most important for social life. However, no one presents arguments as to why these and not other goods should be taken into account. In each case their list is dogmatically postulated. An apparent argument is the reference to Natural Law, which has been made by some authors. But Natural Law is itself based upon assumptions about human nature. Isaiah Berlin, in his *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*,⁹ presents a convincing picture of the negative reactions which liberalism, in this early form, provoked, the most extreme ones coming from German contemporary thinkers like J. G. Herder and some of the representatives of German Romanticism. They were outraged by the association of liberal programs for social reform with concrete values in the light of which the French way of life appeared much more advanced and worthy of affirmation than the German one. That is, local cultural forms were declared to be a universal ideal – which is not only theoretical inconsistency, but also amounts to (to employ a later term) “cultural imperialism,” which justifies a domination of certain cultures over others.

Immanuel Kant's Position

An important step in attaining self-consistency in liberal social and moral theory was made by Immanuel Kant. He does not see morality as a means of promoting certain concrete values, but rather as a formal rule. His formalistic ethics presents a remarkable synthesis of instrumental (purposive) and value rationality.¹⁰ In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant demonstrates that an immoral action cannot be rational. Here, “rational action” is understood, in the broadest sense, as that which is exercised according to principles, each of which in no conceivable case would contradict itself. That is, such a principle can be universalized without the danger that at a certain point it would deny itself. In support of this claim Kant gives his famous example of the financial deposit,

⁹ Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* (London: Fontana Press, 1991).

¹⁰ I use these categories here in the meaning of Max Weber's theory of the types of social action: as “Zweckrationalitaet” and “Wertrationalitaet.” See Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978).

I have, for example, made it my maxim to increase my assets by every safe means. Now I have a *deposit* in my hands, the owner of which is deceased and has left no record of it. Naturally, this is a case for my maxim. Now I want only to know whether that maxim can also hold as a universal practical law. I therefore apply the maxim to the present case and ask whether it could indeed take the form of a law and I could thus indeed, at the same time, give through my maxim such a law as this: that everyone may deny a deposit which no one can prove to him to have been made. I immediately become aware that such a principle, as a law, would annihilate itself, because it would bring it about that there would be no deposit[s] at all. A practical law that I cognize as such must qualify for universal legislation; this is an identical proposition and therefore self-evident.¹¹

What is the reason for Kant accepting the following as the “basic law of pure practical reason” (i.e., the basic moral law, the formal rule): “So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle of a universal legislation”¹²? At least in my understanding of the lengthy quotation above, it follows that this is the consideration that to act in contradiction with the principle in question would be irrational. At a certain point action will achieve a result which is contrary to its purpose. In fact any substantive principle for human behavior, even a *prima facie* morally acceptable one – e.g., the pursuit of happiness,¹³ cannot be universalized without self-contradiction,

Empirical determining bases are not suitable for any universal external legislation, but just as little for an internal one; for each person lays at the basis of inclination his [own] subject, but another person another subject; and in each subject himself now this inclination and now another is superior in influence.”¹⁴

¹¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), pp. 40-41.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Because of the variety of empirical (in later terms substantive) features of human beings (today we may use the term “identities”), whichever concrete Good (or complex of Goods) is chosen as the basis of a universal legislation, this will bring about contradictions with alternative versions of the Good, accepted by other people.¹⁵

Traditionally, Kant’s formalistic ethics has been considered to be basically, if not typically, contractarian. In the contractarian paradigm, self-interest and morality seem to be reconciled. You can act in a way which is both selfish and moral, if you keep to the contract with the other selfish social actors so as not to disturb the overall balance of interests. However, there is only a superficial resemblance between typical contractarianism and Kant’s view. The starting point is different in the two cases. In the contractarian view one begins with individual self-interest. The restrictions on the realization of self-interests which follow from the contract make this realization rational, indeed, but it is still a selfish kind of behavior. While in Kant’s ethics we have to do with rational behavior, which does not exclude the realization of the individual’s empirical self-interest.

It may seem that this is only a difference in the verbal description of the two cases. However, I’ll try to show that they differ significantly by referring to the thought-experiment which is usually used in order to reveal the morally problematic element in contractarian ethics. Consider an individual who has the opportunity to commit a crime, which will obviously be in her/his interest (e.g., to steal a large amount of money) and for whom it is absolutely certain that s/he will not be caught or even suspected. Would the contractarian morality provide the individual in question with a motive to abstain from this crime? If the contract is breached by her/him, but no one comes to know this (except the perpetrator her/himself), no negative effect will ensue from this deed for the person who has performed it. There is no reason for which s/he should not leave it entirely to her/his self-interest to guide her/him in this case and commit the crime.

The situation is quite different from the Kantian point of view. Even if you will not be caught, or even be suspected, you will know yourself that you have acted irrationally. This is so because a maxim of the type, let us say, “steal in all cases when you are sure that you

¹⁵ Whether this will result in a contradiction of the principle with itself – as was the case with an obviously immoral “Good” in Kant’s example of the deposit – is another issue.

will not be caught" cannot, if we use Kant's words, hold at the same time as a principle of a universal legislation. Such a principle would, if universalized, "annihilate itself" just as the one concerning the denial of a deposit from Kant's example cited above.

What difference does it make, whether you know that you have acted rationally or irrationally? What would make us abstain from a deed if we know that it would be in conflict with our own reason? Kantian ethics is based on the self-evidence of human rationality. If I am a reasonable being – and this is self-evident for me – then to act irrationally would mean to act against myself. In such a case the person has within her/himself the motive to abstain from crime. This is not based on whether others would come to know what you have done, but concerns your own reason. Actually, in Kant's formalistic ethics, moral behavior is the authentic behavior of a rational moral agent. For her/him to act morally means to be true to her/himself.

Contrary to the traditional interpretations of Kantian formalistic ethics as too rationalistic, calculative and cold, I think that it has a significant emotional and even existential (in the broad sense of this term) dimension. The second formulation of the Categorical Imperative – "In all of creation everything one wants and over which one has any power can also be used *merely as a means*; only the human being, and with him every rational creature is a *purpose in itself*."¹⁶ – is preceded by expressions like "...the humanity in his person must be holy to him" and "The moral law is holy (inviolable)."¹⁷

That this is not mere rhetoric can be seen if we take into account Kant's statements which follow – e.g., that "...every will, even every person's own will directed to himself, is restricted to the condition of harmony with the *autonomy* of a rational being, viz. the condition not to subject such a being to any aim that is not possible in accordance with a law that could arise from the will of the subject himself who undergoes [the action]..."¹⁸

So, the ideal of self-consistency is obviously a guiding factor for Kant's ethics – to act morally means to act in a *self-consistent* way in order to be consistent with one's own *self-consistency*. This frame of mind may seem somewhat solipsistic, but we should not forget that if everybody followed such a morality, the result would be a universal

¹⁶ Kant, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

sustainable just social order – an end which many ethical theories aim, but for which they have not been able to present such an elegant argumentation.

John Rawls' Position

An attempt to do this in the conditions of the twentieth century – building on the achievements of Kant, Locke and other liberal thinkers – has been made by John Rawls. In his *A Theory of Justice*,¹⁹ Rawls insists on the dissociation of the decisions which concern public life from any possible influence which would make them biased. In other words, those involved in making such decisions (e.g., members of Parliament) should not be guided by their own interests. The only considerations which are allowed are those which refer to ways of achieving the best balance among the interests of all people affected by the decision; i.e., which refer to justice. In order to cope with this requirement, moral agents should abstract themselves self-reflectively from their own status – whether they are rich or poor, old or young, healthy or ailing, etc. They should forget for the moment who they are, in order not to allow their personal interest to shift their position in favor of an option which may not be the most just. Metaphorically, Rawls expresses this as a requirement that they hide from themselves their own selves under a “veil of ignorance.”

In Kantian terms, this would mean that the person should make her/his moral choices without being influenced by her/his empirical character. This position goes hand in hand with ethical formalism. If each of the moral agents is guided by her/his notions of the Good, this may – most probably – bring about an unjust decision. In fact, any substantive considerations should be excluded as factors in deciding which configuration of relationships in public life is just. The Right should prevail over the Good.

What does this well known liberal thesis mean? It may be regarded as a continuation of Locke's considerations on the necessity of justice in the domain of the political, i.e., with respect to coercive relations, and also of Kant's requirements to which a maxim must correspond in order to be accepted as a valid universal moral law. Simply formulated, it means that no concrete conception of the Good should

¹⁹ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

be allowed to influence public life, because of the variety of the notions of the Good among human beings. If one of these notions is established as the ultimate guiding value for society, this will be unjust toward alternative views of the Good. For many people this would mean that they should conform their ways of life to standards of behavior which are alien or even repulsive for them, i.e., their freedom and dignity as rational beings would be curtailed. If, on the contrary, a plurality of Goods would be accepted as the basis for legislation, such laws would inevitably come into contradiction with one another and ultimately each with itself. Therefore, the Right should exclusively regulate relations in public space.

What about the role of the Good in society? This liberal theory leaves room for the Good in the realm of private life. Unlike in public life (where people interact as strangers and not as united by a common life-world, culture, belief system, religion or common cause), here moral agents may share the same notion of the Good or of an internally harmonious complex (hierarchy) of Goods. And unlike public life which we cannot leave (unless by emigrating to another country), in a liberal society every community or group which has a private life of its own, can in principle be left by an individual who belongs to it; for example, when at a given moment for some reason an individual discovers that s/he does not any more share the vision of the common Good which is characteristic for this group. In this case the individual member has the so-called "right to exit." So, if the life of the members of a community is ordered in a way which is determined by concrete views about the Good, this would not contradict their freedom and dignity, even if this order is not just in terms of balance of their "civil interests" (in Locke's meaning). What matters in this case is that these people accept the concrete pattern of relations in their group as legitimate.

Critique of Rawls' Position

Now, is this model for the arrangement of society really just – as it was intended to be? Rawls' theory of justice has been extensively and severely criticized in this respect. It has been pointed out that in spite of its author's claims, it is discriminative, i.e., unjust, with regard to religions and, more generally, to cultural identities. It privileges the secular way of life (which in Rawls' terms is not engaged with one or another concrete version of the Good) and the ethnic culture of the

majority (which is inevitably identified to some extent with the national, allegedly purely civic, values and ideals). The state should follow policies which ought to be culturally neutral, but in fact these are always designed in light of the predominant will of the majority, which makes their neutrality highly questionable.

As an example of such criticism I would refer to Charles Taylor's thesis²⁰ that not only the negative attitude towards a culture, but also indifference towards it (which is characteristic for the neutrality of liberal tolerance as commonly understood)²¹, is unjust. Because, if one's culture is not recognized as valuable by the "significant [for her/him] others" that person's identity suffers damage. Identity, as Taylor convincingly claims, has a dialogical nature. How I perceive and understand myself depends a lot on the attitude of Others toward me. So, even if they do not demonstrate a contempt to my values and way of life, but simply show to me that they have no interest in my culture (Taylor uses the expression "withholding of recognition"),²² this will have a negative effect on me, which I have not deserved.

The Common Thread Argument

Whether the multiculturalist approach to identity issues, which is Taylor's proposed alternative, is itself viable or not is a different problem. Here, I shall focus on another substantivist alternative to liberal tolerance and liberal cultural neutrality (or in other words, to ethical formalism). It is a concrete form of the general substantivist approach to social issues – one that relates directly to the debate on the relevance of religion to public life. In the context of this paper I shall call it "the common thread argument."

The authors who work in this trend draw attention to the existence of a "core" of common values which are recognized by all, or almost all world religions, as well as by the most influential substantive

²⁰ See Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in Amy Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 25-73.

²¹ The exact nature of tolerance is a matter of great debate in contemporary social science. See for example Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997). For the purposes of presenting the criticism in this respect against the liberal theories in the 1970s and 1980s, it suffices to use this popular meaning of the category.

²² Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," p. 36

secular theories about society and ideologies (in terms of the later Rawls – by the most influential “comprehensive doctrines”). This is the “thread” which runs through all of them, somehow binding them together. The general claim of the proponents of this argument is that this set of shared fundamental values can – and should – be used as a basis for improving the relations between the many apparently competing worldviews.

In my opinion conceptions of this kind can be ordered in a hierarchy of three levels with regard of the ambitiousness of their claims. The minimalist approach toward the set of common values presents it as evidence against the interpretations of religious pluralism as religious relativism. The question is whether it follows from the very fact that various religions exist (and many of them thrive nowadays, enjoying large popularity and cultural and social influence) that none of them is a true religion. They are all hypothetical and maybe even fictitious beliefs (because if only one of them were true – a status for which each of them aspires – all others would have died away so far, or at least would exist only as exceptions which confirm the rule). According to the “common thread argument,” the important role of one and the same set of fundamental values for most religious beliefs is evidence that they have a common source, which can be only a transcendent one and that is why they all should be taken seriously. As Stanley Samartha puts it, “God’s self-disclosure in the lives of neighbors of other faiths and in the secular struggles of human life should also be recognized as theologically significant.”²³

This application of the “common thread argument” bears no or almost no relevance to our problem. This is not the case of a second more ambitious – level of its use. According to some authors, the core of shared values should be regarded as the basis of religious tolerance (including relations with secular doctrines). If our beliefs are fundamentally similar, why should we compete and struggle against one another? Jay Newman, for example, enumerates several “trans-cultural,” as he calls them, values – “love, justice, peace, economic prosperity, wisdom, progress, self-realization”²⁴ – claiming that they

²³ Stanley Samartha, “The Lordship of Jesus Christ and Religious Pluralism,” in: Anderson, Gerald, Stransky, Thomas (eds.), *Christ’s Lordship and Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981), p. 28.

²⁴ Jay Newman, *Foundations of Religious Tolerance* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 66.

are an ideal of what ought to be, which is recognized by all major religions. The latter differ only in terms of the ways through which this ideal should be realized. So, the ends are the same, the controversies concern only the means. But as ends are more important than the means there are more moral reasons in favor of positive relations among the representatives of different religions as well as of secular theories and ideologies than for antagonisms among them.

The third, i.e., the maximalist version of the “common thread argument” is the properly substantivist one. I shall use as an example the considerations of Hans Kung about working out a declaration on a global ethic by representatives of different religions. In his opinion this declaration has to “penetrate to a deeper *ethical level*, the level of *binding values, irrevocable criteria and inner basic attitudes*;²⁵ it “must be capable of *securing a consensus*: a moral unanimity and not just numerical unanimity;²⁶ “must have a *religious foundation*,”²⁷ etc. This means, at least, in my understanding, that all religious people should sooner or later unite around a set of fundamental values, which should play a guiding role in the life of society as a whole, not just within their religious communities.

Critique of the Common Thread Argument

My criticism against the application of the “common thread argument” on levels 2 and 3 is based on taking into account the issues of the practical implementation of the fundamental values which presupposes their concretization by means of interpretation. To act in accord with the value “honor,” for example, may mean totally different things in different cultural contexts. In a “shame-type” culture people may think that it is justified to sacrifice the interests of other people in order to preserve one’s own honor. In a “guilt-type” culture,²⁸ on the contrary, justice has priority over honor. The problem with the “common thread argument” is that the fundamental values

²⁵ Hans Kung, “The History, Significance and Method of the Declaration Toward a Global Ethic,” in Hans Kung, Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds.), *A Global Ethic, The Declaration of the Parliament of the World’s Religions* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1993), p. 58.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁸ Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston, MA: Mariner Books, 1989).

do not have an intrinsic capacity to determine how they are to be concretely interpreted. This is entirely dependent on the cultural specificities in each case, and therefore people who recognize the same values can behave in opposite ways in one and the same situation. All religious practices which are controversial from the point of view of other religions can be interpreted as a realization of fundamental values which are shared by all. For example, the notorious stoning to death for adultery – whether or not it is an authentically Islamic practice – is done in the name of marital fidelity, i.e., in the name of an almost universally recognized value. Besides, the core values can be in a competitive relationship in certain situations. For example, “individual autonomy” and “life” are both acknowledged as morally valuable by the parties in the abortion-debate, but the big question is which one has priority when they happen to be incompatible with regard to a concrete circumstance. The answer to this question is not to be found in the realm of common fundamental values.

This criticism of the “common thread argument” – concerning its application as justification of religious tolerance and as basis for substantivist visions of morality – goes beyond its qualification as a more or less harmless, well meant self-delusion. It may have serious negative consequences on the discussion concerning the relations among different religions and secular social theories and ideologies, including the “sacred vs. secular” issue. This argument may divert attention away from the real problem towards illusionary prospects of adjusting at some moment in the future our mutual relationship in a harmonious manner by tuning our social and cultural activities more and more to the shared fundamental values. That substantivist ethical project is not viable at all for it underestimates the level and salience of cultural differences.

Rawls’ Later Development

However, the formalistic ethical project of John Rawls which turned out to be not quite convincing in its version presented in *A Theory of Justice*, was developed further by its author – a conceptual endeavor which culminated in *Political Liberalism*. In the conclusion of his article “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” which was published in 1997, i.e., four years after the first edition of *Political Liberalism*, Rawls draws the following distinction between his position in *A Theory of Justice* and the one in *Political Liberalism*. He writes about

the former publication that “justice as fairness is presented there as a comprehensive liberal doctrine (although the term “comprehensive doctrine” is not used in the book) in which all the members of its well ordered society affirm that same doctrine.”²⁹ In other words, his theory of justice claimed to profess certain truths about society which should be recognized as such by everybody. However, in this way it contradicted its own content, which asserted the priority of the Right over the Good in public life. It turned out that Rawls’ theory of justice by affirming ethical formalism in a substantive way was not *self-consistent*.

The second version of the same project, the one articulated in *Political Liberalism* and in later writings, was presented by the author not as a philosophical doctrine about the state of affairs in society, but merely as a methodology which aims at enabling the people who have different, in some cases even irreconcilable views about the world, i.e., who subscribe to different “comprehensive doctrines,” at the same time “to hold a reasonable political conception of justice that supports a constitutional democratic society.”³⁰ The latter conception is not a comprehensive doctrine either. It amounts to the conviction that the fundamental political questions, (i.e., the ones regarding social relationships which are legally binding, i.e., associated in a certain way and to a certain extent with coercion), should be decided “by reasons that might be shared by all citizens as free and equal.”³¹

This means that in *Political Liberalism* Rawls does his best to keep in a *self-consistent* way to a proceduralist approach to the normative issues. And what about the other aspect of the inconsistency in his *Theory of Justice* which was discussed above, i.e., the discriminative prohibition against any input from religious and other doctrines about the Good (in Rawls’ later terms – “comprehensive doctrines”) into public life? As already mentioned, by privileging in the secular trends in society, the author about justice in an unjust way.

Rawls tries to put all substantive visions about man and society (i.e., all “comprehensive doctrines”) in an equal position with regard to the political order. As just mentioned, he insists that only one kind of claim concerning this order should be taken into account, namely,

²⁹ John Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” *University of Chicago Law Review*, 64.3 (1997), 807.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 771.

one which is substantiated by reasons that might be shared by all citizens as free and equal. This means that no comprehensive doctrine can make an input into the political organization of society, if its claims cannot pass the “filter” of public reason. In other words, only reasonable claims should have a chance to exert real influence on political life. And this is valid for all comprehensive doctrines, including secular ideologies, ethical theories, etc.

What follows from this procedural blueprint for the just treatment of the substantive doctrines? Does it put all religions in an equal position with regard to secular worldviews and also with regard to each other? Rawls’ requirement contradicts a very “natural,” propensity of a comprehensive doctrine – to substantiate its claims by referring to truths, which it specifically affirms as such. An argumentation of this sort cannot be taken seriously by the people who do not share this particular religion, or ideology, or, more generally, worldview, and even – life-world. Norms, which are grounded on the Bible have little or no appeal to an atheist, ones which are substantiated by referring to the Holy Koran are not binding for a Christian, etc. Therefore, a common language in which politically relevant decisions can be discussed by the citizens as rational, free and equal should be equidistant from the substance of all comprehensive doctrines. Does this mean that the only difference between *A Theory of Justice* and *Political Liberalism* is that in the latter not only religions, but also secular comprehensive doctrines are denied access to political influence; i.e., that all are equal in their being suppressed by the just political order.

A novel element in comparison with *A Theory of Justice* is Rawls’ statement that it may be possible for claims which concern the political order in society and which follow from the substance of a comprehensive doctrine to be formulated also in a way which would ground them on reasons that can be shared by all citizens, i.e., not only by the adherents of the doctrine in question. One of the examples that he gives in “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited” is about homosexuality. The arguments in political discussions about the legislative regulation of such issues as same-sex marriage can come from religious doctrines (e. g., that homosexuality is evil in itself, or that sexual intercourse with a same-sex partner is a sin, etc.), but they can also refer to the conditions necessary for the “orderly

reproduction of society over time³² or, in the opposite direction, to the “civil rights of free and equal democratic citizens.”³³ Can one and the same person hold both views: that same-sex marriage contradicts the basic norms of Catholicism and that they exert negative influence on the reproduction of society? And if yes – do we have here a case of mere compatibility between two positions which may happen to be supported by the same person or community, or is there something more, i.e., some continuity between them?

According to *Political Liberalism* certain comprehensive doctrines can produce claims concerning fundamental political questions, which can be substantiated also in a publicly acceptable way. And this is not some kind of mimicry, let us say, like the reference to the freedom of speech often made by supporters of totalitarian ideologies as a means of finding opportunities to proselytize in a democratic society. Rawls is convinced that there may be true congeniality between substantively derived and procedurally substantiated political claims – if the comprehensive doctrine involved is a reasonable one. Consequently, his later version of liberalism admits input into the solution to political questions from certain kinds of comprehensive doctrines, i.e., from reasonable ones, religious and secular alike. Their adherents should not be discriminated against in the form of exclusion from taking part in the shaping of the political order in society on the basis of their substantive convictions. There seems to be no inherent injustice in Rawls’ project in this respect.

Formulated in terms of the “substantive – procedural (or formal)” dichotomy, the conception of political liberalism in Rawls is primarily procedural, but with certain substantivist elements; it aims at some synthesis of the two methodologies. It refers to a commonality among some of the different religious and secular substantive doctrines – a commonality which can help arrange the relations among them in a non-conflictual way, and in this respect it reminds us of the “common-thread argument.” However, this commonality is not a substantive feature but reasonability itself, which is identified as such in a procedural way.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 779.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 780.

And finally, as far as the “sacred vs. the secular” issue is concerned, this theory provides room for the sacred on the “territory,” so to say, of the secular – but a very limited one.

Juergen Habermas’ Critique of Rawls’ Later Position

However, the self-consistency of *Political Liberalism* has also been contested, for example, by Juergen Habermas. Commenting on some considerations of Nicolas Wolterstorff, who doubts whether Rawls’ criterion for the reasonability of a religion as comprehensive doctrine is realistic, Habermas states in his lecture at the Holberg Prize Seminar in 2005 that he regards as unjustified a requirement that citizens “supplement their public religious contributions by equivalents in a generally accessible language.”³⁴ At least as far as the religious comprehensive doctrines are concerned, it would be an unjust, or, in Habermas’ words, an “undue *mental and psychological* burden,”³⁵ to demand from the citizens who follow a faith to present in public their claims regarding the political order only in universally comprehensible and acceptable terms. Such a “flimsy switchover of religiously rooted political convictions onto a *different* cognitive basis”³⁶ presupposes an “artificial division between secular and religious within their [the religious persons] own minds”³⁷ which cannot be done “without destabilizing their mode of existence as pious persons.”³⁸

Habermas proposes a modification of Rawls’ model by introducing a reciprocal obligation for secular citizens to get involved in a “cooperative”³⁹ activity of translating politically relevant claims which are formulated in religious language. So to say, the burden of translation from doctrinally-specific to universally-accessible language should be distributed equally between the religious authors of the claims and the non-religious recipients. Both sides should

³⁴ Juergen Habermas, *Religion in the Public Sphere* (Holberg Prize Seminar, 2005), p. 7.

http://www.holberg.uib.no/downloads/diverse/hp/hp_2005/2005_hp_jurgenhabermas_religioninthepublicsphere.pdf.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

engage themselves in a “complementary learning process.”⁴⁰ The liberal state should not prevent religious citizens from “publicly expressing and justifying their convictions by resorting to religious language.”⁴¹ The other society members may learn something from such contributions, especially as far as the articulation of moral intuitions and “the creation of meaning and identity”⁴² are concerned.

Critique of Habermas’ Revision of Rawls

If we interpret Habermas’ proposal in a general sense – as an appeal in favor of mutual openness between citizens of different faiths as well as secular ones, and also against ethnocentrism and discrimination, hardly anyone would object. However, the procedural “censorship” implied in Rawls’ thesis that only reasonable comprehensive doctrines should be admitted into public discourse on fundamental political issues, is motivated by a very concrete necessity – namely, that the solutions to political dilemmas should be achieved in a publicly deliberative way. In the latter case, the goal is not a mutual enrichment of the worldviews of the interlocutors (although this could be a valuable “byproduct”), but rather the production of definitive decisions determined by the force of the better argument. In such situations there is little room for creative discussions, the discourse is much more structured, and the formulation of arguments is a very responsible task. What is at stake is not so much learning processes, but binding solutions. When you are trying to convince the other in an argumentative way, the transition from reason, which refer to the particular content of your own beliefs to ones which can be shared by all citizens as rational, free and equal persons, should be a very precise process. Unfortunately, Habermas does not offer a concrete methodology concerning how this should be done by way of dialogue between people with different convictions, and, especially how the difficulties ensuing from the cultural differences between the interlocutors should be overcome.

Problems with “Translation”

The very fact that he makes an analogy with translation⁴³ is

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ See *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

evidence that he is underestimating the challenges of such a transition. A translation can, indeed, be a cooperative undertaking, provided that the people who are involved master both languages. Consequently, it seems that if secular persons “learn the language” of a particular religion they will be able to understand its substantive claims and help their reformulation into a universalistic, secular version. However, the transition in question is in fact quite different from the transformation of a text into another one with the same meaning. Let us take for example the case of same-sex marriages which was mentioned above. Can we regard the claim that they should not be legalized because the Bible condemns homosexuality as a sin (or because of the Catholic understanding of human nature, or something else in this vein), and the one that this should not be done because it would jeopardize the reproduction of society over time, as having the same meaning? Or, another example, let us compare the claim that euthanasia should not be allowed because this would be a human interference with God’s authority in matters of life and death and the one that this should not be done because the final human decision in such cases can never be totally informed and free. Is this one and the same statement, formulated in different languages?

In my opinion the relationship between such kinds of claims is more complex than between two different linguistic versions of the same message. These are rather different dimensions of one and the same position. If a given political solution is preferable from the viewpoint of your religion, it should also have its merits in a universalistic sense, and if it is evil in the former respect, then it should have a negative potential also in the latter. The transition from the doctrinal to the civic dimension is not a matter of reformulation, but of the self-consistency of one’s attitudes. You defend both claims not because this is actually one and the same claim in different versions, but because there is continuity between them as between two attitudes of the same person who has a *self-consistent* worldview and therefore keeps to the same logic in all of his/her behavior.

Such an interpretation of Rawls’ conception concerning the ways in which reasonable comprehensive doctrines can contribute to the solutions to fundamental political issues in a procedurally correct way, clearly excludes the participation in this process of “outsiders,” i.e., of citizens who do not hold the respective comprehensive doctrine. The continuity between doctrinally dependent and

universally accessible reasons is guaranteed by the self-consistency of the attitudes of the individuals and communities who hold the particular comprehensive doctrine and therefore it is impossible to make adequate suggestions from without about the transition from the one to the other kind of reasons – even if the “outsider” is well informed about the content of the doctrine and acts in good will. That is why the positive proposal of Habermas concerning how to avoid the unjust distribution of the burden of the transition between the two kinds of reasons (or the “translation” of the one kind into the other, in Habermas’ words) does not seem acceptable. Yes, Rawls exclusively entitles the adherents of the doctrine with the task of making this transition and this may look unjust, but help from the outside would not restore the balance if it is not competent help.

Problems with Balancing the “Asymmetrical Burden”

However, let us look in more detail at the claim that the asymmetrical distribution of this “burden” is unjust. As already mentioned, Habermas makes this claim while commenting on a statement by Nicholas Wolterstorff which says: “It belongs to the religious convictions of a good many religious people in our society that they *ought to base* their decisions concerning fundamental issues of justice on their religious convictions. They do not view it as an option whether or not to do it.”⁴⁴ Obviously, this is an adequate description of the existing state of affairs, but how should we evaluate the situation normatively? From a Rawlsian viewpoint this is characteristic of unreasonable comprehensive doctrines. In a liberal society such people should simply have no access to the designing of policies, because their proposals would be substantiated by them in such a way that they would not be recognized as convincing by the general, “unindoctrinated” public. Would this mean that the religious people in question would be treated in an unjust way?

As a next step in the normative analysis of the case of the unreasonable (in Rawls’ sense) comprehensive doctrines, I would like to focus our attention on the civic status of the adherents of such religious or secular convictions. It is a fact that often they are regarded – and even regard themselves – as people who are somehow alien to civil society, as if they live outside of it and interact with it like

⁴⁴ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 7.

foreigners. Is it impossible for them to be both devoted to a spiritual cause and good citizens, who respect the right of the others to have beliefs of their own? In many cases such a tolerance is absent, indeed, from the minds of the “pious persons,” but is this necessarily and rightly so? The practice of the functioning of the various “comprehensive doctrines” nowadays demonstrates that a self-reflective attitude is not incompatible with any of them, the major religions included. Should we regard the self-awareness, e.g., of a religious person as a malignant schizophrenic split-personality into “public and private components”⁴⁵ or rather as enriching her/his religious experience? And, if the latter attitude is adopted, why should we consider Rawls’ “proviso”⁴⁶ as placing an undue burden on the adherents of comprehensive doctrines? In such a case we can regard them rather as situated in a privileged position – as citizens who have special access to deep sources of insight and inspiration when searching for generally acceptable solutions to fundamental political issues.

Concluding Critique of Habermas’ Critique of Rawls

Summing up the results of my analysis of Habermas’ attempt to complement Rawls’ conception in order to overcome certain (alleged) elements of injustice inherent in it, I conclude that: (a) it is not necessary (because under closer scrutiny such elements do not appear to exist), and (b) it is not viable (because of the “centeredness” of the transition from doctrinally dependent to doctrinally neutral political claims on the identity of the adherents of the doctrine; thus making it impossible to design these claims in a dialogical way, with the participation of “unindoctrinated” citizens).

Of course, it is necessary to articulate, as Habermas is trying to do, this conception in a positive direction; i.e., not only as a source of restrictions, which forbid the use of doctrinally biased reasons in the shaping of public policies, but also as a methodology of moving from

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁶ “...reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussions at any time, provided that in due course proper political reasons – and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines – are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support.” Rawls, *The Idea of Public Reason Revisited*, p. 784.

the one to the other kind of claim. However, unlike the German philosopher, I think that it would be worthwhile to develop such a methodology as a technique of “internal” discourses; by that I mean discourses among the adherents of the same comprehensive doctrine, which aim at explicating the dependences between the doctrinal beliefs of these persons and the awareness of their civic responsibilities. This would promote the self-confidence of people of faith as able to contribute in ingenious ways to the optimization of the political order in society, which in its turn would bring about the expansion of reasonability on the “territory” of the comprehensive doctrines.

Actually, from all the considerations which I have presented in this respect, it follows that it would be more adequate to differentiate not between reasonable and unreasonable doctrines, but between their reasonable and unreasonable interpretations. The content of a comprehensive doctrine cannot predetermine whether it will be understood and applied in a dogmatic way, or in a self-reflective manner. It is not difficult today to encounter fundamentalism, i.e., unreasonable, interpretations even of liberal philosophical theories, which proclaim precisely the desirability of self-reflection.

Conclusion

By way of analysis of a number of emblematic liberal philosophical theories about the “competition” between substantivist and procedural (formalist) approaches to the issue of establishing non-conflictual relations among people with conflicting worldviews, I have tried to demonstrate that the latter methodology can function in a *self-consistent* way in spite of all the complexities of this matter. My thesis in this paper, as I stated at the beginning, is that it is more promising to try to achieve a positive coexistence between religious and secular citizens by subordinating their interactions to just norms, rather than by endeavors to bring their convictions to some unity. The only unity of worldviews, which is necessary in order to develop a sustainable just social order is the one of reasonability. And, as I have tried to show, reasonability, conceived as self-reflection, is compatible with people’s self-understanding, not only as secular (i.e., as characterized by seeking the ultimate grounds of people’s behavior in their own “nature”), but also as religious (i.e., as based upon a devout relationship with the transcendent).

Part III
Hermeneutics

Possibilities for Interpretating Tradition in Contemporary Hermeneutics: Heidegger, Gadamer and Apel

ARIFA FARID

This paper focuses on the complexity of Heidegger's notion of hermeneutical phenomenology or phenomenological hermeneutics apropos the issue of *sein qua zeit* being a ground for the superstructure of the hermeneutic of tradition as later enunciated by Gadamer and Apel. Before Heidegger, phenomenology seemed irreconcilable with hermeneutics, as the former appeals to pure consciousness in order to cognize reality as phenomenon, something to be shown-as-it-is in pure intuition rather than to be understood by reason through the process of interpretation. It was Heidegger who made both phenomenology and hermeneutics complementary to each other. He did this by reviewing phenomenology as a new method of philosophical research in order that one may redefine the concept of Being.

In the Heideggerian scheme of hermeneutical phenomenology, Being is taken as phenomenon, as something that shows itself as it is in itself. But since Being is always the Being of some entity and every entity is a being-in-the-world its Being is always the Being-in-the-world), it is therefore necessary, according to Heidegger, to choose the most appropriate entity to attain this task. In this regard, the most appropriate entity is *Dasein*, the human self that can take the question of Being as its issue. It is in the way of *Dasein*, the ontologico-ontically preferred entity that Being shows itself as it is in itself, and this indirect showing of Being needs to be involved in the process of interpretation in order to make Being aptly known to human understanding.

The most important aspect of Heidegger's phenomenological method of inquiring into the question of Being is that he takes both Being and *Dasein* as time or temporality. He does not take time as an entity or its character, that is, as something to be concerned with "the *what*" of entities, rather he takes time as something to be concerned with as "the *how*" of the world. This is the same way he conceives Being. This equivalence of Being as Being-in-the-world with time or

temporality is highly significant regarding the possibility of interpretation of tradition. Owing to the Heideggerian notions both of Being-in-the-world and time, later philosophers like Gadamer and Apel have attempted to interpret tradition in their own way.

**Philosophical Background of Heidegger's Hermeneutic
Phenomenology: Husserl's Phenomenology and Dilthey's
Hermeneutics**

Although there may be several thinkers like Aristotle, Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche etc. to whom Heidegger was attracted during the formative period of his intellectual growth, two thinkers, namely Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and Edmund Husserl (1859-1939), may be taken as the most significant regarding the construction of his phenomenological hermeneutics. Husserl and Dilthey¹ both set the foundation stone of their philosophy on the ground of human experience; then they related it to human intuition in different ways.

Husserl, rejecting every presupposition given by tradition and history, emphasizes a radical way of philosophizing that he calls "transcendental phenomenology." Husserl's transcendental phenomenology begins with 'absolute poverty of knowledge' being devoid of any philosophical presupposition or pre-judgment (CM, pp. 1-6). This beginning of philosophical investigations to cognize the phenomena is the first step of Husserl's phenomenological method, that he calls "the phenomenological *ἐποχή* (*epoché*)." The *epoché* is not the denial or doubt (as in case of the Cartesian method) concerning the existence of world. Instead, it is a 'bracketing' or 'suspension' 'that completely bars' the beginners of philosophy 'from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence' (*Ideas*, pp. 110-111). At this moment of complete "disconnexion" through the phenomenological *epoché* the only thing that 'remains unaffected' is the 'consciousness in itself.' That is to say, at the moment of *epoché* there happens a reduction – a leading back to "pure consciousness" which is the only '*phenomenological residuum*' after the complete suspension of the world. The simultaneous happening of the phenomenological *epoché* and reduction makes pure transcendental

¹ Richard Polt briefly describes the influence both of Husserl and Dilthey on Heidegger; see Richard Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1999), pp. 12-16.

consciousness available as the only field of the radical philosophizing which Husserl calls 'the science of phenomenology' (*Ideas*, p. 113). Philosophical investigations proceed through the experiences of pure transcendental consciousness which is a pure intuition whereby philosophy takes the shape of "[t]he pure phenomenology of the experiences of thinking and knowing." Whatever appears to pure intuition is the thing in itself or phenomenon which intuition cognizes in terms of its *eidōs* (essence). So phenomenology, according to Husserl, 'must bring to pure expression, must describe in terms of their essential concepts and the governing formulas of essence, the essences which directly make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences. Each such statement of essence is an *a priori* statement in the highest sense of the word' (*LI*, Vol. I, p. 249). Through intuitive experiences man, in terms of the essences of the things in themselves, constitutes the life-world (*Lebenswelt*), 'the world in which we are always already living and which furnishes the ground for all cognitive performance and all scientific determinations' (*EJ*, p. 14).

In the process of *epoché* and reduction 'the whole concrete surrounding life-world' is transformed into "only a phenomenon of being." The surrounding life-world does not remain as something existing, rather it is "something that claims being' (*CM*, pp. 18-19). The world is the world of experience and in *epoché* I experience it as I experienced it before; 'the only difference is that, as reflecting philosophically, I no longer keep in effect (no longer accept) the natural believing in existence involved in experiencing the world.'" In addition, all of the processes of 'position takings' regarding the world, "the judgments, valuations, and decisions, the process of setting ends and willing means" are also suspended, as they involve believing in the existence of the world (*CM*, pp. 19-20). This absolute poverty of the surrounding life-world leads one to the absolute and universal richness of 'pure Ego' or I-myself. The richness of I-myself is characterized by 'my own pure conscious life, in and by which the entire objective world exists for me and is precisely as it is for me' (*CM*, pp. 20-21).

Like Husserl, Dilthey also believes in the possibility of all knowledge on the plane of human experience, but in this regard, unlike Husserl, he refers to the human life-world rather than to human intuition. Dilthey's hermeneutics is grounded upon the demarcation

between the *Geisteswissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften* depending upon their concern with man (*Geist*) and nature respectively. It is the life-experience, in Dilthey's view, through which one cognizes oneself as well as 'one's own inner states'; then in cognizing oneself one also knows about other people and the external world. The sphere of learning concerned with the knowledge of 'self' is called by Dilthey the *Geisteswissenschaften* and that concerned with the knowledge of the external world is called the *Naturwissenschaften*.

For Dilthey's all philosophy moves around the pivot of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, but the *Naturwissenschaften* are also very significant for him. He used the latter as a tool to understand the former. The difference between the two kinds of sciences is based upon Dilthey's conception of man as a 'psycho-physical unit'. His conception of man is not like that of Spinoza's which is characterized by 'psychophysical parallelism.'² Instead, both aspects of human existence are simultaneously affecting as well as affected in relation to nature. Man's mental and physical lives are only the two abstractions from his life as the whole unit. Hence, if 'seen from within he is a system of mental facts, but to the senses he is a physical whole' (*WDSW*, p. 164). The relationship between the internal (mental) and the external (physical) can be understood in the light of the relationship between man and nature. For Dilthey, the external world and man are not two parallel existents, instead, they are hierarchically interrelated so that '[t]he human world, that is human society and history, is the highest phenomenon of the empirical world' (*WDSW*, p. 165). In a two-dimensional process through which man and nature affect each other. Man, as stated earlier, is a willing being so he has certain purposes for his action for which he affects nature. But man's purposes cannot be achieved in isolation, rather they can be achieved only with the help of nature; nature 'with its specific characteristics can influence man's purposes' (*WDSW*, p. 166). The physical conditions provided by nature for the achievement of the mental

² In Proposition 2, Part III, *Ethics*, Spinoza wrote: 'The body can not determine the mind to think nor the mind the body to motion, nor to rest'. For Parkinson, 'Spinoza's theory of relation between mind and body is often, and with some justice, said to be a form of 'psycho-physical parallelism'. See G.H.R. Parkinson, "Spinoza: Metaphysics and Knowledge," in G.H.R. Parkinson, ed., *The Renaissance and the 17th Century Rationalism* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 273-303.

purposes throws light on the fact that the historical development of mankind is 'conditioned by the whole cosmic process' (WDSW, p. 167).

There are three dimensions of Dilthey's hermeneutics, namely, experience, expression and understanding.³ Experience is to provide ground for the development of all knowledge, and it is objectivized as expression to be taken as an object of understanding or interpretation. Although all three dimensions of Dilthey's hermeneutics are highly significant in its constitution, the notion of experience, regarding its impact on Heidegger, is the most important. So in what follows we shall focus on experience rather than the two other dimensions of Dilthey's hermeneutics.

The source of knowledge for man, in Dilthey's view, is neither only reason nor only sense perception, as man is a complete human (man-as-a-whole) who wills, feels, imagines and thinks. That is why, unlike both rationalists and empiricists, the starting point of philosophy and of the *Geisteswissenschaften* is experience of the man-as-a-whole. The individual experiences are the building blocks of life. And life is a 'vast fact' constituted by the interweaving of the experiences of all mankind in toto. The man-as-a-whole, who is the man of experience, is always related with other people and the things around. His life changes constantly 'according to how [the] things and [the] people respond to' him (WDSW, p. 178). The response of things and people may be either positive in that they bring happiness and pleasure to man, help him grow, expand his existence and strengthen his efforts, or negative in that they bring him pain and misery, limit the scope of his life and weaken his efforts. These vital relationships of man with the others and things set the directions of the purposes and goals of his life and so 'determine all activity and development' (WDSW, p. 178). Being in relation with others every individual is to lead his life as a shared activity in the context of the community to which he and others belong. For Dilthey, 'with the progress of time' all of the individual experiences are accumulated as memory pictures; the 'individual's knowledge of life springs from the generalizations of what has thus

³ This systematic relationship between experience, expression and understanding is considered by Plamer as Dilthey's hermeneutics, which is compromised of the explanation of this triadic formula. See Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. 98-123.

accumulated' (WDSW, p. 179). As generalization of experiences, this 'is corrected and enlarged by common experience' and that is how 'sacred beliefs concerning life, values, rules of conduct, definitions, goals and purposes, etc. emerge in the community' (WDSW, p. 179). These shared beliefs are then concretized as social values, customs and traditions, etc. which is how there is established a 'social-historical world', which Dilthey called 'mind-constructed world'.

At this point one can understand the concept of time that Dilthey expounds as a category of the mind-constructed world, which emerges from experience. Time, for Dilthey, is the basic category of life or of the mind-constructed world that receives its meaning through experience. An individual experience is always temporal, and this temporality of experience provides a common platform in which all individuals share 'the conditions of simultaneity, sequence, interval, duration and change'. That is how man apprehends time or temporality as a category of human life. It is experienced by man 'as the restless progression, in which the present constantly becomes the past and the future the present'. The present is a real experience characterized by the constant 'filling of a moment of time with reality'; the past is constituted by the temporal accumulation of experiences in memory; and the future is characterized by the potentiality of 'wishes, expectations, hopes, fears and strivings' to be actualized in the present (WDSW, p. 209).

Dilthey's hermeneutics of the *Geisteswissenschaften* particularly his views regarding experience seem to be echoed in Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. His consideration of man as a being-with-others in the context of social world seems to be a crude form of Heidegger's more elaborate concept of being-in-the-world. Further, the man-experience relationship as the foundation of knowledge as he expounds it reminds one of Heidegger's notion of everydayness. Above all his concept of time as a category of life and its being a continuum of past, present and future seems a very strong reminiscence of Heidegger's concept of time. As regards Husserl's influence on Heidegger, the key is to see how Heidegger, being a phenomenologist, deviates from Husserl, the founding father of phenomenology. Both Husserl and Heidegger find phenomenology as a new philosophical method to cognize reality, but the former finds it as a transcendental science while the latter as a hermeneutical one. Both endeavor to explore *the how* of the life-world rather than *the what*,

but the former soon compromises on the cognition of *eidōs* while the latter's pursuit of *the how* goes untiringly to the end, as he conceives Being, Dasein and time all as *the how* rather than *the what*. In order to cognize phenomenon, that which is to be shown as it is in itself, the former brackets all ontology whereas the latter finds it necessary to begin with the ontological question (the question of Being) in order that phenomenon (Being as time by the way of Dasein) is made known to human understanding. The Heideggerian deviation from Husserl will be found more enlightened in the next section where we shall examine the development of Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology.

The Rise of Heidegger's Hermeneutical Phenomenology

The Question of Being and the Conception of Phenomenology

Deviating from the traditional approaches toward the concept of Being, Heidegger lays a new metaphysical foundation in order to develop his unique version of phenomenology. Owing to the problematic of considering the 'inquiry into Being' as 'unnecessary,' Heidegger, in the first step of the development of phenomenology, focuses on 'the necessity for explicitly restating the question of Being.' In the process of this restating, he rejects three traditional presuppositions attached to the concept of Being namely (i) Being is the most universal concept, (ii) Being is indefinable, and (iii) Being is the most self-evident concept (*BT*, pp. 22-24).

The old way of conceiving was concerned with the genus-species relationship, that is, an entity was supposed to be defined or conceived as a species related to a class or genus to be generalized as such through the process of abstraction. In this regard, in Heidegger's view, the concept of Being was not taken by the ancient and the medieval ontologists as a generalized or universalized genus to which every entity is related in order to be defined. Instead, it has been taken as something that transcends the genus-species relationship in the sense that no entity is conceived as species of it, which is to say, it is something transcendental – universal in the sense that '[t]he universality of Being *'transcends'* any universality of genus' (*BT*, p. 22). The transcendental-universality of Being is the characteristic which, according to Heidegger, makes it 'the darkest' rather than 'the clearest' of all concepts, so it needs to be further discussed to be more clarified (*BT*, p. 23). Owing to its 'supreme universality' one can

deduce that Being is indefinable, that is, one cannot define Being as an entity being 'derived from higher concepts by definition, nor can it be presented through lower ones' (BT, p. 23).

Heidegger does not accept the indefinability of Being rejecting the method of definition as given in traditional logic. In the face of it, he intends to explore a new method, which may be termed the phenomenological method, in order to conceive Being appropriately. This is the main purpose of his project of *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*). In the process of restructuring the question of Being, the third presupposition concerned with the concept of Being, which Heidegger rejects, is its being self-evident. If one 'comports' oneself toward something or even toward oneself or, in other words, if one makes an assertion of something or of oneself after an average intelligibility like "The sky is blue," "I am handsome," etc., one takes the 'isness' for granted. This taking the 'isness' of entities for granted is, in Heidegger's view, 'an enigma *a priori*' which makes it justifiable to restructure the question of Being (isness) in order to free man from this enigmatic situation wherein he thinks that he is living in an understanding of Being while 'the meaning of Being is still veiled in darkness' (BT, p. 23).

Thanks to the perplexing nature of the concept of Being through the attachment of the three presuppositions as discussed above, Heidegger tends to formulate the question of the meaning of Being as the most fundamental question in a transparent way. Heidegger designs the structure of the question of Being as an 'inquiry' which, according to him, 'is a seeking (*Suchen*).' Attaining the transparency of the structure of the question of Being, Heidegger finds three constitutive factors of this inquiry as seeking, namely, 'that which is asked about (*sein Gefragtes*)', 'that which is interrogated (*ein Befragtes*)', and 'that which is to be found out by the asking (*das Erfragte*)' (BT, p. 24). When one inquires into Being, what one seeks, according to Heidegger, 'is not something entirely unfamiliar' but rather an 'average understanding of Being.' This average understanding is *vague* in nature through which one cannot grasp Being at all. But out of it 'arise both the explicit question of the meaning of Being and the tendency that leads one towards its conception' (BT, p. 25). In this regard, the average understanding is to guide 'beforehand' the inquiry into Being as a kind of seeking. In this seeking, *what is asked about* is Being – 'that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which

[*woraufhin*] entities are already understood' (*BT*, pp. 25-26). So in the question of the meaning of Being, *what is asked about* is Being but *what is interrogated* is not Being but rather entities, provided '[t]he Being of entities is not itself an entity.'

As the number of entities in the world is infinite, one may find it unlikely to *interrogate* all of the entities, and so one should limit one's *interrogation* to make it viable. Working out the question of Being as a transparent inquiry, one should, in Heidegger's view, give priority to one particular entity in order that the meaning of Being be discerned. This prior entity is the inquirer himself who asks the question as his own mode of Being. Heidegger denotes that entity by the term "*Dasein*" 'which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being' (*BT*, p. 27). The third constitutive factor of the structure of the question of Being is its meaning, the goal of the inquiry that the *Dasein* intends to attain as a result of its seeking. That is to say, *what is to be found out by the asking* lies in *what is asked about* to be discerned by the *Dasein* (that which is interrogated) as a goal of the inquiry.

Adhering to the question of Being, Heidegger expounds the priority of *Dasein*, as a particular entity which is interrogated in order to attain the meaning of Being, over all other entities in three different ways namely '*ontical*,' '*ontological*' and '*the ontico-ontological*' (*BT*, p. 34). The understanding of this threefold nomenclature depends on how Heidegger demarcates *ontical* from *ontological*. The nature of inquiry will be ontological if one inquires into the question of 'to be' or Being or isness, and it will be ontical if one inquires into an entity rather than its Being.⁴ *Dasein* is an entity and it is ontically (i.e. on the ground of being an entity) distinct from other entities 'by the fact, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it.' But as we have seen above

⁴ For the analysis of Heidegger's nomenclature of these two types of inquiry one should go through Michael Gelven's interpretation. Gelven not only shows how ontical is different from ontological but on the basis of this difference also explains the difference between some other Heideggerian terms as follows:

Object of Inquiry: Being (*Sein*), Entity (*Das Seiende*)

Type of inquiry: ontological, ontic

Terms of inquiry: existentials, categories

Status of occurrence in inquiry: factual, factual

Type of self-awareness in inquiry: existential, existentiell

See Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time: A Section-by-Section Interpretation* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), p. 19.

the nature of inquiry is ontological if one inquires into the issue of Being, which implies that 'Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological' (BT, p. 32). Here Dasein's 'Being-ontological' means that *Dasein* takes its Being as an issue for itself, it does not mean that *Dasein* is to develop a theoretical inquiry which aims at working out a study 'explicitly devoted to the meaning of entities.' In this regard, what Heidegger has in his mind 'in speaking of Dasein's "being-ontological" is to be designated as something "pre-ontological" which simply signifies that *Dasein* is being in such a way that it has an understanding of Being (BT, p. 32).

The difference between ontical and ontological leads Heidegger further to the distinction between '*existentiell*' and '*existential*.' Heidegger defines *existence (Existenz)* as '[t]hat kind of Being towards which Dasein can comport itself in one way or another, and always does comport itself somehow.' This comporting of *Dasein* becomes the ground of its understanding of itself, which is to say 'Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence-in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself' (BT, p. 33). *Dasein*'s understanding of itself or the self-awareness, which it attains that way, and which is its 'ontical affair,' is what Heidegger calls '*existentiell*' (BT, p. 33). Unlike the ontical self-awareness of *Dasein*, the understanding of the ontological structure of its existence 'aims at the analysis (*Auseinanderlegung*) of what constitutes existence.' This analysis 'has the character of an understanding which is not *existentiell*, but rather *existential*.' By 'existentiality' Heidegger means:

the state of Being that is constitutive for those entities that exist. But in the idea of such a constitutive state of Being, the idea of Being is already included. And thus even the possibility of carrying through the analytic of Dasein depends on working out beforehand the question about the meaning of Being in general. (BT, p. 33)

The essential character of Being which belongs to Dasein, in Heidegger's view is 'Being in a world.' Owing to the essential character of 'Being in a world' of every entity to be investigated, Dasein is to understand Being pertaining 'with equal primordially' both to the understanding of world, and to the understanding of the Being of the entities to be investigated within the confinement of the world (BT, p. 33). So whenever an inquiry or study is to take place

relating to a particular type of entities, whether Dasein itself or some other entity, it is grounded upon 'Dasein's own ontical structure. In this a pre-ontological understanding of Being is comprised as a definite characteristic' providing the essentiality of Being is Being in a world. 'Therefore *fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can take their rise, must be sought in the *existential analytic of Dasein*.' To sum up the issue concerning the threefold priority of Dasein and the question of Being, Heidegger says:

The first priority is an ontical one: Dasein is an entity whose Being has the determinate character of existence. The second priority is an ontological one: Dasein is in itself 'ontological', because existence is thus determinative for it. But with equal primordiality Dasein also possesses – as constitutive for its understanding of existence – an understanding of the Being of all entities of a character other than its own. Dasein has therefore a third priority as providing the ontico-ontological condition for the possibility of any ontologies. Thus Dasein has turned out to be, more than any other entity, the one which must first be interrogated ontologically. (BT, p. 34)

Ontical Nearness and Ontological Distance of Dasein

After having established the structure of the question of Being as well as the priority of the question and Dasein, Heidegger now turns to the method of his inquiry in order to attain the meaning of Being. In the first step, Heidegger explains how Dasein is closest to us ontically but farthest ontologically. Dasein is ontically closest to us in the sense that we *are* ourselves, each of us, what it *is* (BT, p. 36). On account of the essentiality of Dasein's Being in relation to its world, 'the entity towards which it comports itself proximally and in a way which is essentially constant', Dasein understands its own Being. When Dasein tends to interpret itself ontologically, it reflects back to its understanding of the world which has already been attained by itself in its own understanding of Being. That is to say, the ontological interpretation of Dasein is attained in terms of its understanding of the world, which makes it get 'ontologically farthest', but since it understands the very world in terms of its own understanding of Being therefore pre-ontologically Dasein 'is surely not a stranger.' So

Dasein is closest to itself ontically, not a stranger pre-ontologically, and farthest ontologically (*BT*, p. 37).

According to Heidegger, there are many ways at Dasein's disposal through which it can get itself ontologically interpreted, which is to say,

Dasein's ways of behaviour, its capacities, powers, possibilities, and vicissitudes, have been studied with varying extent in philosophical psychology, in anthropology, ethics, and 'political science', in poetry, biography, and the writing of history, each in a different fashion. (*BT*, p. 37)

Each of such interpretations of Dasein, in Heidegger's view, has to be carried through with a primordial existentiality comparable to whatever existentiell primordiality it may have possessed. So in dealing with the question of Being, the first requirement is the existential analytic of Dasein. In this regard, Heidegger turns to Dasein's 'average everydayness' as a plane of its existential analytic, as on that plane 'it can show itself in itself and from itself [an ihm selbst von ihm selbst her].' Heidegger also mentions the limits of everydayness as a perspective in which the Being of Dasein is brought out explaining that the bringing out of its Being is to occur 'in a preparatory fashion' which cannot provide 'a complete ontology of Dasein' (*BT*, p. 38). That is, the existential analytic of Dasein on the plane of its everydayness is a *provisional* analytic in that '[i]t merely brings out the Being' of Dasein without interpreting its meaning, but it is also 'a preparatory procedure' in the sense that it provides Dasein with the horizon for the most primordial way of interpreting its Being. After having arrived at that horizon, in Heidegger's view, 'this preparatory analytic of Dasein will have to be repeated on a higher and authentically ontological basis' (*BT*, p. 38). It shows that the meaning of the Being of Dasein is attained at a relatively higher level which is ontological rather than pre-ontological. The structures of Dasein, which have already been exhibited provisionally on the plane of everydayness, 'must be interpreted over again' on an ontological basis 'as modes of temporality' (*BT*, p. 38).

Being as Time (Temporality)

Heidegger equates temporality with the meaning of the Being of Dasein. In this regard, time is attempted to 'be brought to light – and genuinely conceived – as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it.' In order to understand time '*as the horizon for the understanding of Being*', Heidegger explains how this notion of time or temporality is to be taken as the source from which both the traditional conception of time and the ordinary way of understanding time have sprung. The ordinary way of understanding time is characterized by taking something as temporal which 'always means simply being [seiend] 'in time'' (BT, p. 39). Within this horizon of the ordinary way of its understanding time has acquired its self-evident function 'as an ontological-or rather an ontical-criterion for naively discriminating various realms of entities.' The entities may be taken as 'temporal' entities like natural processes and historical happenings as well as 'non-temporal' entities like spatial and numerical relationships. Philosophically speaking, the temporal entities are also distinguished from 'the supra-temporal' eternal, and the cleavage between the two is attempted to be bridged. Unlike these philosophical underpinnings regarding the various realms of entities where time always remains unquestionable, Heidegger raises the fundamental question – 'how time has come to have this distinctive ontological function, or with what right does anything like time function as such a criterion' (BT, p. 39).

Heidegger attempts to conceive Being in terms of time, and his treatment of the question of the meaning of Being enables one 'to show that *the central problematic of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenon of time*'. In order to make Being visible in its 'temporal' character, Heidegger suggests making 'the various modes and derivatives' of Being 'intelligible in their respective modifications and derivations by taking time into consideration.' In the procedure of conceiving Being in terms of time, "'temporal' can no longer mean simply 'being in time': '[e]ven the 'non-temporal' and the 'supra-temporal' are 'temporal' with regard to their Being' (BT, p. 40). Heidegger calls this procedure "'Temporal" determinateness' through 'which Being and its modes and characteristics have their meaning determined primordially in terms of time'. The Being-time relationship, as Heidegger expounds it, can become more transparent if one focuses it in terms of the Dasein-time relationship.

In his treatise, *Der Begriff der Zeit (The Concept of Time)*, Heidegger shows how Dasein is to be taken as time or temporality. Drawing from his day's development of research in the field of physics particularly Einstein's relativity theory, he focuses on 'the destructive side' of the notion that '[t]here is no absolute time, and no absolute simultaneity either', i.e., time is nothing, instead it 'persists merely as a consequence of the events taking place in it' (CT, p. 3E).⁵ The fundamental problem with this physicist conception of time is that it takes time as something measurable leading to it being necessarily 'uniform' and 'homogenous.'

Out of this uniformity, Heidegger draws the arbitrariness of time in terms of 'now.' That is to say, time is to be measured in terms of two different 'now-points,' 'one is earlier and the other later' (CT, p. 4E). This arbitrariness of now shows, in Heidegger's view, that if one is to come across an event with a clock, it does not indicate how-much is the duration of the event but rather it 'makes the event explicit...with respect to its unfolding in the now' (CT, p. 5E). He then questions taking *the experience of now as experience of I am*. So the question of *now-I am* equality points the Heideggerian inquiry into time 'in the direction of Dasein...the entity that we each ourselves are, which each of us finds in the fundamental assertion: I am' (CT, p. 6E). Dasein's determining itself as "I am" is as fundamental as its Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) or its Being-with-Others (*mit Anderen sein*) having the same world with others. This character of Dasein 'has a distinctive ontological determination' to be concerned with language. 'The fundamental way of Dasein' to be in the world as having a world shared with others is '*speaking*' a language (CT, p. 8E). 'It is predominantly in speaking,' according to Heidegger, 'that man's being-in-the-world takes place.' Dasein's engagement in the dialogic process with others is not only an involvement in the discourse 'about its way of dealing with its world'; but it is also a process of '*self-interpretation of Dasein*...which maintains itself in this dialogue' (CT, p. 8E). That is to say, 'in all speaking about the world there lies Dasein's speaking out itself about itself', and 'so *all concerned dealing is a concern for the Being of Dasein*.' The important aspect of Dasein's being with

⁵ According to Heidegger, Aristotle had already seen time the way Einstein conceives it. He cites from Aristotle's *Physics* IV, ch. 11, 219a, stating time as something 'within which events take place.' See CT, p. 3E, also see translator's note 5, p. 24.

others in the world is that 'the Dasein of Others [is] not able to substitute' rather 'the sole appropriate way of having Dasein' is to say: 'I never *am* the Other' (CT, p. 11E). Thereby Dasein, owing to the possibility of its own rather than the Other's death, cognizes 'the most extreme possibility of itself, which it can seize and appropriate as standing before it' (CT, p. 11E). Its interpretation with respect to its death is the most certain and authentic self-interpretation of Dasein, as its death is '*the indeterminate certainty of its ownmost possibility of being at an end.*' Drawing from the concept of death as the most extreme possibility of Dasein, Heidegger extends the delineation of the Dasein-time relationship. Heidegger thinks of having one's own death as '*Dasein's running ahead to its past, to an extreme possibility of itself that stands before it in certainty and utter indeterminacy*' (CT, p. 12E).

The most significant aspect of Heidegger's concept of the past it is that he conceives it in terms of 'how'-'what' distinction. The past is not a 'what', for Heidegger, but a 'how' in the sense that 'the past is not some occurrence, not some incident in my Dasein', rather 'it uncovers my Dasein as suddenly no longer there. Suddenly I am no longer there alongside such and such things, alongside such and such people, alongside these vanities, these tricks, this chattering.' This past is...indeed the authentic 'how' of my Dasein...to which I can run ahead as mine' (CT, p. 12E). Dasein's running ahead to 'the past as authentic 'how' also uncovers everydayness in its 'how', as this 'running ahead to the past is Dasein's running up against its most extreme possibility', and that is how '[t]his is Dasein's coming back to its everydayness which it still is' (CT, p. 13E). Dasein's maintaining 'itself in this running ahead' guarantees the authenticity of its existence as being temporal, which Heidegger owes to the notion of running ahead in order to relate past, present and future together. 'In running ahead,' Heidegger believes, 'Dasein is its future, in such a way that in this being futural it comes back to its past and present' (CT, p. 13E). Dasein's running ahead that way is 'not *in* time' but '*is time itself*'. Dasein's running ahead is its coming back to everydayness in which 'Dasein is that Being that *one* is. And Dasein, accordingly, is the time in which *one* is with one another: 'one's' time. So '[w]hat Dasein says about time it speaks from out of everydayness' which, 'as that particular temporality which flees in the face of futurity, and can only be understood when confronted with the authentic time of the futural being of the past' (CT, p. 19E). This is the way the past is

‘experienced as authentic historicity...something to which one can return again and again’ (CT, p. 19E). Drawing from this repeating character of past as authentic historicity in its ‘how’, Heidegger finds *the first principle of hermeneutics*. He says:

The possibility of access to history is grounded in the possibility according to which any specific present understands how to be futural. This is the first principle of all hermeneutics. It says something about the Being of Dasein, which is historicity itself. (CT, p. 20E)

The significance of Heidegger’s conception of Being in terms of time is its concern with how – rather than the what – nature of temporality that may have compelled him to seek such a method of investigation that too characterizes the how rather than ‘the what of the objects of philosophical research.’ Phenomenology is, according to him, such a method. He does not borrow the conception of phenomenology from his predecessors, instead he develops his own version of it which, on the one hand, ‘comprehensively...determines the principles on which a science is to be conducted’, and on the other hand, is ‘primordially...rooted in the way we come to terms with the things in themselves’ (BT, p. 50). The uniqueness of Heidegger’s contribution to the development of this conception of phenomenology is the hermeneutic turn he has given to the conception.

Being, Understanding and Interpretation: Ontical-Ontological-Hermeneutical Triad

Drawing from the etymology of two Greek terms *φαινόμενον* (phenomenon) and *λόγος* (logos), Heidegger explores the meaning of the conception of phenomenology. The word *φαινόμενον* is, according to him, ‘derived from the verb *φαίνεσθαι*⁶ which means ‘to show itself’. So ‘the expression ‘*phenomenon*’, according to him, ‘signifies that *which shows itself in itself*, the manifest’ (BT, p. 51). Now the

⁶ It is not only to this that Heidegger refers to in exploring the most appropriate meaning of the term *φαινόμενον* rather there are certain other etymological options as well to reach the same meaning of the term. These options include *φαίνω* (to bring to the light of day, to put in the light), the source word of which is *φα* like *φως* which means ‘the light’ or ‘that which is bright’ or ‘that wherein something can become manifest, visible in itself’. See BT, p. 51.

question is what is that which shows itself in itself, is it an entity⁷ or other than that? Heidegger explains this demarcating the ordinary conception of phenomenon from the phenomenological conception of phenomenon. The former is the Kantian sense of phenomenon wherein 'that which shows itself in itself' is taken to be 'those entities which are accessible through the empirical intuition' (*BT*, p.54). Grounding upon the Kantian sense of phenomenon having ordinary signification, Heidegger develops the phenomenological conception of phenomenon. The phenomenon which is ordinarily understood is 'that which already shows itself in the appearance' prior to the understanding which showing itself is unthematic, but it can 'be brought thematically to show itself; and what thus shows itself in itself (the 'forms of intuition') will be the "phenomena" of phenomenology.

In order to further understand the concept of phenomenon as Heidegger expounds it, one should go through the discussion concerning the distinguishing of phenomenon both from semblance and appearance. Depending upon the various modes of reaching it, there are many possibilities for an entity to show itself from itself. One such possibility is semblance in which something shows 'itself as something which in itself it is not' (*BT*, p. 51). It is also a sense in which the Greeks used to use the term *φαινόμενον*. In case of phenomenon as semblance, some entity looks like something which it is not in itself. But one should not confuse this sense with the notion of 'appearance', as Heidegger conceives it as different both from phenomenon and semblance. The appearance of something is much like 'the symptoms of a disease'. The symptom of a disease, in its appearing, does show the disease rather than itself. In this showing, the disease is one which does not show itself in itself rather it always needs the symptom to show itself, and this is what Heidegger considers 'the announcing-itself by something which does not show itself.' 'Appearing is', therefore, 'a not-showing-itself' (*BT*, p. 52).

Now one can differentiate between the three notions namely phenomenon, semblance and appearance. Phenomenon is the showing itself in itself, semblance is the showing itself as something which it is not, whereas appearance is simply a not-showing-itself but rather the announcing-itself by something else. In the next step of the

⁷ The Greeks at times identified *φαινόμενον* with *τὰ ὄντα* (entities). See *BT*, p. 51.

development of his argument, Heidegger complements the notion of phenomenon with that of logos in order that the concept of phenomenology may take shape as a notion different from that already expounded by his predecessors.

Three Greek terms namely *λόγος*, *ἀπόφανσις* and *λεγόμενον* are the key words to understand the Heideggerian conception of logos. Overlooking the various interpretations of the word *λόγος*, like “reason,” “judgment,” “concept,” “definition,” “ground,” or “relationship” etc., Heidegger focuses on ‘the basic signification of *λόγος*’, which according to him is “discourse” (BT, p. 55). Referring to Aristotle’s explication of the term *λόγος*, he relates it to another Greek word, *ἀποφαίνεσθαι*. Discourse as *ἀπόφανσις* ‘lets something be seen’, that is, it makes manifest what is being said by someone, ‘and thus makes this accessible to the other party.’ Appealing to the various interpretations of *λόγος* like reason, ground and relationship, Heidegger further expounds it in relation to another Greek word, *λεγόμενον*. *Λόγος*, as letting something be seen, lets entities be perceived showing its signification as reason (*Vernunft*) (BT, p. 58). Moreover, *λόγος* is not only to let something be seen, it is also used with the signification of ‘*λεγόμενον* (that which is exhibited, as such)’ which, ‘as present-at-hand, already lies at the *bottom* [zum *Grunde*] of any procedure of addressing oneself to it or discussing it.’ So ‘*λόγος* *quia* *λεγόμενον* means the ground’ (BT, p. 58). Finally, *λόγος* acquires the signification of relationship when *λόγος* as *λεγόμενον* signifies ‘that which, as something to which one addresses oneself, becomes visible in its relation to something in its relatedness’ (BT, p. 58).

The composite words like sociology, biology, theology etc. show that when the term “*λόγος* (*logos*)” is attached with some word representing some specific thing, it makes that thing an object of study and so the composite words are to represent certain fields of study. That is to say, sociology is a discipline in which we study about society as in the case of biology and theology we study about life and God respectively. These disciplines designate the object of their study and the subject-matter regarding the same. Instead of *the how*, they focus on *the what* of their study. Phenomenology, according to Heidegger, is not such a composite word to represent a field of study. It is not the science of *phenomenon* in the sense that one can attempt, under the heading of phenomenology, to study phenomenon as its definite subject-matter. Instead phenomenology is an investigation of *the how-*

nature of things, that is, it is an 'exhibiting' of things as they are in themselves. For Heidegger, it is a science which

...merely informs us of the "how" with which *what* is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled. To have a science 'of' phenomena means to grasp its objects *in such a way* that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly....The signification of "phenomenon," as conceived both formally and in the ordinary manner, is such that any exhibiting of an entity as it shows itself in itself, may be called "phenomenology" with formal justification. (*BT*, p. 59)

The theme of phenomenology is Being, 'its meaning, its modification and derivatives.' So regarding its subject-matter, 'phenomenology is the science of the Being of entities-ontology' (*BT*, p. 60). In that sense phenomenology is a highly generalized discipline as it takes Being as its subject-matter, and Being, in *its showing-itself*, is neither a semblance nor an appearance. It is rather "phenomenon" of phenomenology as ontology. In order to explicitly cognize ontology, one has to 'necessarily' focus 'a fundamental ontology' (*BT*, p. 61). As Being is always 'the Being of some entity' the fundamental ontology takes 'as its theme that entity which is ontologico-ontically distinctive, Dasein.' Here Heidegger complementarily attaches the notion of *ἑρμηνεύειν* (*hermeneuein*) with the concept of phenomenology. Dasein as an ontologico-ontically distinctive entity has itself 'the basic structures of Being', but in order to make those structures 'known to Dasein's understanding of Being', it needs to interpret. The interpretation is extended 'by uncovering the meaning of Being and the basic structures of Dasein in general' in order that one 'may exhibit the horizon for any further ontological study of those entities which do not have the character of Dasein' (*BT*, p. 62). Heidegger also incorporates the concept of transcendence in the notion of hermeneutic-phenomenology. Being, not being a 'class or genus of entities', 'pertains to every entity' (*BT*, p. 62). Owing to this universality of Being, it lies along with its structures 'beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess.' In that sense of being beyond all, '*Being is the transcendens*' (*BT*, p. 62). Further, '[e]very disclosure of Being as the *transcendens* is

transcendental knowledge' (BT, p. 62). That's how Heidegger conceives philosophy as a 'universal phenomenological ontology' whose primary step is 'the hermeneutic of Dasein.' He says:

Ontology and phenomenology are not two distinct philosophical disciplines among others. These terms characterize philosophy itself with regard to its object and its way of treating that object. Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of *existence*, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it *arises* and to which it *returns*. (BT, p. 62)

At this point, a brief look at Heidegger's notion of interpretation in relation to understanding will be of use in order to aptly grasp his concept of phenomenological hermeneutics or hermeneutic phenomenology. He does not grasp understanding as one of the modes of cognition, instead, understanding is for him a 'mode of Being.' Understanding is a mode through which the Being of Dasein 'discloses in itself what its Being is capable of' in the entirety of Being-in-the-world as an essential basic state of its Being (BT, p. 184). That is to say, understanding is the intelligibility of the whole mode of Being-in-the-world in which the Being of Dasein not only understands itself but the world as well. Understanding is the disclosure of possibilities of Being of Dasein in the world to guarantee 'the full disclosedness of Being-in-the-world throughout all the constitutive items which are essential to it' (BT, p. 187). Here arises the notion of interpretation, as expounded by Heidegger, as directly related to the development of understanding. Understanding is a projection of the Being of Dasein upon possibilities whereby understanding develops itself. This development of understanding is called interpretation (*Auslegung*) by Heidegger. So interpretation is not, as traditionally conceived, an additional account of something that has already been understood, rather it is 'the working out of possibilities projected in understanding.' Having the fore-structure of understanding in background interpretation is to work out something as something-in-itself in a web of relations established in the totality of world (BT, pp. 188-193). This sort of interpretation is worked out at three levels namely (1) fore-having (*Vorhabe*), (2) fore-sight (*Vorsicht*) and (3) fore-

conception (*Vorgriff*). The *Vorhabe* is the level of the appropriation of understanding in which the interpretation is grounded in 'something we have in advance', the grasp of totality of involvements in the whole situation. After this level of appropriation, if something is still unveiled then there arises one more 'act of appropriation' called *Vorsicht*. In this level, we see in advance the appropriate way in which things can appear 'under the guidance of a point of view which fixes that with regard to which what is understood is to be interpreted'. Whatever is held in our *Vorhabe* and *Vorsicht* 'becomes conceptualizable through the interpretation' in the third level of appropriation called *Vorgriff* (fore-conception). In this level, 'the way in which the entity we are interpreting is conceived in advance'. So interpretation, for Heidegger, 'is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something [as something] presented to us', rather it is always 'founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception' (*BT*, pp. 191-192).

This understanding-interpretation relationship having the notion of Being-in-the-world in background is circular in the sense that all interpretations require the fore-structure of understanding and again all understanding is developed or projected through interpretation. This is what Heidegger calls the 'circle of understanding' denying any possibility of its being vicious. According to him, every being as being-in-the-world has a 'circular structure' ontologically, if Being is itself an issue for it. The circle of understanding or hermeneutic circle, for him, 'is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move; it is the expression of the existential fore-structure of *Dasein* itself' (*BT*, p. 195). That is to say, it involves 'the structure of meaning' as the circular relationship between understanding and interpretation which is rooted in 'the existential constitution of *Dasein*' as being-in-the-world. That is why Heidegger denies any possibility of reducing this hermeneutical circle to

the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of meaning. To be sure, we genuinely can hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last and constant task is never to allow any fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the

scientific theme secure by working out the fore-structures in terms of the things themselves. (*BT*, p. 195)

Post-Heideggerian Attempts at Interpreting Tradition: Gadamer and Apel

Setting the Western mind's face against the enlightenment prejudice regarding the concepts of tradition and authority and drawing from Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer explores the possibility of philosophizing tradition positively. Karl-Otto Apel extends his efforts in making it philosophically viable to interpret one tradition in relation to another.

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics justifies the evolvment of all mind-sets of an individual as 'prejudices', both legitimate and illegitimate with respect to his affiliation with a specific tradition. In this paradigm, it is unlikely for an individual to transcend the historically or traditionally given prejudices while understanding or interpreting some text like tradition itself. However, one can cleanse the illegitimacy of one's prejudices in a hermeneutical situation by referring to the effective historical consciousness that is always available in the guise of tradition. According to Gadamer, tradition is not a dead past, but a living continuity, a flow of 'effective-history' which encompasses not only the past but also the relevant present. It is the 'effective-historical consciousness' that has given rise to the human sciences as they are and as well as to the social structure as it exists. It is in the living process of tradition that we acquire our prejudices and fore-meanings regarding a text; again the text speaks of the tradition that has already been objectivized in it. This is what Gadamer calls the 'hermeneutical situation,' that is, 'a situation in which we find ourselves, with regard to the tradition that we are trying to understand.' 'Effective-historical consciousness is the consciousness of the hermeneutical situation' that makes us realize that we are not standing outside the situation 'and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it' (*TM*, pp. 268-269). Instead, we are always within the situation and the 'illumination' of it is a task which 'cannot be completely achieved,' as we exist as historical beings and all of our knowledge 'proceeds from what is historically pre-given.' The concept of situation is essentially concerned with the 'concept of *horizon*' as explored by Gadamer. The hermeneutical situation, as shown above, determines the limits of the possibility of

understanding the tradition in which we always find ourselves. 'The *horizon* is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point' (*TM*, p. 269). Moreover, one's horizon makes one know 'the relative significance of everything' that is included within the horizon whether it is 'near or far, great or small.' When one acquires a horizon, one becomes able 'to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it, but to see it better within a larger whole and in truer proportion' (*TM*, p. 272). If we relate the notions of situation and horizon to that of prejudices, we can say that it is our prejudices that, on the one hand, determine the hermeneutical situation in which we find ourselves. On the other hand, 'they constitute...the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see' (*TM*, p. 272). As the hermeneutical situation, as discussed above, is determined by the effective-historical consciousness the operation of prejudices in the present horizon is a continuous process. The significant aspect of this operation of the prejudices in a hermeneutical situation or within a horizon of the present is the encounter with the tradition which relates the horizon of the present to the historical horizon. 'Understanding... is always the fusion of these horizons.' It means that in the process of understanding, the historical horizon is projected to be fused with our present horizon, and so it is no more there to be 'solidified into the self-alienation of a past consciousness' (*TM*, p. 273). This implies a hermeneutic circle in which the tradition becomes a larger whole that determines all of our prejudices. Again the prejudices are necessary conditions to understand the tradition itself as a continuous flow that encompasses all past and present horizons. In this framework of philosophical hermeneutics, no experience of understanding can take place outside the continuum of tradition, that is, the historicity of tradition is inevitable if one attempts to interpret some text on the essential ground of one's prejudices.

Apel's response to the problem of historicism, one's distancing from his own tradition due to one's engagement in a dialogical mediation with a foreign tradition, is rather complex. Apel advises a non-Western contemporary man to construct a philosophy of history in order to address the problem of historicity characterized as the crisis of break with his tradition due to the inevitable adoption of the Western technical-industrial form of life. This philosophy of history should be both hermeneutic and scientific in character. Its

hermeneutic character may help one interpret the heritage of one's own, and the foreign tradition, which is handed down linguistically, while the scientific character may help one explain the remnants of traditions which are linguistically undocumented. This binary function of interpretation and explanation, according to Apel, enables the philosophy of history aptly to address the problem of historicism which the contemporary non-Western man is facing. The constitution of such a cognitive scheme is based upon Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world. Apel opines that the 'constitution of meaning' is impossible by a pure consciousness taken by itself. Instead, the knowing consciousness can arrive at the meaning constitution by its 'living engagement' with the world 'concentrically' though it may be 'eccentric' in its own (*TTP*, p. 48). This life a priori of knowledge, i.e. the knowing consciousness' engagement in life as a condition of its knowledge makes it a being-with-others whose 'intended meanings become mediated with the possible meaning intentions of other human beings in such a manner' that it can really mean something. According to Apel, language is a precondition for this 'intersubjective validity' of the constitution of meaning, for the linguistic signs are the instruments for the mediation of meanings among human beings who are engaged in life. Language or linguistic signs are not the objects of knowledge in themselves, rather they are the preconditions of all knowledge. So he calls language 'the bodily a priori (*Leibapriori*) of knowledge' (*TTP*, p. 45).

On the basis of the preconditions of all cognition, Apel construes his scheme of interpreting Western and non-Western traditions through the dialogic process. According to Apel, the non-Western men's inevitable adoption of 'the European technical-industrial form of life and its specific foundations' force them to distance themselves from their own tradition. This emergent crisis of a break with tradition which Apel calls 'the problem of historicism' cannot be resolved, he argues, 'solely by hermeneutic reflection'. Rather along with it they must also 'achieve a quasi-objective, historical-philosophical system of reference'. They must most preferably seek a 'philosophical and scientific orientation' to mediate a hermeneutic understanding both of their own and the foreign, particularly the Western, 'traditions of meaning by sociological analysis of those economic and social orders' to which they belong (*TTP*, p. 66).

Furthermore, there are always certain limitations and contradictions faced by the interpreter in order to understand the texts of temporally and spatially distant cultures. In the course of history, human beings have always been unable to have a transparent and lucid understanding either of their 'intentions' and 'motives' behind their actions or of at least their conceptions of meaning that are objectivated in linguistic documents like historical and literary works. They have always been and still are unable to put the full and pure expressions of their intellectual 'convictions' and 'intentions' in the linguistic texts and so the major part of their history remains in the natural and actual forms of life. When an interpreter is to mediate the tradition he finds a huge 'barrier to understanding' due to the 'contradictions which are determined by the intermeshing of sense and nonsense, intended actions and naturally determined reactions' (*TTP*, p. 68). Here one can understand why Apel finds a merely hermeneutic reflection to be not enough to mediate tradition. Instead, he puts emphasis on undertaking a philosophy of history that seeks to integrate both hermeneutic and explanatory sciences. The hermeneutic side of the philosophy of history is concerned with the interpretation of those motivations and intentions of life that can be understood by the drive of 'the hermeneutic interest in intersubjective agreement.' Whereas the explanatory scientific side of the philosophy of history may deal with those 'factually contingent factors of human history' which are unable to rise to the level of intersubjective agreement because they are not 'subjectively transparent but are merely factually effective and can only be analyzed by means of a quasi-objective explanatory science' (*TTP*, p. 68).

With the dialectical mediation of hermeneutic and explanatory methods Apel incorporates the critique of ideology through the model of psychoanalysis. Drawing from his notion of the 'partial suspension of hermeneutic communication' Apel equates the critique of ideology with the technique of psychotherapy further relating to the mediation of explanation and interpretation. In a discourse between people, according to Apel, one party does not take the intentions of the other 'seriously hermeneutically', but rather 'distances himself from the other objectively as a quasi-natural entity.' He no longer attempts to create the unity of language in communication, but rather seeks to evaluate what the other person says as the symptom of an objective situation which he seeks to explain from outside in a language in

which his partner does not participate' (*TTP*, p. 68). This is what Apel calls 'the partial breakdown of hermeneutic communication in favour of an objective method of acquiring knowledge' and which he further equates with the situation wherein a psychotherapist treats his neurotic patient. The breakdown of hermeneutic communication is to have an analogical relation to 'the break with tradition' that we have already mentioned as the problem of historicism. Responding to this problem Apel proposes to explore a philosophy of history that must, on the one hand, unify both hermeneutic and scientific methods and, on the other, 'adopt the objective distancing cognitive role of a psychotherapist regarding 'the behaviour and meaning claims of what has been handed down [through tradition] and of contemporaries' (*TTP*, p. 69). The hermeneutic method of historical explanation emphasizes that 'the objective context of events as a result of historical reconstruction is mediated through an understanding of the intentions of participating human beings' whereas the scientific explanation of history attempts to mediate the causes behind the events 'by methodological analysis of objective, operating factors of which the responsible actors are not at all conscious as meaningful motives' (*TTP*, p. 69).

Apel considers 'the quasi-objective cognitive achievement of the behavioral sciences' as an ideal form of scientific explanation to be incorporated into his proposed method of philosophy of history. His cognitive model opts for a mid-way between the methods mentioned above by realizing a connection between 'the quasi-natural causal process of a specific mode of societal practice and the neurotic symptoms of individuals in this society' (*TTP*, p. 71). This proposal takes the form of a psychoanalytic-psychotherapeutic model as a critique of ideology, as it, on the one hand, analyzes human history to diagnose the ailment of the social sciences, and on the other, cures the ailments by therapy of the society. The guiding cognitive interest of this model, Apel argues, 'corresponds to the life-a priori of a psychosomatic self-diagnosis and self-therapy of mankind' (*TTP*, p. 72).

Conclusion

Metaphysical undergirdings of Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology, namely, the notion of Being-in-the-world (*In-der-welt-Sein*) and the Being-Dasein-time triad seem to pave the way for

the possibility of interpretation of tradition. Being disinterested in the transcendental orientation of Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger conceives entities and their Being in the context of life-world giving rise to the notion of Being-in-the-world. Moreover, he benefits from Dilthey's hermeneutics of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, particularly the experience-time relationship as Dilthey expounds it, in order to redefine time as not *the what* but *the how* equivalent to Dasein as well as Being. Heidegger's Dasein maintains itself as running ahead to its past and simultaneously running up against the future, and in its running up it comes back to the everydayness-the present. This concept of time is very similar to 'temporality' as the past-present-future continuum as Dilthey expounds it.

This notion of temporality directs Gadamer to conceive tradition as something historically alive and effective in shaping what is to come ahead to the tradition. Criticizing the Enlightenment prejudice against tradition, he rejects the neutrality of the human intellect in taking sides. This 'prejudice' of the human is an outcome of the effective-historical consciousness. Apel also draws from Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world when he puts the foundation stone of his project of cognitive anthropology. He advises non-Western man to diminish his distancing from his own tradition (due to his engagement in the Western technical-industrial form of life) by construing a philosophy of history that seeks to integrate both hermeneutical and explanatory aspects of human learning. As far as learning or arriving at the constitution of meaning is concerned, Apel considers the life-a priori of knowledge, that is, man's engagement in life with others as a precondition. Besides, he also considers language as another precondition of having knowledge. Both of these preconditions are obviously drawn from Heidegger's notion of Being-in-the-world.

Abbreviations

BT Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit (Being and Time)*, trans. by J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (New York: Blackwell, 1962).

CM Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. by D. Cairns (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967).

CT Martin Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit (The Concept of Time)*, trans. by William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

EJ Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, Rev. and Ed. L. Landgrebe, trans. by J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

Ideas Edmund Husserl, *Ideen: zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und Phänomenologischen Philosophie (Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology)*, trans. by W. R. Boyce Gibson (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931).

LI Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen (Logical Investigations)*, 2 Volumes, trans. by J. N. Findlay (New York: Humanities Press, 1970).

LSS Jürgen Habermas, *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften (On the Logic of the Social Sciences)*, trans. by Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry A. Stark (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

TM Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode (Truth and Method)*, trans. by G. Barden and W.G. Doerpel (New York: Crossroad, 1975).

TTP Karl-Otto Apel, *Transfromation der Philosophie (Towards a Transformation of Philosophy)*, trans. by Glyn Adey and David Frisby (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

WDSW Wilhelm Dilthey, *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Writings*, ed., trans. and Intr. by H.P. Rickman (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976).

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Complementarity inside Conflict? Between Sacrum, Myth and Rationality

AGNIESZKA LENARTOWICZ

The sphere of the *sacrum* seems to be, presently, in a state of increasing atrophy. But if we wish to analyze the issue seriously, we should consider the phenomenon from a few different points of view. Global times might be considered both as threatening and encouraging for the sphere of the *sacrum*. There is a real threat in changing cultural patterns in our times, but, at the same time, we can observe a rare social interest in a differently understood sacrum. It is too simple to criticize globalism and the process of globalization; it is too simple to criticize contemporary culture for being too easy and popular. On the other hand, there is also the danger of the impression that every output of contemporary culture should be accepted irrespective of its real value.

The thesis of this article is that, apart from the need to be critical of contemporary cultural products, we should notice that global times create a special chance for increasing the sphere of the sacrum. The chance is not only in complementarity but in conflict as well; or speaking differently – the complementarity might exist in a few types of conflict, understood rather as a state of dynamic ambivalence between different types of oppositions. Contemporary, globalized culture possesses some features that make it especially receptive for the sacrum, even if it is not a sacrum as traditionally and institutionally understood. One of the most important contradictions of modern culture is an opposition between sacrum and rationality. This article is especially concentrated on this issue and on investigations connected with attempts of crossing that radical chasm and finding a way between the poles of opposition.

Sacrum, Myth and a State of Modern Culture

According to Mircea Eliade, each expression of the *sacrum* represents the same structure – that of a special, sacral dialectics which makes a human experience of the sacrum something continuous. Eliade understands the dialectics of sacrum as a coincidence of a

limitation and a boundlessness in human experience of the sacrum. If the experience is to be open for human understanding, it has to be (in some aspects and some way) limited. This is a paradox because the sacrum is entirely boundlessness – and the dialectics is based on this. The dialectics is crucial for my approach to the issue of the contemporary shape of the sacrum.

Apart from Eliade's understanding, the dialectics of sacrum may be regarded not only as a coincidence of mentioned oppositions, but also as a special cluster of contemporary approaches to rationalism. This dialectics reveals itself in some orientations that are able to accept a multiplicity of rationalisms instead of one fixed pattern of rational thinking.

The dialectics of contemporary culture appears, among others, in its figurative character. Most matters of culture are, presently, pictures/graphics/screens. That fact changes not only a style of life, it changes even our brains – and it is difficult to call these changes positive. As anthropologists point out, the human brain gradually becomes more receptive for matters given in the form of pictures than the verbal, logical or “rational” matters.

But the language of pictures is, at the same time, the language of myth....There are different ways to restore myth in contemporary culture. One of them might be increasing the role of figurative presentations. Or this may be some kind of the specific “cunning of myth.”

Habermas' diagnosis of contemporary European culture indicates that a myth, relegated from the mainstream of culture, keeps returning to it, sometimes in degenerated forms. The most representative was a cult of 'Reason' and 'Progress' at the time of the enlightenment, which labeled as symbols the struggle against 'an obscurity' of religion, myth, and all forms of sacrum, became some kind of 'gods' of their epoch. Leszek Kołakowski, who understands a myth as every form of sacral, non-practical side of human activity, gives a similar diagnosis of the state. He emphasised that a myth is the human answer for an entire need and, because of this, it is impossible to give it up without negative consequences.

The language of pictures, by which a contemporary culture speaks to us, might be a form of a hidden myth-*sacrum*, trying to get out to the surface of culture. The contemporary situation is some kind of reverse enlightenment, when the myth put a mask of the ideas from

the world of well-educated people. Most receivers of contemporary popular culture are recruited from the worst educated strata of society. However, the consequences are similar: the myth appears itself both in religiously worshiped 'Reason' and in 'icons' of contemporary popular culture. Both forms are followed by the danger of a myth's deformation; but, on the other hand, they are also signs of the need for a myth for the whole culture and for individuals.

In speaking of an emergence of an image of the contemporary world, Habermas appeals to Piaget's theory of learning which he extends from an ontogenetic level to a filogenetic one, and concerns European culture. According to this conception, development consists in "decentration of the egocentrically formed imagination of world."¹ The European culture "matures," stepping from a mythical kind of thinking, metaphysical – religious, to a contemporary, gradually modifying hitherto prevailing systems of categories. Achieving each next stage, means at the same time a devaluation of hitherto prevailing standards – the process necessary for achieving a higher level of development. Thus, the standards of culture are under the pressure of time and hence are relative; but failure to treat them in such a way is a mechanism blocking their development.

A "decentration" expresses itself by a capacity of considering a perspective different from "my own"; by a capacity of taking into account (according to the Bachtinian expression) "the third in the dialogue," not participating, but having their own reasons. However, the decentration is not persistent; an egocentric image of the world might return in every stage of the development. This is exactly what happened to European culture, which underwent the illusion that a social and subjective world is something localized beyond the area of rationality and – in that unlawful way – has narrowed the term 'rationality' to the 'objective world', that is, to the world that can be grasped in a physical way.²

The consequences of Habermas' investigations connect in this point (unexpectedly) with the consequences of Leszek Kołakowski's thought. He points out that myth (in the sense of a 'values world') was rejected from the area of culture defined as rational. However, Kołakowski leaves the issue of rationality and a definition of ratio to

¹ J. Habermas, *Teoria działania komunikacyjnego* (Warszawa, PWN, 1999), s. 134.

² *Ibid.*, s. 140-141.

“philosophical likings.” The myth, as Kołakowski writes, is guided by its own logic (different from the scientific), which matches a need with the area able to appease it, not the judgment to a described situation. The myth shall always find a way to exist, because it is an intrinsic element of culture, a response to a deep human need.³

In the beginnings of its existence, Philosophy relativized the myth, making it one among the multiplicity of languages describing the world. Now, myth must be taken into consideration, becoming a cultural element of full value, and not only a museum piece.

Whereas Habermas regards a crossing of a mythic point of view as a positive, decentralizing moment in human history, as a beginning moment of a process of raising European civilization to ever-higher grades of development, Kołakowski sees in that fact ‘an original sin’ of philosophy. In spite of the starting point, both note dramatic consequences brought by rustication of myth from a culture.⁴

Away from philosophical discourse, a myth returns “from the backyard” as reason, making philosophy a kind of secular religion, with a collection of dogmas, unavailable for discussion and falsification. This is the way of a new concentration of a worldview: Reason is to rule in spite of anything and a philosopher’s task is to guard everybody to believe it. A longing for a myth, for its (according to Kołakowski’s term) “meaning-creative energy,” made us construct an hypostasis of “universal suppositions of something common” and to put this chimera on the altar of culture.

Meanwhile, a new question emerges: whether, in appealing to myth, we express a longing for a rural, tribal life, concentrated around central symbols? This question should be answered negatively. It would be naive to think that we can throw in the rubbish more than two and a half thousand years of philosophical tradition and return to the untroubled happiness of a pre-philosophical state. This is not to disregard myth, understood in a broad sense. Such a disregarded myth may put on a mask of reason and in that way become prevalent on our world of life (*Lebenswelt*).

Both Kołakowski and Habermas protest against that situation. They both understand the myth (social/subjective world) as, at the same time, a threat and a chance for the rationality: if we regain for

³ L. Kołakowski, *Horror metaphysicus* (Poznań, 1999), s. 200.

⁴ L. Kołakowski, *Kapłan i błazen* (Twórczość, 1959), nr 10.

myth a right to rationality, we shall prevent a danger, created by the myth in its deformed shape. However, Habermas is more inclined to the enlightenment pursuit of “stepping out from immaturity,”⁵ because he treats the relegation of myth from the European culture as an expression of renewal of egocentrism, blocking a ‘decentration’ process – this means a stoppage of development as pursuit of maturity. Kołakowski, in contrast, regards the immaturity of culture as a permanent feature, which – at the same time – expresses its vitality.⁶ In the reflections of both philosophers, there is the entire intention to unblock cultural development, and regain the vital energy of myth.

Multiplicity of Rationalisms

Regaining the myth implicates an acceptance of multiplicity of rationalisms which doesn't mean irrationality. Such an attitude appears in the works of two brilliant Polish axiologists, Józef Tischner and Henryk Elzenberg.

An acceptance of pluralism appears in Tischner's writings as acceptance of the world – such as it presents itself both in a common, everyday experience, and in an image construed by science and philosophy.⁷

Ontological pluralism is followed by a methodological one. Tischner notices the present decline of what existed in science not so long ago, namely, the belief that there might exist some one, universal method, allowing an effective examination of the whole of reality. “Multiplicity of methods means a pluralism of deeds, and pluralism is an opening for riddle.”⁸

If we accept a plurality of deeds and ways of their recognition, we should consequently accept a plurality of rationalisms. This is a very interesting idea of Tischner on the plurality of rationalisms in which he recognizes the possibility of going beyond both rationalism and irrationalism.⁹ As there is not only one pattern of rationality, it is not right to force anyone.

⁵ I. Kant, *Co to jest oświecenie*, [w:] T. Kroński, *Kant* (Warszawa, 1966).

⁶ L. Kołakowski, *Horror metaphysicus*, *op. cit.*

⁷ J. Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości* (Kraków: Znak, 2005), s. 264.

⁸ *Ibid.*, s. 269.

⁹ *Ibid.*, s. 431.

An opening for pluralism is understood here by Tischner even as one of the key tasks of philosophy, as describing the very object of its investigations. A philosophy is to be (in its approach) the area of knowledge able to oscillate between rationalism and irrationalism, trying to keep some kind of dynamic balance between them; this is not at all easy.

We should realize from above, the cost of such an enterprise. For the enthusiasts of rationalistic monism, everything said in terms of pluralism, shall be a slip towards irrationalism. For the solid irrationalists everything shall be a slip in the opposite direction. There are some [people] who always would like to see clear-cut oppositions: ...whites...blacks. (...) But life, especially the life of spirit, is different. There is something irrational in any rationalism, and something rational in any irrationalism. Because of this, dualistic divisions in the area of philosophy are suspected from the beginning.¹⁰

There is a sharp protest against a dualism, which is not, at the same time, an apotheosis of a monism. Tischner's idea wants to avoid the oppositions, as they are avoided by the world, which is never black and white. We should describe rationalism and irrationalism as a pair of terms with too sharply defined ranges, which makes them hardly useful for the investigation of the human world – especially, the world of values.¹¹

Specific rationality of every range (or discourse) is not susceptible to the uniformed – and hence absolute – criteria.

It should be noted here that such a pluralistic conception contains, finally, a statement **for** rationalism; such a point of view, however, needs a revision of the enlightenment or a broader modern idea of rationalism. Contemporary reality seems to demand – for its better, a more complete description – putting a category of rationalism in a pluralistic context. The attitude of the author of *Thinking according to Values* is involved in the circle of approaches that do not escape from such a recontextualisation.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, s. 431.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, s. 435.

Henryk Elzenberg was frequently described as an 'irrationalist.' However, we could find in his works many testimonials of his special care for...rationality. A specific case of this is Elzenberg's consideration of language, in searching for the best and most adequate language for philosophical reflection. Elzenberg's works lead to the conclusion that the best philosophical language should be closer to figurative language than to a typically scientific one.

Care about language is for Elzenberg, at the same time, a care for rationality. A figurative language appeals often to a contradiction and a paradox included in the area of irrationality, though in some cases those paradoxes are "more reasonable" than "rationalistic" mediums of expression. For reason is able to notice a matter hidden in a paradox and use it. Elzenberg bases his judgments on Jaspers's "reasonable a-logic."

Exactly by my reason I notice in a paradox and contradiction what only in that form is able to transfer. By reason: because as a thinker I agree for those irrationalities are necessary: they give something which it [the reason] is unable to give. In practical regard: a reasonable man should have an open mind for what is beyond reason, not to perish but to take advantage.

Jaspers supplies (and only then does the thing become passionate): <Interesting and stimulating research: to investigate vicious circles and other logical improprieties in philosophizing and every time, to notice, what, in identical intellectually and logically forms, is at one time an absurd foolishness and at another time something deep, touching a boundary>. Rightly: because till this moment, the term was a problem, namely, to understand reason more broadly or more narrowly and beyond this or inside it to place some phenomena, traditionally and more conventionally considered 'irrational'?¹²

A boundary between "rational" and "irrational" here ceases to be evident; a paradox, even an absurdity, gives a strong stimulus to creative investigations, attracts the mind to that which causes astonishment, which disturbs common habits of the mind. Following

¹² H. Elzenberg, *Kłopot z istnieniem* (Toruń, 2002), s. 481.

this voice demands courage in thinking – which courage was an important feature of Elzenberg's style of thinking.

Contemporary culture needs a myth and *sacrum*, just as did previous epochs. The specialty of the present situation consists in a state of dynamic readiness, something similar to the calm just before the storm....We could describe the state by the word 'crisis,' but, in this context, the word has a rather positive connotation because it indicates a state of emerging new phenomena, new patterns of culture and – following them – new patterns of their ontological and axiological description. Such ontological description should be able to grasp a modification of the cultural world, which seems to turn into an acceptance of contradictories and pluralism. In this, the old idea of '*coincidentia oppositorum*' may presently find its new shape and new application.

Philosophy Expanding to a Global Horizon: The Problem of Intercultural Communication in the Age of Pluralism

ALOIS A. NUGROHO

Introduction

This article is written in the context of a discussion on the relation between the sacred and the secular. Its assumption is that the age of pluralism is closely related with what Charles Taylor calls “a secular age.” Namely, in the previous days, it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, but nowadays – in the age of pluralism – faith is simply one cultural possibility among others. Consequently, the question of whether the sacred and the secular are conflictual or complementary can be regarded as an aspect of the problem of the possibility of intercultural communication in the postmodern world.

For approximately four decades, postmodernism has evoked a great controversy not only among philosophers but also among empirical scientists as well. The debate over Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* provides a case in point. To be sure, there are many modes of postmodernism. Charles Jencks, for instance, distinguishes “post-modern poststructuralists” from “post-modern cosmologist.”¹ The former is “deconstructionist” in character, while the latter looks for a comprehensive map of reality. Stephen Toulmin² points out that process philosophy is an example of such a postmodern, holistic, paradigm. If so, Ken Wilber’s remark that postmodernism is *passé* contradicts his own effort to construct “an integral vision for business, politics, science and spirituality.”³

Process philosophy can be interpreted as a criticism of modern world views, notably that of Descartes’ concept of “substance” as something that “requires nothing but itself in order to exist.” Process

¹ Charles Jencks, *The Post-Modern Reader* (London and New York: Academic Editions, 1992), p. 55.

² Stephen Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology: Post Modern Science and the Theology of Nature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1982).

³ Ken Wilber, *A Theory of Everything* (Boston: Shambala, 2001), pp. ix-xiii.

philosophy combines inspiration taken from the new developments in physics and those from areas as far ranging as culture and religion. Indeed, according to Whitehead as “founding father” of process philosophy, a philosophical scheme should be coherent, logical, applicable, and adequate.⁴ This, he expresses in a not-so technical metaphor: “the true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation, it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization, and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation.”⁵

But highly appreciated as it may, process philosophy, as “constructive postmodernism” (in the words of David Ray Griffin, one of the prominent figures in the school), still pretends to be comprehensive and universal, by proposing an all-encompassing worldview. It starts from the ground of the history of Western philosophy and, at least implicitly, claims being applicable to and adequate for any life-world of human beings all over the world at any historical time. Although some similarities between Whitehead’s philosophy and Derrida’s outlook can be identified,⁶ it can, after all, be recommended that Derrida’s concept of “*differance*” should be applied to the doctrine of process itself. We should scrupulously examine local world views other than those that start from Western meta-narratives. A philosophical scheme should be able to discern the differences among various worldviews. Consequently, we should postpone our judgments concerning the universal character of process cosmology, for such a universality contains within itself a certain amount of dominance or hegemony. In fact, Luis Pedraja – himself a proponent of process philosophy – warns us, in his aforementioned essay, that “the dominance of Western philosophical views in scholarly circles often reduces Third World perspectives to an inferior status.”⁷

Vernacularism Revisited

“Post-modern poststructuralist” or “post-modern deconstructionist” deserves a fair consideration, too. It might not miss the point to

⁴ Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York & London: Free Press, 1979), p. 3.

⁵ *op.cit.*, p. 5.

⁶ See Luis Pedraja, “Whitehead, Deconstructionism and Postmodernism,” *Process Studies*, vol. 28 no. 1-2 (1999), pp. 68-84.

⁷ *op.cit.*, p. 84.

assert that postmodernism tends to see the human world as consisting of fragmented civilizations that can hardly be reconciled with each other. Postmodernism celebrates fragmented conditions in linguistic and cultural domains, and even in the personal identity of every human being. Nevertheless, it is an exaggeration to point to postmodernism as the culprit responsible for the potential or actual horror of "clash of civilizations." It is as if postmodernism commits a crime which causes a new version of Hobbes' "*bellum omnium contra omnes*,"⁸ only this time it is no longer "the war of every man against every man," rather than "the war of every civilization against civilization." Actually, the potential or actual clash of civilizations cannot directly be deduced from the tenets of postmodernism, one main concern of which is how to be aware of meta-narratives, domination or hegemony.

Michael Drolet claims that the deconstructionist brand of postmodernism brings along the theme of liberation against the hegemony of "grand narratives" as well as emancipatory program of local narratives.⁹ With the inspiration of the deconstructionist brand of postmodernism, we can draw a new cognitive map as well as practical programs. What a community previously perceived as "natural" or "normal" is in fact affected by some dominant "meta-narrative" being "habituated" through many kinds of "power." Ethical perception concerning gender relationship is but one case in point of such power exertion.

Inspiring as it may be, the deconstructionist brand of postmodernism has to cope with two interrelated problems, namely, the problem of the reflective subject and the problem of intercultural communication. First of all, if it is the case that the contest is between local narratives (the dominant narrative being but one of those local narratives), what role should and can an individual play. If the individual is nothing but an exemplification of a particular narrative or – better – an arena of contestation between narratives, whether and how can the individual be emancipated from any of the narratives. Without any recognition of genuinely reflective power in the part of subject, this particular brand of postmodernism is in danger of

⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 13.

⁹ Michael Drolet, *The Postmodernism Reader. Foundational Texts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

subscribing to “local totalitarianism,” where individuals are regarded merely as reproductions or articulations of local narratives.

Within the tradition of phenomenological existentialism, the late Drijarkara – one of the most prominent philosophers of modern Indonesia – once said that “human beings are all the same everywhere. There is but one humanity.” This claim is made in the context of his emphasis that being-together (Heidegger’s *Mitsein*) is something existential for every human being (*Dasein*).¹⁰ Drijarkara even mentions that the Indonesian tradition of “*gotong royong*,” which literally means “cooperation,” is but a case in point of the truth that “*Dasein ist Mitsein*.” In the practice of *gotong royong*, people in rural Java – sometimes also in urban parts of the island even up to now – show their solidarity by helping their neighbor, for instance, in building his house or by doing hand-in-hand some neighborhood project, such as repairing irrigation dams, keeping the village clean and the like. Such a practice can be found in other parts of Indonesia with various names and might be compared to Japanese *kyosei*.

Nowadays, under the spell of postmodernism, the social dimension of the human being is underscored and easily fathomable at the expense of the phenomenological-existential notion of subjectivity. Not only does the existence of a human being presuppose the existence of other human beings, but he or she is in the most radical way highly influenced by others. We used to say that human beings differ from animals and plants due to their ability to designate themselves as an “I.” This is subjectivity, the reflective capability of a human being. If there is no “I,” or its “family resemblances” in languages other than English, then it is hard to imagine how human beings can have a personal identity or an ego experience. Should there be no reflectivity in a human being, should there be no capability which enables a human being to say “It’s me,” it will be very hard to distinguish a human being from an *orang utan* (which is an Indonesian word that literally means “jungle people”).

It must be hard to figure out how civilizations can come into being without the word “I” and all its families. Reflectivity, or consciousness, enables the emergence of what Ernst Cassirer calls *animal symbolicum*¹¹ in the cosmic evolution, by virtue of which “every thing

¹⁰ N. Drijarkara, *Sosialitas sebagai Eksistensial* (Jakarta: Pembangunan, 1962).

¹¹ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay On Man* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1944).

has a name." Without the emergence of *animal symbolicum*, there will be no name, no language, no cosmos. The world will anyhow exist, but it exists "in the darkness" without the ordering and structuring power of language. Hence, the importance of the word "I" and its families in other languages. However, the very word "I," that structures this chaotic, organic experience into "my" experience, is not invented by my own self but by the other. Who is the other who has invented the "I" word that is so important in making me and my experiences? It must not be any particular other with whom I interact in my every day life. Certainly, there were and are particular others who help me in one way or another to enter a particular symbolic order that I can grow into an *animal symbolicum*, especially those who edify me or make me aware of myself during my childhood. But all those particular others are not the inventor of the word "I"; they simply articulate it and they themselves are structured by the very word "I."

Language structures the deepest experience of human beings as "I" (and its families), but I do not coin the very word "I" that structures me in a very radical way. It is the other that structures me, but not a particular other. It is the Other with a capital letter or in Slavoj Žižek's term – following Jacques Lacan – a "big other." We do not know who the "big other" is, and normally we are not aware of the big other. In its absence, our life world or our form of life is incessantly structured, being no longer a chaotic real world, but an ordered symbolic world.¹²

The symbolic order, society's unwritten constitution, is the second nature of every speaking being: it is here, directing and controlling my acts; it is the sea I swim in, yet it remains utterly impenetrable – I can never put it in front of me and grasp it. It is as if we, subject of language, talk and interact like puppets, our speech and gestures dictated by some nameless all-pervasive agency.

On the symbolic level, the speaking being is really not a subject in the sense of "*sub-jicere*," something beneath, a permanence beneath all superficial changes, because the real subject of symbolic order is "the big other." Consequently, when a human being as a speaking being is speaking, he or she is automatically performing or staging up the

¹² Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Lacan* (London: Granta Books, 2006), p. 8.

script of the big other. He or she is merely “spoken,” “not a master in his or her own house.”¹³ In this “linguistic determinism,” so to speak, it might be hard to talk genuinely about issues such as freedom, liberty, autonomy and choice – including cooperative choice.¹⁴

To make matters worse, it is seldom the case that we, cosmopolitan, metropolitan, human creatures, must stage only one script. Even those who live all his or her life time in a relatively remote and homogenous village of Indonesia have to live at least according to the scripts of their own native village, their (foreign) religion, and national “culture” as well. The personal identity of a speaking being has been questioned with all its freedom and autonomy. Its integrity is falling apart along with its foundational “*sub-jicere*.” What used to be called “subject” is now not really reflective any more, but reflects the scripts of many “big others.”

The Thesis of Incommensurability

The problem of intercultural communication particularly appears with the thesis of incommensurability. First of all, “the big other” of language, meta-narrative, ideology, language-game, *episteme*, or *doxa*, “conversation,” form of life, cultural practice, *habitus*, whatsoever, cannot be seen as a universal entity. What is apparently universal is nothing but a dominance of a local ideology. We have to dig deeper to unearth any “minor knowledge,” “minor *episteme*” so to say, to find that the appearance of a universal “ideology” is simply the guise of, say, cultural imperialism.¹⁵ In other words, we have to deconstruct what is apparently a universal knowledge. At the very least, we have to postpone our judgment about the universal character of a “big other.” A “big other” cannot be regarded as a universal structure, it is always local and parochial, having meaning only to those who have the initiation and edification (*Bildung*) to “swim in” the sea of that particular symbolic order.

¹³ *op.cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁴ On “cooperative choice” see Rolando M. Gripaldo, “The Person, the Nation, the World: Cooperative Choice in A Globalizing Situation,” paper presented at Southeast Asian Regional Conference on Philosophy, Kuala Lumpur: CRVP & ISTAC, July, 6-7, 2007.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, *passim*.

Under the spell of postmodernism, it is hard to swallow the claim that "Human beings are all the same everywhere. There is but one humanity." We have mentioned that the word "I" (and its families in non-English languages) is performative for any ego-experience and, consequently, also for any societal and worldly experiences, and even for any religious experience. However, the role dictated by the English word "I" is not totally the same as the French "*je*" or the German "*ich*." The "drama" dictated by the script of each "big other" is different. For one, English self-identity is normally written with a capital letter, whether it is in the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a sentence. The second person pronouns in English, as the partner of the first person pronoun "I" are "you" and "thou." But "thou" is rarely used except for God, king or queen. So, when I am speaking English, I must call any second person "you," no matter who he or she is, whether he is my professor, my mentor even, or my classmate, one of my parents or one of my siblings, one of my bosses or one of my subordinates.

Personally, this was one of the most difficult things I had to do in the interaction with my Flemish professor whenever we had to speak English. The case is different with French, German or Flemish. "*Je*" in French or "*ich*" in German or "*ik*" in Flemish or Dutch is not written in a capital letter except when it appears in the beginning of a sentence. French has two, second person pronouns, as the partner of "*je*," namely, "*tu*" and "*vous*." I call my classmate with an informal "*tu*" and my professor, with a formal "*vous*." The script concerning gesture, voice etc. when I use a "*vous*" differs from the one when I use a "*tu*." In a similar way, German language also has two second person pronouns, the informal "*du*" and the formal "*Sie*." But differing from French, the German *Sie* as a second person pronoun is always written with a capital S, no matter where its location in a sentence is. So do Dutch and Flemish have an informal "*ji*" (or *je*) and formal "*U*," the later being written in a capital U. All of these show that the scripts of local "big others," which concern subjectivity or reflectivity, differ from culture to culture. There is no universal "big other," no universal cultural structure. This might be why the deconstructionist brand of postmodernism is sometimes called "postmodern poststructuralist."

To make matters more complex, Indonesian urban youth can play roles of at least three kinds of first person: *saya*, *aku*, *gue*; the first being more formal, the second being more intimate and more personal, the

last being informal. So, they use the word “*saya*” whenever they get into conversation with, for example, their teachers. They use the word “*gue*” or “*gua*,” or simply *gw* in the SMS version, in communication with all their classmates. All of a sudden, the word “*gue*” (which means “I”) will change into the word “*aku*” (which also means “I”) whenever one of them gets into an intimate conversation with one to whom but a moment ago agreed to be one’s boyfriend or girlfriend.

Indonesian second person pronouns are no less delicate as its first person ones. There are a lot of Indonesian second person pronouns, such as *lu* (or *elo*), *kamu* (or *kau*), *dikau*, *bung*, *Anda*, *saudara* (which literally means sibling or, at least, someone who has a familial tie with me), *bapak* (literally means “father,” “daddy”), *ibu* (literally means “mother, mommy”), *tuan* (literally means “master” or “lord”). All of them are second person pronouns, but which one I will use in a particular conversation depends on with whom I am conversing. In turn, this depends on the rule or script of the Indonesian “big other.”

Elo is the partner of *gue*, spoken by urban youth in conversations with their friends (not with a special boyfriend or girlfriend). *Kamu* or *kau* is spoken by urban youth when calling their special friend (in the sense of boyfriend or girlfriend) and is practically also used by everybody to call a person who is the same age and social level, or a lower one. *Dikau* is used by an adult when calling his or her sweetheart, especially in poems or song lyrics. *Bung* is a more “democratic” word, which was used from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the first decades of independent Indonesia. It is almost unheard of nowadays. *Saudara* literally means “my brother” or “my sister”; it is spoken to a person of the same level, but creates some distance between the first person and the second one. So is *Anda*. It is the closest to the English “you,” except that it cannot be used in a sentence such as “I love you” or “You mean everything to me.”

Nevertheless, Indonesian people would not call their superior or any respected person with *saudara* or *Anda*, let alone with *bung*, *dikau*, *kamu* or *elo*. For such a person, the script dictates the usage of *Bapak*, *Ibu*, or *Tuan*. *Tuan* is seldom spoken any longer. It was popular during the colonial period, which stretched from 1596 to 1945. It is an Indonesian word for Dutch (or also Flemish) “*Meneer*” or “*Mijn Heer*.” *Bapak* (daddy) or *Ibu* (mommy) with capital letters have been popular since 1966, when Soeharto consolidated his power. To note this does not amount to saying that Soeharto himself creates the script. It is the

“big other,” the postmodern version of Jose Ortega y Gasset’s “spirit of time,”¹⁶ that has created the new *habitus*. It is a normal practice in recent Indonesia to address a respected person with *Bapak* or *Ibu*, literally meaning “Daddy” or “Mommy,” while the person addressed is not the dad or mom of the first person.

The case is rather similar in Singapore and Malaysia. Once, a Malay immigration officer greeted me with the word “*pak cik*,” that literally means “uncle” (or “oom” in the Dutch-influenced Indonesian *habitus*). And I must say that at the time I was a bit confused first, looking around to see if there was any other person the officer addressed the greeting. When I was sure that the addressee was me, the script asked me to broadly smile at the officer and to try to respond the greeting in Malay. In Singlish (Singaporean English), it is normal to call a taxi-driver “uncle.”

Incommensurability means that we have no decision procedure for judging which language is better, or more cultivated than, other languages. There is no one criterion to judge local “big others” and every “big other” justifies its own self (hermeneutic circle). Evaluating cultures, which means determining whether a culture is “higher” than other cultures, assumes a scale of cultures which is universally applicable. Having learned from postmodern poststructuralist, we know that even the distinction between “high-culture” and “popular culture” contains hegemony or domination.

Thomas Kuhn and Richard Rorty are among those who put forward the thesis of incommensurability. Both are to a certain extent under the influence of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*.¹⁷ While Thomas Kuhn has applied Wittgenstein’s insight to the domain of science, natural sciences in particular,¹⁸ Richard Rorty especially deals with culture and philosophy.

In his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*,¹⁹ Rorty criticizes the notion that the task of philosophy is mirroring the world. Philosophy

¹⁶ Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Man and Crisis* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1958), pp. 1-66.

¹⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 1st edition 1953.

¹⁸ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 1st edition, 1962.

¹⁹ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 1st edition, 1980.

is not a mirror of nature, it is a kind of incessant dialogue or “conversation.” The significance of a particular philosophical proposition, and even of a particular philosopher’s thoughts, is given by incessant dialogue of philosophy, not primarily by its correspondence with nature. The truth value of a philosophical proposition does not depend on the correspondence between the proposition and the reality it represents, so to say, but on the pragmatic role it plays in a particular conversation. The question of whether the proposition is objectively true is the same as the question of whether it “works” in a conversation.

Rorty’s concept of “conversation” has a family resemblance with Kuhn’s idea of “paradigm” and Wittgenstein concept’s of “language-game” as well. Familiarity with a particular conversation is of the utmost importance for a participant to be able to assert any objectively true proposition. For Rorty, edification – the English version of Gadamer’s *Bildung* – will enable someone to take part in a conversation as much as for Kuhn textbooks provide initiation for students that they can partake in the “puzzle solving” activities of a natural science.²⁰

In turn, what we call “culture” might be another family of Rorty’s ‘conversation,’ Kuhn’s “paradigm,” and Wittgenstein’s “language-game.” We need some form of edification in order to take part successfully in the every day life of our community, let alone in the every day practices of a more exclusive community, a university being a case in point. In *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*,²¹ Rorty also mentions the incommensurable character of intercultural comparisons. There is no universal yardstick with which to arrange cultures in a continuum according to a certain criteria. It is now deemed ethnocentric to claim superiority of one’s own culture compared to other cultures, although such a claim is still prevalent today.

A “Family” of Cultures

Yet, it is against our daily experience if the incommensurability among cultures prevents us from intercultural dialogue and

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 366.

²¹ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

intercultural understanding. The fact that we can distinguish a good translation from a bad one, as well as the fact that we can distinguish a “well-adapted” foreigner from “mal-adjusted” one, falsifies such an interpretation of incommensurability thesis. Of course, Quine ever talks about “radical translation.”²² But his notion is only applicable to the translation of the language of hitherto untouched people, where the language is completely unknown, where no cues or clues are known in advance, and where there are no bilingual interpreters.²³ In this case, we are never in a position to claim that one translation is the correct one. Feyerabend’s slogan, “anything goes,” applies.

As to the known language, and the known “big other” in general, the thesis of Quine does not apply. We can translate a particular text in a particular language into another language. We can even interpret a particular symbolic order from the perspective of another one. So, we can stage up the script of the foreign “big other,” this time consciously and not so automatically. Therefore, intercultural communication is not impossible, nor even a remote possibility, difficult as it might be.

Rorty may be somewhat unfair to Wittgenstein’s ideas delineated in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein does underline that there is no all-inclusive criteria by which we are able to evaluate games, languages, or cultures (be it religious or secular). However, he also talks about “family resemblances,” in which cultures – as language games – form “a family.”²⁴

Consider for example the proceeding that we call ‘games’.
I mean board games, card games, ballgames, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all?
– Don’t say: There *must* be something common, or they would not be called ‘games’ – but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*. But similarities, relationships, and the whole series of them at that [...] And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes

²² W.v.O. Quine, *Word and Object*, 1960, p. 28.

²³ Thomas Mautner (ed.), *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 469.

²⁴ Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-67.

similarities of detail [...] I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than ‘family resemblances’; for the various resemblances between members of a family; build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament etc., overlap and crisscross in the same way.
– And I shall say: “games” form a family.

This amounts to saying that if we randomly juxtapose two cultures, there will be some elements of similarity within the two cultures. This can be a starting point from which intercultural communication can be developed into a full-blown solidarity. And in the same way, a network of solidarity among various cultures can be developed should human beings have enough patience in their hearts. I do not dare to talk about cosmopolitanism. But for sure, a certain moral network – an ethics expanding to global horizon, say – is all the more needed in this era of globalization with all its pluses and minuses. Although some may not take Peter Singer’s point of acknowledging “animal rights,” they will, however, agree with him in the need of “expanding” the circle of solidarity.²⁵

This may sound a bit too optimistic and no one will dare to claim that the path to a global horizon will be easy. Coming from a collectivist culture, I even tend to interpret Wittgenstein’s concept of “family” not as “nuclear but as an “extended family.” This means that, on the one hand, the elements of similarity between the cultures we juxtapose is far less than it is in the concept of “family” as nuclear family. The path to a global horizon is all the more difficult. But on the other hand, in an extended family, almost every body is called “aunt” or “uncle,” as in the case with the Malaysian immigration officer or Singaporean taxi driver mentioned above. In the concept of “family” as “extended family,” we tend to be more sensitive to the “family resemblances” that exist between cultures, remote as they might be.

Before proceeding further, I would like to summarize what we have hitherto achieved. First of all, a lesson we can learn from the thesis of incommensurability is that there is no all-inclusive criterion with which we can judge the superiority – or the inferiority – of any culture. Hence there cannot exist a kind of “scale of cultures,” or a

²⁵ Peter Singer, *The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology* (New York: Meridian, 1981).

“hierarchy of cultures.” However, and this is the second point, this does not mean that intercultural dialogues or intercultural communication is impossible, since there is some overlapping and criss-crosses between cultures which Wittgenstein refers to as “family resemblances.”

Translation: Understanding Other Cultures

It has been mentioned above that the idea of incommensurability must not annihilate the possibility of intercultural understanding, especially the possibility of translating one language into another. Paul Ricoeur has emphasized the paramount importance of translation as well as the role of translators. In his essay entitled “The Paradigm of Translation,”²⁶ Ricoeur distinguishes two meanings of the word “translation.” In its strict sense, “translation” is the transference of a verbal message from one language to another; in a broader sense, “translation” is a synonym of “interpretation,” which applies to the whole range of meanings within one and the same linguistic community.

As to translation as an act of intercultural communication, Ricoeur sees two competing theories. The first doctrine is formalism, which tries to explain the possibility of translation, but in fact paralyzes intercultural communication. It resorts to a universally demonstrable structure, such as an “original language” or “perfect language,” but it fails to justify the link between such a perfect language with all possible vernaculars in the human history. On the contrary, relativism – as the second doctrine – denies the possibility of translation due to the radical differences or incommensurability of languages.

Perhaps, there is no expression of the nostalgia for an original language better than the myth of the Tower of Babel, in which men failed to build the tower due to the fact that they suddenly spoke to each other in very different languages so that they could no longer understand each other. The result was confusion and then dispersion. As told by common interpretation, the myth delineates the separation from what was originally one and the same. The unity of a whole, the brotherhood of humankind who spoke the same language, was suddenly broken, so goes the common interpretation.

²⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Reflections on the Just*, translated by David Pellauer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 106-120.

However, Ricoeur has a different interpretation of the myth of the Tower of Babel. To understand his interpretation, we should refer to his *Symbolism of Evil*,²⁷ in which he maintains that the wholeness, the universality so to say, is not a given, but a future goal:

It is only in intention that the myth restores some wholeness, it is because he himself lost that wholeness that man re-enacts and imitates it in myth and rite. The primitive man is already a man of division. Hence the myth can only be an intentional restoration or reinstatement and in this sense already symbolized.

The facts of diversity and plurality, of confusion and dispersion, were already there in reality, yet there was also a longing toward mutual understanding and mutual cooperation as well. The myth is therefore intentional; it is a project waiting for actualization in the future, however utopian it might be. In this sense, translator as a calling or as an activity is as old as the myth of the Tower of Babel itself. It is a profession that manifests human yearning toward their solidarity.

Yet, the activity of translating a source text into another language is a risky business. It is fragile, vulnerable, and has no firm basis. The yearning toward human understanding definitely cannot be achieved through the creation of a perfect and pure language as the basis to reconcile the source and the target. For one, there is no universally acceptable criteria about what would characterize the perfect language. Secondly, there is no universally acceptable procedure to derive any vernacular from the so called perfect language. To these two reasons of Ricoeur, it might be added a third, namely, that an intended perfect language is in fact another vernacular, being regarded "perfect" only by those who speak the language.

On the other hand, relativism cannot deny the possibility of translation. It is true that translation has no firm foundation, and in that sense it is fragile and vulnerable. Although there is a plurality of vernaculars, it is a universal phenomenon that all humans speak. Although humans speak different languages, they can learn languages other than their maternal tongues. Moreover, there is a yearning toward human solidarity. There is human desire to translate,

²⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 167.

to understand other languages and other cultures as well. The lack of a firm foundation does not amount to the impossibility of translation. Certainly, the lack of a "perfect language" as the common reference will make impossible the "identity" of the source and the target. In this sense, a translator must satisfy with the "equivalence" of the two versions. A better translation is not one that is more accurate or adequate in representing a "common reference" of the source and the target. It is better because it offers a more equivalent expression.

As a manifestation of human yearning towards global solidarity, translation has therefore an ethical dimension. For Ricoeur, "the work of translation is accomplished through overcoming intimate resistances motivated by fear, even by hate, of the foreigner, perceived as a threat to [one's] own linguistic identity."²⁸ It makes two parties understand each other, not without risk of even greater misunderstanding. Moreover, the longing toward global solidarity is not the one and only motivation for the act of translation. There is another motivation, which includes also translation as intra-cultural interpretation, namely interpretation within the one and the same language. In this broader sense, translation has something to do with the Greek adage of "*Gnotti Seauton*," "Know Thyself." By understanding "the other," one will enlarge one's own horizon and at the same time will have a better understanding of oneself.

Dialogue: Fusions into a Global Perspective

The problem of intercultural understanding is interrelated with the problem of the reflective subject. Even Rorty himself relies on the role of "strong poet" in intercultural dialogues, by virtue of whom the liberal norm of "non cruelty" can be recognized globally. This role exists in every culture with the task of doing "conversations" with texts derived from other cultures. By so doing, he can understand both the alien cultures as well as his own culture better. In the conversations and dialogues with other cultures, strong poets cannot only enrich the vocabulary of their own culture, but also reinterpret the vocabulary of that particular culture, and even the "final

²⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Reflections on the Just*, translated by David Pellauer (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 115.

vocabulary” of the culture, according to the new perspective they have gotten in the conversations.²⁹

Rorty maintains that the main task of a strong poet is the “re-description” of one’s own culture. Intercultural conversation enables a strong poet to reinterpret the meanings one’s own “final vocabulary” due to their understanding of any alien culture with which they enter into conversation.

Nonetheless, strong poets should have a feeling of irony in order to be able to re-describe their own culture. Though “familiar” with their own culture, they must also be aware that this is not wholly applicable to any other culture. The value system for example, the evaluation of what is good and what is bad, of what is right and what is wrong, is not totally the same as that of any alien culture with all its alterity. The irony lies in the fact that while they claim that something is valuable according to their familiar culture, they must also be aware that there are many other options concerning value systems. To borrow Taylor’s phrase in his *A Secular Age*, familiar to us as our culture might be, it is just “one option among others”³⁰ – even though in matters of culture normally we were never asked what culture we wanted to choose in our upbringing. The point is that our culture is just a possibility among possibilities. That is, I think, what Rorty means by “contingency.”

By acknowledging the contingent character of their familiar culture, strong poets can take some lessons, some knowledge so to say, from a “conversation” with any foreign culture. These lessons will be useful for them to see their own vocabulary in a new light. The new light is due to a new understanding of a foreign culture and its contiguous effect is referred to by the concept of “strong poet” who is expected to exert a great influence in the way common people use and understand their language and culture. There is a universalizing tone in this very concept of “strong poet” which Rorty tacitly assumes (or hopes) there will be in every culture. Whether this hope is a realistic one is quite another story for claiming the incommensurability of cultures, and at the same time wishfully claiming the existence of

²⁹ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

³⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 3.

“strong poets” in every culture sounds like a contradiction. Here the concept of “language-games” as “family,” would ease the way towards global “solidarity.”

At any rate, whoever partakes in an authentic intercultural dialogue should take into account what Gadamer puts forth in his *Truth and Method*.³¹ First of all, there is no necessity for them to be “neutral.” They need not be against their own prejudices or their own horizons. To be against prejudice is, according to Gadamer, itself the essential prejudice of Enlightenment.³² The way out of the hermeneutic circle is then not by ignoring or denying our horizons and initial judgments or prejudices, but by recognizing them as inevitable.³³

Secondly, those who take part in an authentic intercultural dialogue should be aware of their not knowing. Only if they start from the awareness that they do not know, can they put forward authentic questions. According to Gadamer, among the greatest insights that Plato’s account of Socrates afford us is that, “it is more difficult to ask questions than to answer them.”³⁴ The starting point of an authentic question is the awareness of one’s not knowing. And the answer to an authentic question remains open, in the sense that it can be affirmative or negative as to the prejudice of those who put forward the question.

Gadamer maintains that “to someone who engages in dialogue only to prove himself right and to gain insight, asking question will indeed seem easier than answering them.”³⁵ There is no openness with regard to the answer of such a question. Those who ask such inauthentic questions will be locked in their own prejudice; “being fixed or closed in the past, they would disallow new life in the present.”³⁶ This kind of domination in intercultural communication would seem to be the supposition of Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*.

³¹ Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 2nd revised edition.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 269.

³³ George F. McLean, “Hermeneutics of Cultures and Religions in Global Times,” *Plenitude and Participation: the Life of God in Man* (Washington DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2004), p. 127.

³⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *op.cit.*, p. 362.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

³⁶ George F. McLean, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

Thirdly, intercultural dialogue is by no means an arbitrary procedure, in which those asking questions can put forward any question according to their own initiative. They cannot ask whatever question they would like. The question they are putting forth is constrained by the answer they have just received for their last question. Their new question, on the other hand, must also already anticipate the next answer they expect.

Therefore – fourthly – the dialectic of question and answer disclosed in the structure of hermeneutical experience makes understanding appear to be a reciprocal relationship. By asking authentic questions and by anticipating answers, both of those who partake in an intercultural dialogue, create a new “horizon,” which differs from each of their own prejudgments or each of their own initial “horizons.” Something is placed in the center that mediates both interlocutors. This is what Gadamer refers to as “fusion of horizons.”³⁷

The language in which something comes to speak is not a possession at the disposal of one or the other of the interlocutors. Every conversation presupposes a common language, or better, creates a common language. Something is placed in the center, as the Greeks say, which the partners in dialogue both share, and concerning which they can exchange ideas with one another. Hence reaching an understanding on the subject matter of a conversation necessarily means that a common language must first be worked out in the conversation. This is not an external matter of simply adjusting our tools, nor is it even right to say that the partners adapt themselves to one another but, rather, they both come under the influence of the truth of the object and are thus bound to one another in a new community. To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were.

If there are genuinely reflective subjects who are willing to enter intercultural dialogues, then such can genuinely take place, and its consequence is a fusion of horizons – as Gadamer claims. Ethically speaking, as Singer maintains, this will widen the concept of “moral recipient” from one’s own immediate community to global humanity.

³⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *op.cit.*, p. 378.

It will underscore further the paramount importance of philosophers' being aware of local contents, as their particular horizons, within philosophical thoughts. Yet, philosophers should play the role of Rorty's "strong poets," by reflecting on their own local wisdom through entering into dialogues with different wisdoms of other localities. In such a way, the horizon of philosophy might be able to expand to the global and philosophy might, indeed, become "a love for wisdom."

Concluding Remarks

The hermeneutic dimension of intercultural dialogue is just one aspect of global harmony. Although the hermeneutical structure of Gadamer underlines the equal relation among cultures and critiques cultural domination as an inauthentic way of questioning, it does not, however, elaborate further how cultures should organize themselves in order to live together globally. Nonetheless, intercultural conflicts in human history have frequently been caused not by intercultural misunderstanding, but usually by economic disparity and political injustice.

In this regard, it might be tempting to extrapolate from Rawls' idea of justice in "Political Liberalism" to something like "global governance."³⁸ Yet, Rawls' proposal is not free from a certain unfairness, as Habermas mentions,³⁹ for certain types of cultures will suffer from a kind of discrimination. Simply procedural as it might be,

³⁸ See for example, John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," *University of Chicago Law Review*, vol. 64, No. 3 (Summer, 1997), pp. 765-807. Such an idea of a "global governance" came up in a Symposium of the World Congress of Philosophy held in Seoul National University, Korea, August 2008, the title of which was "Cosmopolitanism and Globalization." While globalization was mostly concerned with such "global governance," cosmopolitanism was concerned with the dialogue of, say, "comprehensive doctrines" or cultures in a global context.

³⁹ See for example, Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," Lecture presented at the Holzberg Prize Seminar, 29 November 2005. In this paper, Habermas limitedly talks about religion as a type of comprehensive doctrine whose members suffer from discrimination. But this applies also to those cultures that are dominated by another culture. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian philosopher of education, talks about "the culture of silence." (See for example, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed; Cultural Action for Freedom; Education as the Practice of Freedom; Pedagogy of Hope*).

Rawls' idea has its own vernacular character, its own locality. In other words, we should put forward our own authentic question to the localities to which Rawls belongs and try to work together to find Gadamer's "center" in order to be able to live in mutual understanding and harmony.

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A Hermeneutic of the Sacred and the Secular in Shariah

SAYED HASSAN AKHLAQ

In spite of all the controversy concerning *Shariah* and its seeming impenetrability into Western societies, the true nature of Shariah is rarely discussed. Shariah, in fact, is a unique embodiment wherein sacred texts – the *Qu’ran* and *Sunnah* – join with secular efforts – like reason (*Aql*) and traditional beliefs and customs (*Urf*). Although in technical terms it is only one part of Islam, both the masses in Islam and non-Muslims consider Shariah as the center of Islam. For example, all Muslim seminarians are very involved with Shariah; it is part of the generic knowledge that all Muslims acquire growing up; and it shapes main Islamic practices. However, Shariah reflects only one component of Islam – alongside theological doctrines and ethical virtues. It represents only one-thirteenth of the verses of the Quran. Many recent Muslim reformists and revolutionaries like al-Afghani in Egypt, Muhammad Iqbal in Pakistan, and Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran were critical of the traditional Muftis and called for updating Shariah law and reducing its spread.

Terminology

Shariah is an Arabic term rooted in “Sh-r-a” meaning the clear path which leads to a source of water. The Quran uses it for all paths especially religious paths (42:21; 7:163). It also acknowledges the various divine paths, namely Shariah, among faithful especially Abrahamic faiths; it is a divine plan to examine people how much they are striving in a race to spread all virtues (5:48). Generally and in broad usage, Shariah is equated with religion, not only Islam, which the Quran applied to that of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (42:13); this is why Muslims usually use the phrases the “Shariah of Moses” and the “Shariah of Jesus.” Consequently, just the last form of Shariah was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (45:18). In a technical and particular manner, Muslims reduce Shariah to religious laws, especially Islamic ones, so when they are talking about the practice or

domination of Shariah mostly they mean applying Islamic laws and rules.

When Muslims refers to the study of Shariah they use the term *Fiqh*. *Fiqh* is also an Arabic term meaning deep understanding. The Quran attributes this level of understanding to an accomplishment by the hearts (7:179; 6: 69 & 98; 17:44 & 46; 63:3). At the first centuries of Islam, the term *Fiqh* used to be used for all aspects of Islamic life particularly calling Islamic doctrines as the Greater Understanding (*al-Fiqh al-Akbar*), but gradually it became restricted to Islamic regulations and jurisprudence. Therefore, nowadays *Fiqh* means a science which is attempting to conclude Islamic regulations of actions from the relevant sources. The master of *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) is called *Faqih* who must have great familiarity in advance with several sciences like of Arabic literature, of exegeses of the Quran, of *Hadith* (the narrations related to the Prophet or infallible Imams in Shia-Islam), of the learned men (who narrated the *Hadith*), of logic (to argue correctly), of social realities (to understand *Urf*/Custom and usual norms). The science which discusses methodology of using these sources is called the Principles of the Islamic Jurisprudence (*Usool al-Fiqh*).

The process exercising *Fiqh* is called *Ijtihad*. *Ijtihad* is an Arabic term that comes from "*Juhd*" meaning the high struggle. It appears also in form of *Jihad* an Islamic term referring to a great effort in the path of God. Therefore *Ijtihad* (independent reasoning) echoes a profound process of effort in order to deduce Islamic regulations. So, *Mujtahid*, one who has high expertise in this profession, is the same *Faqih*. There are plenty of the Quranic verses like (9:122; 16:43; 39:17-18; 2:168-170; 4:83) that are used by Muslim scholars to infer that acquiring *Ijtihad* is an Islamic obligation and laypeople have to follow *Mujtahid*. A similar title is *Mufti* meaning a Muslim professional who declares *Fatwa* (juristic opinion). *Fatwa* is an authoritative legal opinion deduced from Islamic sources and reveals two aspects: *Mufti/Mujtahid* scholarly effort and divine will on particular actions. While the divine aspect is sacred, the human aspects are fully secular. No God's involvement and intercession occurs in process of making Sharia law. It's completely human and limited to both knowledge and methodology of *Mufti/Faqih/Mujtahid*.

Structure

The Quran revealed to the Prophet Muhammad interprets particular events and needs of the people. Also the Prophet appeared for Muslims both as a spiritual leader pointing to transcendental objects, and as a human being with ordinary demands who experiences peoples' laughter, fears, hopes, family issues, and thus helps them to manage daily affairs, face problems, solve conflicts, and be open God's revelation. These lived experiences provided an intensive foundation for regulating various aspects of life including individual and family, local and international community, cross-cultural communications, and even the environment. This inspires practicing the faith in every single moment of life, regardless of place or time. But in reality we are bound by time and space. To meet timeless truths with timely life creates the process of *Ijtihad* and brings the human mind and secular element before the sacred texts (the Quran and Sunnah). Two sources appear to help *Ijtihad*: reasoning (*Aql*) and the consensus of Muslims (*Ijma*). How do these sources work together to develop Islamic *Sharia* and *Fiqh*?

There has never been general agreement as to how the different issues of jurisprudence should be categorized. I would like to recount the most common classification in order to offer the big picture of Islamic regulations. It divides all the Islamic laws into two groups:

1. "Worship and Affairs of Self-Perfection," (*Ibadat*) including the issues of cleanliness, *Salat* (ritual prayer), *Sawm* (fasting), and *Hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca);
2. "Social, Economic, Family, and Political Affairs," (*Muamilat*) including *al-'amr bil ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (Exhortation to perform the good and prohibition of doing evil), *Hijab* (social clothing), *Mahram* and non-Mahram (lawful intimate sociability and unlawful intimate sociability), congregations, resolving social conflicts; *Zakat* (almsgiving), *Khums* (a fifth share), endowment, buying and selling, *Riba* (usury), investment, partnership, divorce, wills and inheritance; arbitration, Caliphate and *Imamah*, Islamic punishments, *Shura* (counsel/parliament), *Jihad*, and so on.

Indeed, this holistic feature of Islamic laws inspired Muslims with two concepts: first, "Comprehensive Shariah/Islamic law," namely God has a law, regarding each single action and behavior that must be considered; second, acts of worships are more fixed and bound to God's restrict commands but the other acts are more flexible and bound

to human development. This approach was applied in history of Islam in dealing with the Quran and Sunnah and applying the reason and consensus. To see how this deal requires applying human hermeneutics on all four sources of Shariah, I give several examples as follow.

All Islamic denominations¹ agree with the complete authority of the Quran, surely issued by God. Nonetheless, some of its meanings are not obvious and need examination; the text includes simultaneously universal/general (*Aam*) and particular/special (*Khas*) aspects; it contains unconditioned (*Mutlaq*) and conditioned (*Muqayyad*), indicated (*Mubayyan*) and non-indicated (*Mujmal*), and abrogating (*Nasikh*) and abrogated (*Mansukh*) propositions. The Quranic verse 7 chapter 3 explicitly acknowledges multiple statements which call for a different hermeneutic (*Ta'wil*). The nature of the Quran, namely being words, and its verbal essence encourage linguistic and hermeneutical study. Moreover, Islamic revelation took place gradually and more or less related to particular situations during 23 years of the Prophet's life. For example, the prohibition of drinking alcoholic beverage happened in three phases (2:219; 4:43; 5:90).² Also, records of particular circumstances for specific revelation "*Shan-e Nuzol*" (the circumstances of descending) motivated *Fagh* to think of the relationship between Shariah and the demands of time and space. They elaborated Islamic commands into scholarly divisions – particular-general, conditioned-unconditioned, indicated-non-indicated, and historical events as positive or negative.

The second source is *Sunnah* or *Hadith*. Sunnah (lit. tradition) in Islamic context means the speech, action, and confirmation of the infallible individual – the Prophet for the Sunni and the Prophet and Twelve Imams in Shia. There is a division among Sunnah or Hadith regarding how many and how people reported it. Most Muslims trust in *Mutawatir* (successive) narration which is conveyed by narrators so

¹ Merely *Akhbaris*, a very minority among Shia-Muslims, are limited to sacred reports of the Prophet and the infallible Twelve Imams. This school appeared at the late Safavid period and rejected using reasoning, *Ijma*, and referring to the Quran to achieve Islamic regulations.

² In my book in press "The Intellectuals Foundations of Islamic Culture, An Introduction" I suggest many examples in the Quran. Also I highlight how Islamic Fiqh institutionalized them and paved path toward changing some issue from forbidden to allow in particular situations.

numerous and various that it is not conceivable that they have agreed upon a wrong one³. Mutazilite did not trust this. More disputes happened about what is valid in much of non-Mutawatir reports of the Prophet's (and the Imams') life. Could we trust to a single narration that conducts a strong guess mostly? Few are overly accepting about this Sunnah, some is overly rejecting of such Hadith, and majority treats it with some clear criteria related to the reporter. However, Muslims consider the Sunnah valid as long as it supports the Quranic idea. It means if there is a Sunnah saying something contradicting the Quranic view, it is not valid anymore. Since there are many contradictory reports in Sunnah, Scholars also discuss how to treat them and harmonizing them, preferring some to others, and so on. Beside these particulars in the Sunnah, study faces the same hermeneutical challenges of the Quran – the need to interpret words. The classic principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (*Usool-e Figh*) examines these points concerning sacred texts:

1. The meaning of a word must be examined in five steps: in vocabulary; in the context; in the statement; in the deduction process of the word per se; and in the deduction process of the statement. Other examinations criticize the issues within the statements (see, al-Shashi, 2003).

2. What do the religious commands and avoidances entail? Obligatory and forbidden, being desirable and undesirable, or neither? Do they imply immediate application or can they be done after a delay? For once or forever?

3. If there are general (*Aam*) and particular (*Khas*) laws, how might they be reconciled? What about unconditional (*Mutlaq*) and conditional (*Muqayyad*) law? The first group of laws is related to individual people and to special professions, and the second is related to the nature of things like the essence of praying, regardless of who is praying.

4. What is the relationship between spoken (*Mantuq*) law, the direct meaning of speech, and implied speech (*Mafhum*)?

5. What are the implications of a law? Does the introduction to an ordered thing also need to be ordered? What about the requirements of a forbidden law, are they also forbidden? If we face a situation that

³ It is said that Mutazilite did not grade *Mutawatir* Hadiths believing they may have fake attributes to the Prophet (Amarraji, 2000, 99).

requires us to do two different things, at the same time: for example praying or cleaning the mosque? Which of them has priority and what priority is implied? Does an order include numbers warning about the opposite side? And what must a person do if s/he is in the situation that is involved in two contradictory orders for the same action: for example praying in a particular place that is currently forbidden might be acceptable because prayer is more important than place (Motahhari, 1382).

As has come to light, these are linguistic investigations that connect the principles of Jurisprudence to the philosophical, especially linguistic approaches. They are, obviously, linked to the philosophical perspectives and secular changes.

There is a well known quotation of the Prophet saying that, all my people do not gather together in false beliefs or actions. This brings out the idea of *Ijma* (consensus), agreement of the Muslim community, among the four sources of Islamic laws. Although there are several disagreements between Sunni and Shia, and among Sunni itself, more or less *Ijma* is considered as a one source of law in Islam. However, it, by nature, highlights the question how the gathering of non-sacred peoples create sacred outcomes.

Aql (Reason) is recognized by Muslims as the fourth source of Islamic laws. They attempt to explore the rational implications of religious regulations. *Faqih*s believe there is a parallel between rational and religious order and judgments. Since God is the head of reason, the creator of reason, and the universal intellect, his judgement does not oppose reason at all. They argue what is certainly good for reason is *Mustahab* in Shariah, even better is *Wajib*, *Makruh* is tolerated, and evil is *Haram*. The latter concerns the body or soul, the individual or society, the worldly or otherworldly. On the other hand, because reason believes in pursuing social interests (*Maslihat*) in religious judgments so it tries to discover it in following the religious order. It is worth mentioning that although there is a fully rationalistic taste, all subjects are approached through common sense but are also based on customary tradition (*Urf*) in Usool al-Fiqh. In the Sunni context reason as the fourth source of Islamic jurisprudence is mostly equated with *Qiyas* which means the process of deductive analogy. Based on *Qiyas*, the jurist can reach the judgment of a recent event or issue through examining a similar issue which is in the Islamic tradition.

Rational Practical Principles

Muslim scholars also formulated practical principles of reason when there is not a clear deduction from the Quran, Sunnah, *Ijma*, and reason. These rational principles can apply to all sections of Islamic law. Moreover, they illustrate how human reason makes a marriage between ordinary reason and religious duty.

1. The Principle of Exemption (*Bara'at*) means that we are released from our religious obligation and we have no duty. This happens when we have no idea about the obligation and state of a subject like whether this food is legal or illegal. In such cases of doubt, exemption is offered and legality is presumed.

2. The Principle of Precaution (*Ihtiyat*) means that we must be cautious. This happens when we have a clear idea about an obligation but have options, like being offered two bottles when we know one of them might be alcohol – better to avoid both.

3. The Principle of Options (*takhyir*) meaning we have the option to choose one of two things, whichever we like. This might occur when we have an unclear idea about an obligation but do not know how to go forward or what path to take. So we are allowed to opt for one.

4. The Principle of Precedence (*Istishab*) meaning believing in the continuity of a previous state (the certainty does preclude doubt). This happens when we have no idea about the obligation but we know the previous state of the subject, e.g., whether our hands are still clean or are dirty.

5. The Principle of Prohibiting Devices (*Sadde Zaraye*) means that what is not usually *Haram* (unlawful) per se but could be since it might lead to something *Haram*; thus it becomes *Haram*.⁴ Because the extension of this principle can bring hardship to a society, (an axiom in Islam says: Difficulty necessitates facilitation or Shariah comes to make things easy not hard (2:185)), it is restricted to conditions like the device which, in most cases, leads to harm (*Mafsidah*). This has to be specified regarding its harmful aspect and limited so that when that harmful aspect is removed the principle is removed. For example, one is not allowed to sell army tools when they might be used for the wrong reason.

⁴ Shia law discusses the same idea under the name of relation between *Wajib* or *Haram* and their introduction (*Muqaddemye Wajib*).

6. The Principle of Preference for the good (*Istihsan*) means leaving an opening for stronger evidence or a hidden analogy. For example, a person who cannot manage his financial affairs because of immaturity (*Safih*) is not allowed to have fiscal dealings by himself including even use of funds for devotion and charity. If he wills to spend some of his wealth on charity, his will must be followed, although his independence will generally not be accepted; this is for his benefit, as well as others.

7. The Principle of Public Interest (*Masalih Mursalah*) means considering the public interest, not mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah, in the process of legislation especially in regards to new issues. These may be considered as religious issues as long as they are presented and agreed to by common interest. Since this can mean a change to Shariah, and to conventional law, it is conditioned on civil involvement (*Mu'amilat*), necessary, objective, and clear common interests and not limited to a specific group.

8. The Principle of Objectives in Shariah (*Maqasid al-Shariah*) concerns the objectives which Shariah follows in each single law. Traditionally it is thought that Shariah comes to preserve and protect (1) faith; because the human is a religious creature by nature (30:30); (2) life, humans are God's vice-regents on earth (2:30; 5:32); (3) property and wealth, the Quran recognizes property as a means for maintaining life (4:5; 3:14); (4) reason and intellect are human endowments (8:22); (5) family, lineage and marriage are recognized as signs of God's presence (30:21). These five objectives are called *Kulliyat al-Khmas* (the five universals) because they cover the reasons for a great part of Shariah. Imam al-Shatibi (d. 1388) and his unique book "*al-Muwafaqaat fi Usool al-Shariah*" (The Reconciliation of the Fundamentals of Islamic Law) are well-known for leading the way in new intellectual conversations among scholars. He develops his philosophy based on four fundamentals premises about the objectives of Shariah: (1) happiness for the whole of humanity; (2) making sense for the public good; (3) religious obligations must fit human limitations and capacities; and (4) that Shariah is consistent with the rational customs of people. These points indicate how rationality impact on interpreting Shariah law: being conservative about *Ibadat*, the acts of worship (which are designed by God, lead to God's mercy, are done just for the sake of Him, and cannot be changed). This is done by applying the principle of Precaution, while being very liberal about

Mu'amilat wa Adat or civil and social activities. The latter, based on reason and custom lead to an easiness of life and can be tolerated by applying the Principle of Exemption.

The Five Schools of Islamic Jurisprudence

The scholars of Usool-e Fiqh study the four above-mentioned sources and the practical principles, Fiqh applies them in the concrete and on particular subjects and, thus, Islamic law takes shape. Schools of law formed the four following legal systems, called *Madhhab* among Sunni-Islam. Let us take a glance briefly at how they compare to the Shia school of jurisprudence in applying practical principles, and acknowledging rational achievements:

Hanafi. This school is named after Abu Hanifah (699-767) whose roots come from Kabul and was born in Kufa. He was the most liberal and rational Imam among the leaders of the Shariah schools. In this context liberal means openness to secular achievements and concerns, while rational means that the texts should be interpreted in a common-sense way rather than taking only their literal meaning from revelation. Abu Hanifah is known as the founder of the 'people of opinion' which is opposite of the 'people of the Hadith.' Although the use of analogical reasoning (*Qiyas*) preceded him, Abu Hanifah is recognized as the one who systematized this idea. He also developed *Istihsan* (juristic discretion – the determination of something as good). This concept is in opposition to *Qiyas* and tries to detach a case from its particular context. In this process there is respect to *Urf* (the customs of the local population) as long as it does not contradict a clear statement of the Companions. His school is considered the oldest and largest school of jurisprudence schools among the Sunnis. Ibn Khaldun reports that Abu Hanifah accepted only 17 *Hadiths* and used to reject even proven *Hadiths* which seemed no longer to make sense, while other leaders of law schools affirmed so many authentic *Hadiths*. Some outstanding examples are Imam Ahmad ibn Hambal, considered by some current academics to be the Salafists' spiritual leader; he believed in 30,000 *Hadiths*, Imam Malik narrated 300 *Hadiths* (Ibn Khaldun, 1984, 2:539-540). In addition, one of Abu Hanifah's disciples is known for advocating the trick "al-Hiyal al-Shariyah" that helps the faithful to make excuses in practicing a restricted application of Shariah.

Maliki. This school is named after Imam Malik bin Anas (711-795) who was born in Medina. Believing in the statement of the Companion, *Qiyas*, *Istihsan* and *Urf*, he added *Istishab* (applying previous certainty to a new unclear subject), *Masalih Mursalah* (considering the public interest which is not mentioned in the Quran and Sunnah in the process of legislation especially for new issues), and *Sadde Zaraye* (prohibiting what usually leads to evil). Imam Malik tried to provide a flexible school of law in order to make a connection between Islamic law, public interest and everyday facts in Muslim life.

Shafi'i. This school is named after Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i (767-820) who was born in Gaza City and studied with Imam Malik. He recognized *Qiyas* and the statements of the companions, rejecting the validity of *Masalih Mursalah* or *Istislah* (consideration of public interest or human welfare in choosing one rule over another). He wrote a book on verses of the Quran concerning laws and is the first Muslim scholar to present a text on *Usool al-Fiqh*. The Sunni schools of jurisprudence are perched between two extreme borders: the people of Hijaz who were also the people of the Hadith, devoted to the appearance of the Quran and Sunnah; and the statements of the companions; the people of Iraq who depended on opinion and analogical reasoning in their search for religious regulations. Imam al-Shafi'i stood at the middle point. He was open to examining the social contracts and business dealings as well as the more formal statements (Abd ar-Razzaq, 2011).

Hanbali. This school is named after Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855) who was born in Baghdad and is celebrated among Salafi peoples as "Sheikh al-Islam" (the scholar of Islam) and recognized as a father of the very orthodox scholars who advocated few restrictions to the Hadiths and Sunnah.⁵ Limited to the Quran, Sunnah, and statements of the companions, he respected all Hadiths and did not recognize rational efforts to discover true Islamic law. He did not try to deal with the different hypothetical situations which are necessary for establishing a school of law, saying that religious statements and Fatwa are restricted to the present facts rather than imaginary situations. However, he applied restricted rules regarding praying

⁵ It is ironic that Salafists and Wahhabists who proclaim themselves as the followers of Imam Hanbal, more or less, do not follow his way of deduction in Islamic law by limiting themselves to several Hadiths.

and open rules regarding business among people. Imam Hanbal expanded the judgments about business and social contracts according to their objectives and results.

Ja'fari. This school is named after Jafar ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (702-765) who was born in Medina. He is the sixth Imam of Twelver-Shia and their jurisprudence is known for his name. The Jafari School is limited to the Quran, Sunnah, *Ijma*, and reason; the school applies four practical principles. These four, including the role of reason in Shariah, were taken from the Shia explanation. They are known in the Shia context as “practical principles” and can be applied by any Muslim regarding a specific subject without being limited to Mujtahid with regards to canon law. The Shia does not apply the other the above-mentioned practical applications directly, though in practice there is room for *Urf*.

How to Deal with Shariah in a Secular Age

Once again, Muslims, more or less, grow up with Shariah regulations in their family and daily affairs and find it a part of their identity. They look at Shariah as the unparalleled source of prosperity, safety, and happiness both here and hereafter (2:201). They show less tolerance in terms of worship, prayer, and private deeds, but they question some of the harsh public punishments and political and public affairs. Considering the public aspects of Shariah, one must attend to its secular aspects which should start with a linguistic and rational investigation of the Principles of Jurisprudence. Here, I present some suggestions to those who are concerned about secular values, such as human and women rights and democracy. How might one interact with such issues within the context of Shariah?

First and foremost, we have to recognize both elements of Shariah – sacred and secular; even something as direct as a traffic accident is open to interpretation, thus Shariah law cannot be grasped as locked into one interpretation. Both legal processes – sacred and secular – involve interaction between fact and interpretation; the traffic example concerns external fact and the Shariah is a textual fact. It is a long journey from Islamic regulations to imposing a penal code in 21st century. This demands a hard struggle for humanity as the process is affected by many factors. There is a philosophical discussion among different schools of jurisprudence in Islam regarding how human efforts meet God’s will. Shariah or Islamic law is not completely divine

nor is it fully human. Shariah law ensures us of God's satisfaction because Islam allowed *Ijtihad* (deduction of Islamic law from authorized sources). *Ijtihad* requires both the science of jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence so that mutual understanding and a common language between the secular mind and Mujtahid/Mufti mind can construct the proper and productive cooperation.

Second, awareness of these two aspects can encourage us in a holistic approach toward Shariah involving both stable and changeable elements. Muslims cannot ignore the Shariah because it is God's will, but they also cannot ignore its human, rational and secular element. There is always a negotiation between the divine aspect which is absolute and sacred, and the human aspect which is conditioned and secular. Non-Muslims should not insult Shariah because it is a part of Muslims' identity, but they can share in it by understanding and promoting the humanistic aspect. Likewise, Muslims must be reminded of Shariah's objectives and rationale elements as well. Islam can enrich Shariah in deducing new laws and adjusting them in accordance with the current state of humanity by calling the attention of Muftis to some social, historical and linguistics points.

Third, the gap between Muslims and non-Muslims widens when one or both look at Shariah as black and white. The Muslim has to keep in mind that although Shariah is divine it needs to be interpreted by humans, and comprehended it within its formative components. Actually, there is a big need to understand each other instead of judging; understanding is the first vital step toward resolution. Shariah solves a lot of conflicts among communities, connects different relationships, builds a bond and solidarity among isolated peoples, encourages the faithful to moral values, educates the masses, eases life among familiars, and inspires humanity to peruse the truth in everyday life. It can be misused and abused like all other laws; thus a common task is tonot to allow hate and fear be spread in the name of God.

Fourth, there is a Quarnic verse saying that the guided and blessed people are those who listen to every idea and accept the best one (39:17-18). It clearly gives confidence to Muslims to listen to others and to follow the best thought. Verses like this lay a field for dialogue among civilizations and provide Muslims the chance to compare themselves with others and learn from others. There is also a big need

to sit down together and try to know each other its potentials and challenges. For example, the penalty for insulting the Prophet in Islam is not limited to Muhammad, but includes Moses and Jesus as well. Muslims are not allowed to profane other faiths (6:108) when they want their own holiness to remain respected. In addition, Islamic law recognizes the difference between insulting and criticizing. All this supports the effort to harmonize Shariah and human rights. In a more radical suggestion, I would like to express my wish that Muslim Muftis deduce new practical principles in Shariah based on new developments in social sciences and human life.

Fifth, except for the Prophets (and the infallible Imams in Shia) there is no unimpeachable individual in Islam. The narrations related to the Prophets are also matters of discussion. So Muslims distinguish between Islam and Muslims, opening the way to criticism. Muslims feel honor and identity with Shariah, but not with all who practice or even preach Shariah. It is usual among them to criticize or question some laws issued in the name of Islam referring constantly to the objectives of Shariah. Discussion of each of the five objectives of Shariah discussed earlier can happen based on common sense. This, in turn, builds a field of communication for human responsibility, peace, progress, safety, happiness, and integrity. Moreover, if Muslims feel that critics are concerned to reduce human suffering, they are welcomed. The big conflict among advocates of human or women's rights with Muslims emerge when they find that the counterpart aims to deconstruct fundamental values instead of solving an ongoing problem. Reasonably, they are on guard against attacks so it is the responsibility of their counterparts to find a common language. There is only one source of ultimate truth for Muslims and that is God. So, they cannot be empathetic with who appear as the new saviors of humanity, under the guise of human or women rights and democracy. It is the duty of the advocates of these values to show their commitment to reducing human suffering rather than of destroying authority. However, this does preclude the need for both Muslims and Shariah scholars to be open to the needed linguistic and cultural changes in order to improve mutual understanding and cooperation.

Sixth, even though the nature of Islam has some political aspects, it is a global religion trying to connect people to the experience of the holy in their daily life. Muslims are suffering greatly from the

politicization of Islam and a politicized approach to the faith. To take a Quranic verse far from its context causes distance among humans and insults their holiness. However, it is the common responsibility of Muslims and non-Muslims to stand for the human aspects of Shariah and not allow non-professionals in Shariah to talk on behalf of Shariah.

I would like to conclude this section with a quotation of al-Afghani, the great ground-breaker of all recent Islamic movements. He said, I have seen Islam in Western countries and Muslims in Islamic regions; indeed, he was admiring Western organization, hard work, honesty, and responsibility. This view includes the insight that secular achievements are admired by Shariah's objectives; it also concentrates on common human values to work together and make the world safer, peaceful, happy, and connected to the truth.

Ideology and the Abuse of Shariah

The Prophet used to say that there were two professions of the faith within Islam – one related to religion, and one related to politics – and if they both were reformed all his people were reformed and if they all were corrupt all were corrupted. These two groups consist of religious experts (*Fuqaha* or *Ulema*) and political leaders (Ibn Abd al-Bir, 1994, 641; Motahhari, 1385, 9:121). Since politics and religion are linked in Islam, it is clear that there is a potential for religion to be abused by those who have a political agenda. Also the Quran condemns pre-Islamic believers for uncritically following their religious leaders (9:31 & 3:64, also see 2:44 & 79; 3:19, 78&187; 9:34). This view maintains that there is always a chance for religious leaders to be corrupted and this greatly afflicts the people. The history of Islam, like that of several other religions, suggests some of these issues. Some have been condemned mostly because of their abuse of Shariah for their personal interest and ambitions. However, I would like to discuss another form of abusing Shariah which is very common in our era. It is the abuse of Shariah by very pious people who are devoted totally to Islam for the sake of God and commit themselves to a process of proving their dedication (*Ikhlas*) to God. The Kharijite sect in early Islam represents this quality. Regarding socio-political features it is known for its ideas of excommunication and immigration. They are very pious and devoted regarding the private aspects of faith which is my main focus here. Many reports highlight

their sincere dedication to God and piety (see, Ibn Abd Rabbuh al-Andulisi, 1983, 2:233; Ali ibn AbiTalib, 2004, 357). Indeed, the core idea of the Kharijites came from this Quranic verse, “the Judgment is only God’s” (6:57) which provides the limits “*Hukm*,” refers to leaving judgment, decision, and command, to God. Kharijites meant that because God makes the decisions, people are not the decision-makers. The idea has survived and appeared many times in the history of Islam, although, Imam Ali, the forth caliph of Sunni and the first Imam of Shia responded to the Kharijites as follows:

[It is] a true statement to which a false meaning is attributed. It is true that the verdict lies with God, but these people say that (the function of) governance is only for God. The fact is that there is no escape for people from the ruler, good or bad. The faithful persons perform (good) acts in their governance while the unfaithful enjoy the (worldly) the benefits of governance. During this rule, God takes the lead. Through the ruler, taxes are collected, enemies are fought, roadways are protected and the rights of the weak are protected from the strong; the virtuous enjoy peace and receive protection from (the oppression of) the wicked.⁶

For these pious people, these points feature these characteristics: the lack of education in Shariah, causes confusion by using, and sometimes, misusing religious ideas and statements, and oversimplifies Islam by reducing it to one aspect or doctrine. However, let me be clear, there is no doubt that they were pious, honest Muslims. Thus, it was said, “one who seeks right but does not find it, is not like one who seeks wrong and finds it.”⁷ However, Ali warned how harmful and unhealthy is this version of Islam when he addressed the Kharjirites saying “Certainly you are the most evil of all persons and the vehicle of Satan for hitting the target and misleading the people.”⁸

This historical phenomenon, in fact, points out a hidden spirit and symbol rather than merely a historical fact. This spirit has not disappeared; in fact it continually reappears and is often revived among Muslims. For a while it appears very clear and strong as in the

⁶ Ali ibn AbiTalib, 2004, 82; also see 182-183.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 184.

great Hanafi Mufti Ibn Abidin, who equated Wahhabism with Kharijites (Ibn Abidin, 2003, 6:413). Often it is hidden under various religious trends as Morteza Motahhari suggests; scripturalism in both Sunni and Shia, during different epochs, is influenced by the Kharijites spirit (Motahhari, 1390, 128-155). Nonetheless, Shariah or Islamic practice is the main focus of scriptural trends for pious Muslims who want to prove their dedication in faith through practice, rather than meditation.

Given that, there is now a sharp turning back to this abuse of Shariah in current Islam which affects both Muslims and non-Muslims across the world. It is part of Western life to be shocked by the news relating to Shariah. The rise of extremist movements among Muslims worldwide who claim to be practicing Shariah has spread from the Middle East to East Asia and Northern Africa, and more and more to the western world. The Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, *Daesh (ISIS)* in Syria and Iraq, *Boko Haram* in Nigeria, and the recent imposition of the Shariah penal code by the government of Brunei all feed the abuse of Shariah. Their ideas are backed with several sacred quotations and laws taken from the Quran and Sunnah. Many political games, economic interests and regional circumstances play roles in creating such groups, but here I am focusing on internal aspects. One cannot ignore the potential of Shariah to be misunderstood and abused.

What is this potential and how can it be counteracted? In fact, being connected with daily and petty affairs plays the role of a double edged sword for Shariah; it is useful to connect each single moment of life with the clear will of God but it is also harmful to reduce Shariah as a means to justify socio-political affairs of Muslims. The big responsibility of Muslim scholars is to clarify Shariah to such an extent that it is effectively prevented from being misused. They need to stand for a justified use of Shariah. When Shariah is reduced to a socio-political ideology it is a radical shift away from its objectives and a big abuse. Shariah is a guide to the water of life, inner and outer peace through free will and spiritual self-consciousness and not a map or plan for limiting free will or engineering society. Although Shariah divides people into faithful and unfaithful it recognizes the human

dignity of all by addressing all with “O people” instead of merely “O faithful.”⁹

In reducing Shariah to ideology, faith changes to a restricted regulation for political aims which divide people into two groups: on one side are those who are in the camp of ideology and the other side is anyone who doesn't share that ideology thus creating enemies. Ideology is directed to practice while the Shariah is directed to awareness and meditation. This is why intellect and maturity are the primary conditions for discussing Shariah. Since ideologues greatly desire to immediately implement practice, they ignore the contemplation of faith. They turn what should be a source of peace, love, and faith, into a device of hatred and violence. Shariah always encourages the faithful to attempt to get closer to God. When faithful pray or fast, or perform any kind of worship, they must make an intention that they are doing this in order to get closer to God (*Niyyat Qurbat Ilallah*).

The ideologues, in contrast, think they already reached the truth. Since a religious ideology is focused on implication, the primary problem of the absence of methodic and scholarly study, work, and investigation emerges. Many times the ideologues selectively choose Quranic verses, occasional Hadiths, quotations from a rightful Caliph, and ideas of Muslim scholars merely to justify their plan of social engineering. They are used to supporting their beliefs, but in doing so they ignore the context and turn it into a statement which is no longer from the Quran or Hadith. Such statements are taken out of context and out of history and eliminate any analysis. Instead of the Quran informing practice, practice informs the Quran. Like an aggressive army who picks selected things from a specific area, the ‘ideological’ Shariah is picky and committed to non-Islamic presuppositions. The ideologues simply place some religious concepts in their pockets and use them to accuse others and justify themselves. To have an idea which fosters rapid implementation, religious ideologues have no time to contemplate the history of Islamic civilization and intellectual scholarship. This sort of thing makes them confused. Reducing

⁹ I personally prefer “faithful” to “belief” in translation of “*Iman*” because “Belief” equates Arabic term “*A-q-d*”; the point is faith (*Iman*) mostly refers to a flexible and sophisticated trust while the “belief” (*Itiqad*) refers to restricted and tight cling.

Shariah to ideology leads to the oversimplification and disparagement of Islam.

Oversimplifying Islam through ideological Shariah has three aspects: over-highlighting some aspects of Shariah at expense of other parts (it makes Shariah a cartoon); deducing Shariah law out of its institutionalized models (five schools which have passed many historical examinations); and separating Shariah from other scholarship in Islam. An example of the first aspect is how some Muslims simplify Islam to the simplest form of just pure enthusiasm and passion. Shariah, in this thought, is nothing but Jihad. For example, when I was serving as a dean of a university, I was shocked when I learned from a chief officer of police in Farah, Afghanistan, who fought against Taliban that many Taliban who, fighting under name of Islam and performing Jihad, did not know even basic Islamic prayers. These ideologues make harsh protests against some insult to the Prophet Muhammad but not regarding Jesus and Moses who are considered protected under the same Shariah law. The ideological Shariah overlooks the history of Islam and its intellectual journey. Lack of historical knowledge leads to separation of facts and to an unhealthy level of self-confidence. All Islamic scholars can agree that Quranic verses were revealed to the Prophet connected to specific conditions, events and times. Inferring a universal rule from a particular fact requires skill and knowledge that is related to history. Islam encourages building self-confidence by learning from others and being open to other proposed arguments and perspectives (39:17-18).

Muslims who lack an historical and dialogical approach will not only lose a great asset and scholarly method, but easily can fall into totalitarianism. Regarding the third aspect, unfortunately many Muslim traditional jurists, with Shariah-law backgrounds, belittle Islamic Philosophy and Sufism accusing them of not being integral and original parts of Islam. On the one hand, Sufis and Philosophers often degrade Islamic jurisprudence and Shariah-law, claiming Shariah law is a secondary and superficial part of Islam which is far from the spirit of Islam. On the other hand, jurists focus on the outer aspect of Islam and Sufis as well as Philosophers concentrate on the inner aspect of Islam. Both groups invalidate secular investigations and fail to see the human rationality of the other side. Sufism and Islamic Philosophy acknowledge rationality and secular discovery

through Hermeneutics (in the Islamic context, *Ta'wil*) as the Islamic Shariah does through the Principles of Jurisprudence (*Usool-e Fiqh*) which emphasizes Common Sense and Mores (*Urf*). However, both groups by disrespecting the richness of each branch of knowledge reduces Islam to their interests; the former reduces faith to restricted law and Revelation to literal text while the latter reduces it to transcendental and supernatural realms; therefore, from two opposite extremes they provide the same result – superstition. Recently, new religious thinkers have joined this debate and belittle both of these groups based on their reductionist methods. In the Islamist reading they simplify Islam to their political ideology.

Moreover, in the reformist and liberal interpretations they have tried in vain to apply the developments that occurred overtime in Christianity to Islam without respect for the unique historical and cultural context. They think of Islam without Shariah law which is not Islam anymore. Finally, in the worst form – the Salafi version, they freeze Islam to a literal interpretation limited to the first generations from the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Sadly, all of the above mentioned groups consider themselves the purist form of Islam and view the others as bastardizations. All these approaches forget that the only permanent Islamic miracle of the Prophet is a book, the Quran. Having a written book as the miracle and bedrock of faith presupposes and promotes education, dialogue and co-understanding as both a way of faith and life. All of these, education, dialogue and co-understanding, occur also in a secular way, because the sacred way or has no particular suggestion or they are too limited to believers.

To overcome this abuse of Shariah, first and foremost Muslims must present a clear definition of Islamic faith which associates piety with rational understanding as it appeared in emerging theology in Islam. Second they have to consider faith within its various aspects; I mean as much as Shariah is part of Islamic faith, so are ethics, spirituality, theology and philosophy as well. Reducing Islam to Shariah which is associated with many daily affairs is making a cartoon of Islam. Moreover, the interpretation of Shariah must be done by scholars who have proven already their expertise in the field through clear process of study, research and teachings. There is a great need shifting from popularity to skillfulness in Shariah. As long as Islam is not reducible to Shariah aspect, the Shariah law is not

deducible through only one Hadith or even a verse of the Quran. Whoever presents a meta-narrative or grand-judgment based on a single quotation, historical event, Hadith, or even a verse of the Quran is not a scholar of Shariah. The religious decree and statement (*Fatwa*) which didn't pass linguistic investigations, examinations for the related verses and Hadiths, Jurisprudential methods and hermeneutic approach cannot be viewed as a valid opinion in Shariah. Hadiths have to be understood with respect to the Quran and its relations with other Hadiths, spirit of Islam (objectives of Shariah), and in its own socio-historical formation.

Again Muslim scholars must raise their voice against abuse of Shariah and examine the potential within Shariah to get misused. Fredrick Nietzsche, a German philosopher, has wisdom that warns us directly when we are facing abusers of Shariah. He says when you are going to fight against a demon you should be careful you don't gain affection for their tools and methods so that you become a second demon. In fighting against excommunicators one should be aware of not going through the same hell although through opposite ends: saying extremist campaigners of Shariah are not "true" Muslims. We have to be brave enough to accept there is potential in Shariah to be misused and then take responsibility to reinterpret it. Finally, why do the true scholars of Shariah not look for the other potentials in religion to promote peace and co-existence as much as abusers of Shariah make a loud voice to spread hate and war? If there are Quranic verses that relate to Jihad it should also be mentioned that there are counter-balancing Quranic verses such as the one that considers killing an innocent individual equal to killing all of humanity (5:32).

While extremists aim to find evidence justifying their negative approach in a matter that is far from the aims of Shariah, why have we not attempted to highlight evidence to support a genuine and positive approach with respect to Shariah? Doubtless there is an extremely significant need to highlight human aspect of Shariah and illustrate how much God cares about His people? This is not the world of judgment and evaluation; otherwise the Judgment Day is meaningless. A person is not a righteous individual as long as he or she leaves people in order to serve God. We have to return to the clear Islamic Shariah point that it is possible God forgoes His rights over the person (like worship) but for sure He does not forgoe the rights of people over one another. Shariah explicitly distinguishes sins related to God and

sins related to people. Traditionally in Islam *Haq al-Nas* (the right of peoples) is more significant than the *Haq Allah* (the right of God); a Muslim who violates people is worse than a Muslim who violates God. In contrast the extremists neglect reason, people and achievements throughout the history of Islamic civilization because in their belief these things violate God's revelation. This is why these groups do not recognize philosophy, Sufism, and even rational ethics in an Islamic context as respectful achievements. However, turning toward human values based on Shariah advice can make a great contribution to peaceful Islam and illustrate how violent Islam is abusing Shariah.

Concluding Points

Shariah attempts to illustrate a unique harmony and association between the sacred and the secular in Islam; the sanctification of the human effort and the secularization of divine regulations. What is reached by a rational process (*Ijtihad*) is also a divine law because it happened within a divine field dealing with divine regulations. It does not disrespect humans before a transcendental God and does not neglect God by respecting human limitation and weakness. Indeed it suggests a distinctive attempt to enlarge the human perspective but not diminish God's position. The approach glorifies God but does not ignore humans. God's revelation and words are limited, but human reason, needs, efforts, and sufferings are unlimited; God and humans, thus, take care of each other as primary and secondary, branching out, to and from guiding principles.

There are different definitions of secularism. Here, I will refer to two to make clear what I mean by a mixture of secular and sacred issues in Islamic law: first and positive, make an idea or decision based on pure rationality and second and negative, make a judgment regardless of religious preference. Doubtless, elements like 'rational independence' and the objectives of Shariah highlight the link between first meaning of secularism and Islamic law, and like *Urf* and *Masalih Mursalah* bring to light the connection between the second meaning and Islam. Moreover, the personal background, educational climate, theological and philosophical interests, and the presupposed propositions of Mujtahid/Mufti play such a major role that Muslims used to say, the Fatwa of a rustic has a smell of the village and the Fatwa of an urban setting has a smell of the city; in other words, an

Arab's Fatwa has an Arabic flavor, and a non-Arab Fatwa, has a non-Arab (*Ajam*) flavor.

In addition, regarding the outcome of *Ijtihad* two extreme ideas among scholars of Shariah emerged: *Takhtea* (possibly wrong) and *Taswib* (completely right). The former concept states that the *Mujtahid*, in the process of deducing Shariah law, might reach a wrong idea but he is still rewarded by God because of his scholarly struggle. The latter idea holds that the *Mujtahid* always reaches the right conclusion because the divine commands do not determine anything insofar as God considers a scholarly *Fatwa*, with its diversity, as His own command. The point is that both ideas recognize human effort to reach divine law and consider the outcome valid before God, no matter what it is. This point, then, consists of two truly significant aspects: recognition of diversity in Islamic law as well as recognition of the human aspect which, without doubt, is affected by the *Mujtahid*'s knowledge, skills, and circumstances. From two opposite poles, they come to the same core: humanizing Shariah and making room for pluralism.

As our body, soul, thought, emotions and decisions are linked together; Islamic law does not examine the human as an isolated being and in a separated situation; rather it considers context. Accordingly, humans cannot be treated as temporary beings regarding legislation. The law reminds us to regard different aspects of humanity in legislation. Also, the five categories of Islamic regulation, from obligatory (*Wajib*) to not-allowed (*Haram*), connects each single moment of life to God in various forms. It breaks the mold of white/black categories in the eyes of the faithful – to not see each issue as either obligation or freedom, allowed or not-allowed. It thus helps the faithful to exercise a variety of options including: what is forbidden, not-preferred, allowed, preferred, or obligated.

To conclude, one needs to: (1) interpret Shariah law in terms of new developments in the philosophical and social sciences; (2) locate Shariah in the intersection with other Islamic intellectual traditions including Sufism and Philosophy; (3) put the objectives of Shariah, in a broader field, at the center of Islamic ethics; (4) learn from the historical experiences of Shariah to reach an updated form; (5) reread the potential shifts within classical Islamic law like *Ahkam Imzaii* (confirmed laws which were affirmed by the Prophet to support local traditions, instead of initiating new laws); and (6) update the meaning

of *Ijtihad* to explore new hermeneutical directions and aspirations. All these efforts happen through human rationality, with all the limitations, but with the hope and perspective of serving humanity; all are recognized in Shariah. However, it is clear that a significant number of Islamic jurisprudence scholars fail to understand and apply principles such as the above. In summary, we can say that it is not exactly the secularization of Shariah that is sought but, rather, the exploration and exercise of the hidden secular power to enrich both humanity and Shariah. This is the true meaning of Louis Massignon's insight about the Islamic system when he described it as "une theocratie laïque égalitaire" (a secular egalitarian theocracy).

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The Hermeneutical Age of Morality: On Translating the Sacred by Habermas, Taylor and Ricoeur

AGUSTÍN DOMINGO MORATALLA

Introduction

The Work of Hermes

Those who have had the opportunity to browse the book containing the dialogue between Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Ratzinger, and Jürgen Habermas realize the significance of the photograph used for the cover of the volume. Ratzinger is speaking and Habermas is listening attentively, and both are in careful conversation.¹ The picture is significant because it symbolizes the dialogue between reason and faith at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Neither Habermas, nor Cardinal Ratzinger, are the only people who symbolize reason and faith, but they are two significant persons in the world of reason and the world of faith. Their intense discussion can be read it as a symbol of the sacred and the secular debate.²

This conversation has become an important text for the traditions that both characters represent. In the tradition of secular philosophy and criticism that Habermas symbolizes, it is a renewed reading of modernity open to the sacred. For Catholic theology since Benedict XVI, it symbolizes a theological tradition open to secular modernity. And this is a conversation that did not need a translator because both speak the same language.

Those who know the debate that has occurred in Spain around the Citizenship Education (CE), or educational reform after the socialist victory of 2004, will know that the position maintained by the Spanish

¹ J. Habermas and J. Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2006), trans. by B. McNeil. Cfr. A. Domingo, "Las Fuentes morales de la ciudadanía active," A. Domingo, ed., *Ciudadania, Religión y Educación Moral* (Madrid: PPC, 207), 75-110.

² To explore the relation between sacred/secular, cfr. J. Gómez-Caffarena, *El enigma y el misterio* (Madrid: Trotta, 2006); J. Zubiri, *El problema filosófico de la historia de las religiones* (Madrid: Fundación Zubiri-Alianza, 1993).

Federation of Religious Teaching (FERE) does not match the position of the Spanish Bishops Conference (CEE). For most philosophers who worried about the relationship between the sacred and the secular, this divergence of approach is irrelevant. However, one important event cannot go unnoticed, namely, that FERE has edited a book that explains in detail how the contents of the CE can be interpreted by schools that are Catholic in ideology. Given the position of the bishops, which does not oppose the objection of conscience of parents to the CE, and given the position of the Ministry of Education, which developed the CE as a minimum program of secular citizenship, FERE conducted an exercise in translation from “sacred” to “secular” to recognise the plausibility and legitimacy of that position.

It was necessary to convince the Catholic community of parents that at the minimum secular citizens are not opposed to the maximum moral present in the ideology of the centers. Why have the educational authorities and representatives of secular citizenship not made the effort to translate its minimum in their respective traditions: moral, political or religious? We can answer these questions from multiple perspectives, but we are interested now in Habermas’ dialogue with Cardinal Ratzinger.

The dialogue is a new period of Habermas’ philosophy where he asked about the significant role of religion in the public sphere, and is concerned about the *asymmetric burden* requiring religious communities to translate their vision into secular citizenship. Here lies the point of the matter we wish to address:

Viewed in historical terms, religious citizens had to learn to take epistemic attitudes toward their secular environment, whereas the attitudes of the secular enlightened citizens stood without effort...secular citizens are not exempted from a cognitive burden as not conscious enough to provide for cooperative relations with their fellow religious...What is at issue is not only respectful feeling towards the possible existential meaning of religion, which is also expected of secular

citizens, but the self-understanding of modernity in terms of hardened secularists.³

In the situation we are talking about, both the FERE and the Bishops have made a supplementary effort concerning citizenship “*in terms of hardened secularists*” (in terms of Habermas). This situation shows three major issues: first, the asymmetric burden that endures for these organizations when the CE is understood in purely secular terms. Second, the identification of approaches to secular citizenship that need not be justified in terms other than strictly those of elections. Third, the likely bad conscience of the Bishops and FERE that never terminated the task of legitimizing ethics in the context of a secular citizenship.

As we see, this is a situation where it is difficult, but not impossible because the relationship between the sacred and the secular is changing. It has already succeeded in some “conversion” for Habermas and has been working for several decades when the term “hermeneutics” came out of the specialized worlds of jurisprudence, philology and theology to enter into the world of philosophy.⁴

These “works of Hermes” are not the only ones, and we will seek out others in detail. Although we can say that we are in the age of hermeneutics of reason, I will raise this work on key moral and political philosophy and therefore have entitled it the age of moral hermeneutics. I realize that replacing the word “reason” with the word “moral” limits the scope of work to what Kant called the practical use of reason. This will limit my pretensions of speculative philosophy but widen the horizon in areas where moral or political life demands deliberation, the capacity for judgement, and a desire for truth. Aware of the problems that accompany a philosophical definition of the sacred, Danièle Hervieu-Leger:

[The sacred] Designates a structure of meanings common to the historical religions and new ways of responding to ultimate issues of the existence, beyond the beliefs that

³ J. Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2008); “Religion in the Public Sphere”: Holberg Prize, 29 November 2005, p. 9. Spanish version, *Entre naturaleza y religión*. (Barcelona: Paidós, 2006) p. 146.

⁴ Cfr. J. Habermas, “La voz pública de las religiones”: *Claves*, 180 (2008), p. 4. J.M. Mardones, *El discurso filosófico de la modernidad. Habermas y la religión* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1998).

one or another holds...The sacred exceeds and involves the definitions that the historical religions have provided and imposed for a long time upon society....It goes beyond the new forms of unconventional institutional religion...and refers to a specific reality that does not end with social forms that may have been taken.⁵

The Contextual Temptation in a Global Time

This approach could be a postmodern and deconstructionist reading of hermeneutics, as Richard Rorty and Jacques Derrida have done.⁶ For Rorty, this comes with a philosophical hermeneutics announcing the end of philosophy based on ideas, representations, and metaphysical concepts. It is time, he thinks, that the philosophers give more importance to *democracy* than to *philosophy*, to *social justice* than to the *truth*. The coming of a hermeneutical moral age would be based on contingency, in the present, in a contextualistic moral from which would pose the problems through democratic conversation or local narratives. The transformation of the teaching of philosophy for Citizenship-Education (EC) as interpreted in this key might even suppose a type of *post-metaphysical thinking*.

If so, it would be easy to read the hermeneutics in the horizon which Rorty himself called *the linguistic turn* as if Hermes had chosen a shortcut to solve the problems. Certainly hermeneutics affirms the value of context and the need to recover the value of such categories as the situation, the conversation and the distance.

The reading Derrida is proposing is not in line with the universality proposed by Gadamer. Language is not only the language of words, signs and codes, as if hermeneutics were confused with poor rhetoric. Gadamer claims the interrogative dimension of language, the value of dialogue and the force of the word because he wants to recover the

⁵ D. Hervieu-Leger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers U.P., 2000), p. 75-76. (Sp.: *La religión, el hilo de la memoria*. Herder, Barcelona, pp. 79-80).

⁶ Cfr. R. Rorty, "La prioridad de la democracia sobre la filosofía," in Vattimo, G. (ed.) *La secularización de la filosofía* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1992) pp. 31-61. Vid. A. Domingo, "Esperanzas de libertad. Ética y Política en la hermenéutica de Gadamer y Rorty" *Contrastes* (Málaga, 2000), pp. 193-212; A. Domingo, "Perfeccionistas y liberales: el horizonte político de la verdad en Gadamer y Rorty" *Estudios Filosóficos* 129: XLV (1996), pp. 261-296.

universality of a dialectic guided by the truth. Therefore, hermeneutics lies not only on the cognitive level of philosophical concepts and terminology, but on an integrative personal level where the stakes are not just ideas or values as radical ideal entities, but the integrative reality of human persons. These are not only beings who speak or communicate, but are concerned about the meaning or value they are communicating. These interpretations do not do justice to the universal dimension had by philosophical hermeneutics. There are at least three reasons:

a. The true reality of language includes poetry “and its appearance in the inner ear as the true language of reality.”⁷

b. The emergence of hermeneutics is not done at the expense of the disappearance of metaphysics, but its transformation. Hermeneutics is not condemned to a post-metaphysical philosophy. Questioning the subjectivity of modern metaphysics, the objectivism of medieval metaphysics and continuing to ask for the sense of what appears in communication, continues to struggle with metaphysics. We remain in a time of metaphysics time, but not in an age that replaces what was *said* replace *say*. It is important to recover the initial questions that always moved to the metaphysical because “closer to the beginning means always being aware of other possibilities opened up by abandoning the path travelled. What is situated at the beginning must choose the path, and if it returns to the beginning, warns that from the point of departure other paths could have been chosen.”⁸ Gadamer does not concur with Heidegger in his approach to metaphysics because the latter “ignores the continuing strength and toughness of the units of life that still exist in small and large groups of human coexistence.”⁹

c. There is a need for radical reflexivity and mutual recognition. This means that entry to talking is going out of oneself, thinking of the

⁷ H.G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode, II* (Tübingen: J.C. B. Mohr, 1986), pp. 57 ss. Spanish version. *Verdad y Método, II*, (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1992) trans. by M. Olasagasti. To Hermeneutics and Dialogue in Gadamer’s Hermeneutic, vid. A. Domingo, *El arte de poder no tener razón. La hermenéutica dialógica de Gadamer* (Salamanca: Ediciones de la Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1990).

⁸ H.G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode I* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1985); *Truth and Method* (London-New York: Continuum, 1989), Spanish version *Verdad y Método I*, (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1979), p. 351. (Las siglas WM corresponden a la edición alemana, y las siglas VM a la trad. española).

⁹ Gadamer, VM, II, p. 355.

other, and “going back into oneself as another.”¹⁰ This path is found in the moral philosophy of Paul Ricoeur and Charles Taylor. It is also present in the “conversion” of Habermas, who has always recognized the universality of hermeneutics.

It is important to note that the continuing appeal for dialogue in this hermeneutics cannot be understood in instrumental or situational terms. As we have stated, hermeneutics raises the dialogue in a radical way to preclude consensus or conversation, even allowing the building of bridges with other religious and philosophical traditions. The universality of language requires not only ownership of the tradition but also the ability of critical thinking. Hermeneutical dialogue reminds us how important the time of the appropriation is as the moment of reflection:

The true reality of human communication is that dialogue does not impose the views of one another or against the opinion of one adds that of another. The dialogue turns over and over. A dialogue no longer can be based on the dissent that put it in motion. The coincidence that is no longer my opinion or yours, but a common interpretation of the world, allows for moral and social solidarity. Agreement on what is fair and is regarded as such must be reached through mutual understanding. The common view is changing constantly when we talk to each other and ends in the silence of consensus and the obvious. That is why I feel justified in asserting that all non-verbal forms of understanding aim at expanding the understanding achieved in speech and conversation. If I start from this idea, that does not mean that all understanding has a potential reference to the language, so that such is the pride of our reason that whenever possible, when a disagreement arises, we reach agreement through conversation. We do not always succeed, but our social life rests on the assumption that conversation, in its broadest sense, opens the lock produced by grasping at one's own opinions. Hence, it is also a serious mistake to say that the universality of understanding from which I begin and try to hold

¹⁰ H.G. Gadamer, VM, II, p. 356.

credible implies a conservative or harmonizing attitude towards our social world. To "understand" the circumstances and the structures of our world, and to understand each other in this world, requires both criticism and rebuttal of recognition or defense of the established order.¹¹

Hope in Times of Uncertainty and Insecurity

A hermeneutical age of morality could be understood as a time in which we are locked in the finitude of existence, whether global and cosmic. In this case, hermeneutics would be synonymous with resignation before facticity; note that the hermeneutics of Heidegger began as a "hermeneutics of actuality." It would be reductionist to reduce it to a philosophy of finitude that has overcome the anguish of the philosophies of existence, for that it was not a philosophy of hope.

The contribution that hermeneutics has made in his criticism of scientism and mass society could endorse this interpretation as if the only way to treat society in the philosophical hermeneutics is that of a *hermeneutics of suspicion*. Well defined by Paul Ricoeur, the philosophies of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud speak in terms of "a hermeneutics of suspicion" and criticism of all established morals.

However, when contemporary ethics can be described as hermeneutics it is not only due to its capacity for criticism of naturalism or the scientific naturalism communicated on the media. Hermeneutics indicates that we have developed our capacity to critique and suspicion, but it also indicates that in developing these capabilities, there is a desire for guidance, a wish for sense, a hope that is uncertain – but radical – in human intelligence.

Hermeneutics of morals at this age is important, for suspicion leads to trust. The uncertainty, insecurity and finitude can open the door to a philosophy of hope. The sense of human life and search for guidance behind any proposed morals do not present themselves what makes sense and gives direction. What are the conditions of the possibility of a philosophy of hope? For that philosophy cannot lock itself up, but is called upon to rethink the relationship between reason and faith, the sacred and the profane. In this, the key is not only suspicion, but trust.

¹¹ Gadamer, WM, 188-189 / VM, II, 184-185.

Hermeneutics aims to achieve the meaning of life, but not in an instrumental manner, as if we were faced with a math or technical problem. Jean Grondin has used a very expressive metaphor, remember the activity of the baker. None of us stands before her life as a baker before the mass of bread so that we can shape it, cut or destroy it.¹² It is not only the meaning of our freedom, our actions, virtues or values. This involved a basic trust, a critical attitude towards life related with convictions or beliefs we hold and which can be called a “faith hermeneutics.”

This seriously raises the relationship between reason and religion, as has always happened in the history of different hermeneutics. Talking about the hermeneutical age of morality to describe a time where the universality of philosophy does not adequate the religions, is to feel challenged by them but is not intended as the totalising task of building alternatives to compete with them. We face a new time that Habermas is still calling post-metaphysical but where faith, religion and the sacred play an important role. Charles Taylor describes it as *A Secular Age* and Habermas as a *post-secular Age*.

Both are conscious of this paradigm where modernization and secularization have not finished with religion. Both invite them to overcome the secularized self of modern reason, and what appeared to be a zero-sum game where what reason gained religion lost. Both are aware of the value of religion in globalization and are situated within a paradigm that we could call the hermeneutical age of morality. They are aware that the relationship between the sacred and the secular can no longer be as simple as it had been hitherto. These are complex relationships that affect our orientation in the world, full of both misunderstandings and possibilities. Raised as hermeneutics, philosophy continues to rely on the work of Hermes while still forced to build bridges between the gods and mortals, faith and reason, the sacred and the secular.

As hermeneutics is obliged to transmit, interpret, and translate it is likely that this task entails a loss of respect for the maxim of “*traductore traditore*.” However, not every translation is a betrayal of meaning; it can be a possibility for intellection, overflow and understanding. As shown by George Steiner in *After Babel*: “understanding is translate.”¹³

¹² J. Grondin, *Del sentido de la vida* (Barcelona: Herder, 2005) p. 75.

¹³ G. Steiner, *Après Babel* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998).

Habermas, Taylor and Ricoeur raise three different embodiments of the sacred to the secular, three different ways to understand how the sacred can be an adequate philosophical response to the contemporary ethical. They have talked about the post-secular age or secular age; why not unify these approaches with the term "hermeneutics"?

These three approaches do not provide us with an arbitrary integration of the sacred in the secular. If the sacred is recovered with discernment it is attractive to philosophical approaches. Not all integration of the sacred in the secular has the same level of philosophical legitimacy or credibility. Instead of claiming religion as a response to the problems of guidance and direction, modern man will do with philosophical credibility based on linking both with a philosophical hermeneutics. Therefore we can speak of the "hermeneutical age of morality."

Jürgen Habermas: Religion in a Post-Secular Society

From 2 to June 6, 2008 Istanbul held a dialogue on civilizations. There, Habermas wondered, "What is a post-secular society?" His talk continued the approach of recent years in which he has strongly advocated the legitimacy of the sacred in the public sphere.

Habermas maintains the tension between "secular *state*" and "post-secular *society*" which indicates that we are operating in the public sphere of deliberation.¹⁴ The term "post-" in the phrase "post-secular" points toward a serious revision of the theory of secularization posed by modernization as an individual privatization of religion and a progressive disappearance of religions in the public sphere. Is aware that these approaches are being questioned because empirically and historically the sacred remains a determining explanatory factor. The term "post-secular" describes the change in the consciousness of contemporary societies where there are three phenomena: the presence of the religious factor in the public interpretation of global conflicts, religion is present in an active way in the areas of public deliberation nationally through churches and congregations as "communities of interpretation," the immigration of "guest workers"

¹⁴ "No deberíamos confundir en ningún caso, dice Habermas, la secularización del poder estatal con la secularización de la sociedad." Respuesta a Flores d' Arcais, *Claves*, 180 (2008), p. 5.

and refugees takes the problem of the coexistence of cultures beyond political pluralism in order to promote integration.

As pointed out by Jesús Conill, this shift is in an Hegelian matrix where religions belong to the history of reason, as a new time requires changing the habits of mind to enable secular and religious citizens to cooperate. It is a time when religions are entitled to intervene in the public sphere and contribute to a new conception of citizenship. In the address specified by Conill, and without assessing what it means to this conversion in Habermas' overall philosophy of religion, let me point out three observations that support the attachment of Habermas to the hermeneutical age of morality.¹⁵

But before doing so let me cite a fact and pose one question. The information to which we refer is the relationship of the hermeneutics of Gadamer with the work of Habermas, let us remember the controversy of the early seventies held by master (Gadamer) and disciple (Habermas) on the capacity of social critique in hermeneutics. While the hermeneutics of Gadamer was necessary in the processes of appropriation of meaning, Habermas believed that it was inadequate because it lacked the ability to critique or question the traditions inherited. The question is simple: Does Habermas continue to maintain the same concept of rationality? Should we not reread this dispute through this new horizon that is more receptive to the sacred? Was not Ricoeur more fair when as third in the debate he pointed to a "post-secular"?

The Limits of Naturalism and the Will to Truth

In his important work entitled *Between Naturalism and Religion*, Habermas has a chapter devoted to the role of religion in the public sphere. He comments about the truth that cannot go unnoticed, especially if we bear in mind that the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer has questioned a modernity that is more a prisoner of the certainties provided by *method* than the will of truth of the philosophical work itself.

The democratic constitutional state, which relies on a deliberative form of politics, represents a demanding form of government and an ambitious epistemic in some

¹⁵ J. Conill, "Racionalización religiosa y ciudadanía postsecular en Habermas": *Pensamiento* 63 (2007), pp. 571-581.

ways, sensitive to the truth. A democracy of the post-truth...would no longer be a democracy for...lack of normative arguments. The controversy extends to the epistemological question of the relationship between faith and knowledge, which relate back to the essential elements of modernity's depth of understanding.¹⁶

Will is really important to build bridges between the sacred and the secular. Habermas' ethics can afford to be a post-metaphysical, but not of being post-Christian. Although – thought Habermas – present as the dull side of reason, religious traditions are still present and “more intense than metaphysics...we cannot exclude that they carry valuable semantic potential to develop an energy capable of inspiring all society once they release their really profane contents.”¹⁷

Thinking – Habermas argues – “is willing to learn from religion while remaining strictly agnostic in relation with her. He emphasizes the difference between the certainties of faith and validity claims open publicly to criticism, but refrains from the arrogance of rationalism that one can himself decide what is reasonable and unreasonable in religious doctrines. The content that the reason appropriates through the translation does not have to lose faith.”¹⁸ He stressed three terms particularly important for the credibility of the philosophy that opens to the sacred: a willingness to learn from religion, a will not to confuse this with knowledge, and an ability to differentiate between the cooperative efforts of translation.

Morality, secular or religious, is not about putting the truth in motion; there is a willingness to “learn together” in a “complementary learning.” In this way, post-metaphysical thinking is to the truth in a new way, not only because it refrains from judging about religious truths, but because it balks at a cut-rate scientism “and against the doctrine of excluding religious respect from the genealogy of reason.”¹⁹

To waive those ontological factors does not mean falling into a radical naturalism that devalues what is contained in the not small experimental observations and the moral, legal and evaluative

¹⁶ J. Habermas, *Entre naturalismo y religión*, op. cit., p. 152-153.

¹⁷ J. Habermas, *Entre naturalismo y religión*, op. cit., p. 150-151.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Habermas, op. cit., 148.

statements from religious groups. The naturalization of the mind calls into question “our self-practice as individuals.” Furthermore, if the naturalization of the individual invades daily life, it “is incompatible with any idea of political integration that secures a normative citizens’ consensus.”²⁰

From a Liberal to a Post-Liberal Tolerance

Democratic citizenship cannot alienate a “monolingual” or “religious” people from the processes of political decision. Simple respect or the mere acceptance or civic condescension to their proposals is not enough.²¹ If liberal tolerance towards the proposals of believers demands moral neutrality of the authorities and respect in the public sphere, we may have to find a new model of tolerance; without neglecting neutrality the liberal state must accept “the polyphonic complexity.”

It is not just for formal reasons of democratic fairness; there are pragmatic and functional reasons. The state, argues Habermas: “cannot discourage believers and religious communities making them refrain from manifesting their visions as well as a political way, because it cannot know whether or not a disconnected secular society would be deprived of important reserves of meaning.”²²

If citizens are convinced that secular religions are an archaic relic of pre-modern societies, this can only be to understand freedom of religion as if it were a cultural variant of the natural preservation of an endangered species.²³

It is necessary to rethink the principle of tolerance, which until now had been considered as a requirement of mutual respect between religions monitored by the liberal state to avoid conflicts. This is a liberal model that requires a peacemaker of religious wars where respect is identified with distance. But now the problem is not on the foundations of tolerance but in its implementation, for tolerance must be practiced every day. The principle of tolerance is freed from a

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ J. Habermas, “A Post-secular Society – What Does That Mean?,” *Reset Dialogues on Civilizations*, Istanbul, 2-6 June 2008. Mss., p. 4. (Citatus Istanbul)

²² J. Habermas, *Entre naturalismo y religión*, p. 138. To concept of post-liberal tolerance vid. A. Domingo, “La tolerancia post-liberal: el valor de la verdad en la ética democrática” *Veritas XV* (2008), 87-110.

²³ Habermas, *op. cit.*, 146.

simple condescension when the conflicting parties are recognized as equals in the process, not only in terms of a negative, but a positive freedom.²⁴

The requirement of tolerance arises in terms of mutual recognition. Demanding a form of mutual recognition should not be confused with the simple appreciation of another culture or another way of life. Habermas himself acknowledges the difficulties and confirms that this is easier said than done. It notes that the most important thing for him at this moment is the image of an inclusive society in which citizens' cultural differences can be complementary and equal:

“Tolerance” is, of course, not only a question of enacting and applying laws; it must be practiced in everyday life. Tolerance means that believers of one faith and another and non-believers must mutually concede one another the right to those convictions, practices and ways of living that they themselves reject. This concession must be supported by a shared basis of *mutual recognition* from which repugnant dissonances can be overcome. The required kind of recognition must not be confused with an appreciation of an alien culture and way of living, or of rejected convictions and practices... We need tolerance only vis-à-vis worldviews that we consider wrong and vis-à-vis habits that we do not like. Therefore, the basis of recognition is not the esteem for this or that property or achievement, but the awareness of the fact that the other one is a member of an inclusive community of citizens with equal rights, in which each is accountable to everybody else for their political contributions.²⁵

We are faced with a tolerance that is not strictly liberal, so we can talk about a post-liberal tolerance where the mere acceptance of others is not enough. Tolerance as simple condescension calls for a tolerance as mutual appreciation, such as mutual recognition. This is where Paul Ricoeur reflects on the need for modes of recognition in the horizon of a liberal democracy obliged to cope with multiculturalism.

²⁴ Habermas, Istanbul, 5.

²⁵ Habermas, Istanbul, 5.

Religions as a Source of Meaning in a Secular Democracy

In addition to functional reasons, the sacred and the secular have to be taken seriously by cognitive reason. The epistemic status of religions cannot be described as irrational. And Habermas warns that these attempts which can be renewed with a posthegeliana philosophical theology seems to him more acceptable than the Nietzschean variant:

Taking on loan from the Christian connotations of seeing and listening, recalls the expectation of grace, the coming of the event and the salvific encounter, reducing the Christian connotations to a thought that is free from any texture and propositional marrow, aimed at moving behind Christ and Socrates to get lost in the indeterminacy of the archaic philosophy...has good reason to show willingness to learn from religious traditions.²⁶

Habermas refers to religion in general and Catholicism in particular as a "source" from which the liberal system feeds. Along with other secular sources that have not required the effort of religious people, religion remains a source "that could dry up because of a secularization gone bad of society as a whole."²⁷ Habermas regrets that the will to live together and understand properly the constitution, "...our republican attitudes, have been decoupled from their pre-political anchors."²⁸

The sources of meaning referred to Habermas are the sources of solidarity, so it is important not to lose sight of religion, understood as connecting pre-political, social and natural reference to the previous political system. "In the life of religious communities, says Habermas, to the extent they succeed in avoiding dogmatism and coercion of conscience, something remains intact that in other places has been lost and that cannot be rebuilt with only the knowledge of experts."²⁹

²⁶ J. Habermas, *Glauben un Wissen*, Friedenspreistrede, 2001, Spanish "Las bases morales pre-políticas del estado liberal": *Debats*, 2004, translated J. Jiménez, p. 81.

²⁷ Habermas, *Las bases*, p. 75.

²⁸ Habermas, *Las bases*, p. 78.

²⁹ Habermas, *Las bases*, p. 82.

At another point he says: “religious traditions are equipped with a special force to articulate moral intuitions, especially in light of sensitive forms of human coexistence.³⁰ When we look at today’s vulnerability of social relations, religious traditions have the power to convincingly articulate moral sensitivities and intuitions of solidarity.”³¹

Deliberative democracy can be fed from these sources if citizens are willing to translate their minds to the field of public reason. This translation process is institutionally important and so far has required religious citizens to legitimize the presence of their belief in a secular democracy. Here, there is a symmetrical loading that is necessary to review, and must also be demanded of secular citizens because a secularist conscience is not enough to account for cooperative relations with religious citizens. The ethics of democratic citizenship requires continued efforts to translate learning from people’s minds. According to Audi, Habermas recognizes the legitimacy of the reasons for Christians to seek balance in qualifying as a theo-ethical.

Charles Taylor: The Eclipse of Religion in the Secular Age

Another philosophical approach that allows us to talk about the old hermeneutics of morality is found in Charles Taylor. While the bridge that Habermas had is ethical-political, for Taylor the bridge is cultural. The dialogue of the sacred with the secular is required no longer by normative categories, but by cultural categories.

The effort undertaken by Habermas to integrate the sacred in the political debate now by Taylor is to integrate the sacred in the cultural debate. Both maintain the legitimacy of the sacred in the public sphere, both raise this presence as an effort of communication or translation of meanings, and both see the sacred-secular tension as a search for meaning. While Habermas is not within the personal or existential level, Taylor enters it and does so with an explicit hermeneutical intent. The analysis carried out is based on the issues, the language semantics and the variation of the categories with which it has developed a thirst for transcendence that remains culturally present.

³⁰ Habermas, *Entre naturalismo y religión*, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

³¹ Habermas, *Istanbul*, 9. To relation between secularist and secularization in a democratic education, vid. A. Domingo, “Laicidad política y educación democrática” *Debate Actual*, 2 (2007), 93-106.

This attention to language is properly hermeneutic because no fragments unify the sign language that produces human communication. The analysis is not syntactic, semantic and pragmatic, analyses that are binding expressions and practices with organized codes, meanings and virtues. In this way, Taylor has the ability of a preformed ordinary language and is at the level of practical reason. His philosophy helps strengthen not only the hypothesis that we are in a hermeneutical age of reason, but that this is the practical dimension of reason.

There is also special attention to the historicity of the concepts' very own philosophical hermeneutics. If in *The sources of the Self* we have a de-construction of the identity of modern man as a re-construction of categories and philosophical backgrounds, in *A Secular Age*, we have a genealogy of disenchantment generated by modernity, rationalization and secularization.

I will limit my analysis to three issues: secularism, the organization of meaning in the social imaginary, and the power of a semantics of religious language to express social ties and obligations. The term "eclipse" of religion to describe the approach of Taylor is a metaphor used to indicate that the presence of the sacred has not disappeared but is temporarily hidden. The shadow of such phenomena is produced by the horizon of the light in which it is located. Secularization does not describe a process of subtraction where the secular has removed the sacred, but a process where the secular has overshadowed the sacred; in Habermasian terminology, knowledge (*Wissen*) has overshadowed faith (*Glauben*).

Secularism and the Thirst for Transcendence

Secularization is a term that refers to Max Weber's analysis of Modernity.³² From there, and the developments of the sociology of knowledge of Max Scheler, the term has described, as a first step, the process that has occurred with the *gradual disappearance of the religious horizon* of modern life. Modern life has created streamlined processes in all spheres of human life in a way that has made unnecessary a horizon of meaning in the interpretation of the world. Modernization, rationalization and secularization were three central concepts in the

³² Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge-London: Belknap Press of Harvard, 2007), p. 156.

discourse of Modernity. These thick brush strokes give us a sample of the complexity of the phenomenon, if not announce the demise of religion in modern societies, or at least its privatization, its dissolution or confusion with its aesthetic or cultural categories.³³

But the phenomenon is more complex than was at first thought because it is neither a universal nor an irreversible phenomenon. Perhaps this is a temporary phenomenon, like an eclipse, which should be analyzed in greater detail. Taylor is reluctant to interpret secularism as had been understood since Weber, in the sense of a process of subtraction, that is, as a process which places the reduction of human nature to the sacred so as to enable the development of one that is more free or without obstacles. As a process of subtraction, secularism leaves man free of repressive traditions that hamper his autonomy and fulfilment.³⁴

Is this the only reading of the secularization? Taylor is not convinced that it is an important interpretation. His novelty is to interpret the process with philosophical hermeneutics, that is, as historical, cultural and open. For Taylor,

...People still experience a feeling of unease in the new world without faith, some feel that something big has been left out, something important; that it has ignored some deeper level of desire which has been pushed higher and a reality outside us...But the sense of dignity, control, maturity and autonomy that is associated with the rejection of the faith, remained attractive to people and it seems that indefinitely in the future...most people feel both sensations, and can only choose one but never completely break from the other...³⁵

Secularization is not necessarily a process of subtraction, or a process of empowerment. Why see secularization as a theft and not as an eclipse?; when sociologists themselves are reviewing their

³³ Uno de los primeros filósofos que fueron conscientes del alcance filosófico de la secularización fue Paul Ricoeur, quien en los coloquios de E. Castelli, ya cuestionó la tesis de la sustracción. Cfr. *Archivio di Filosofia*, 46 (1976). Los textos de Ricoeur sobre la secularización están recogidos en el volumen *Ética y Cultura*, Docencia, Buenos Aires, 1986.

³⁴ Taylor, ASA, 153.

³⁵ Ch. Taylor, *Las variedades de la religión hoy* (Barcelona: Paidós 2003), pp. 65-66.

secularization thesis, why retain this interpretation? Modernization is not necessarily identified with secularism. There may be secularization, but there are also movements of anti-secularism. It is necessary even to distinguish levels because the phenomenon on the social and individual levels requires different qualifications.³⁶

With this revision of the term, in the introduction to the book *A Secular Age*, makes an interesting semantic clarification which states that the term "secular" describes a horizon of understanding or context which is part of the moral, spiritual or religious experience of modern man. It has three meanings of "secularism"³⁷:

- *Separation* of the religious sphere from other social fields, as "secularization of the public sphere." A separation that is not inconsistent with the fact that most people believe in God and practice their religion in a vigorous manner.

- *Reduction* of religious belief and religious practices. But this means not that people do not go to God, but that they stop going to church.

- Describes the context in which it is unquestionably a *personal choice* where belief in God is one option of meaning among others, and not the easiest to take. Believing in God is an alternative.

This broad horizon of understanding has no theoretical or speculative claims, but only an analysis of the changing conditions of the possibility of man's relationship with God. It is on the level not of competing theories, but of the paths that people appropriate for existence or morals. Secularity sets a horizon of immanence where personal fulfilment can also be achieved within the limits of the world and history, within the exclusive humanism as an option available.³⁸ Faith (*Glauben*) and Reason (*Wissen*) in terms of Habermas, or belief

³⁶ P. L. Berger, ed., *The Desecularization of the World. Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Washington DC, Eerdmans, 1999). Says Berger: "the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today.... is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever...the literature labeled "secularization theory" is essentially mistaken." (p. 2). Cfr. J. Casanova, *Religiones públicas en el mundo moderno* (Madrid: PPC, 2000), "La inmigración y el nuevo pluralismo religioso" CIDOB, 77 (2007).

³⁷ Ch. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge-London, Belknap Press of Harvard, 2007) p. 3 (cited as ASA).

³⁸ Taylor, ASA, p. 21.

and unbelief in terms of Taylor, co-exist as valid alternatives to our present.

Modernity does not necessarily lead to the death of God, or to the end of religion, posed as the theory of secularization. Secularization and secularity are phenomena that reach beyond the boundaries of the Christian and Latin worlds, overflowing because the phenomenon has global dimensions. It would be preferable to speak of multiples modernities. Modernity in general, and in particular secularism, cannot be understood as a subtraction or as certain features of a human nature. It is time for new possibilities, for a new self through new practices, "and cannot be explained in terms of perennial features of human life."³⁹

Identity Personal and Social Imaginary

Without the analysis by Taylor on how to change *the imaginary*, I am interested in dwelling on the concept *as such*. It plays a mediating role between intelligence and sensitivity, between the cognitive and the emotional, even among what Ortega called *Ideas y Creencias*. In addition, it could disappoint both sociologists with their more orthodox philosophical burden and more orthodox philosophers with their sociological burden. By addressing the problem of philosophical meaning, the sociology of knowledge as heir to Scheler, Weber and Mannheim would have us accept a term marked by tension as noted in *Ideology and Utopia*.⁴⁰

Ricoeur clarifies its meaning by binding it to the untranslatable term "background" to describe the constitution of its socio-cultural uniqueness. The too individualistic philosophical interpretation needs to appeal to a social and cultural meaning that cannot be understood in isolation, but by the network or code of significance. The tension between the whole and the part of hermeneutics re-emerges again between understanding and explanation. There is also a passionate vindication of the ordinary language as a space for reflection's very own philosophical hermeneutics.

Taylor wants to mark the distance with elitist epistemological and theoretical intellectual constructions. He does not describe a social theory, but: first, the way in which ordinary people imagine their

³⁹ Taylor, ASA, p. 22.

⁴⁰ P. Ricoeur, *Ideología y Utopía* (Barcelona, Gedisa, 1986).

social environment; as expressed, second, through images, stories and legends shared by large groups of people or society as a whole; and third, the condition of the possibility of common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy.⁴¹ The imagery was once factual and normative. Not only is it an idea of the meanings, but of how they have to operate: the practices are part of the rules, as being within a certain ideal, and this in a moral or metaphysical sense.⁴²

Taylor refers to implicit understandings, not to theoretical descriptions. That does not mean that these implicit understandings have to be linked to the *status quo*, nor that the theories cannot influence the consolidation, alteration or dissolution of a social imaginary. This is important for the new relationship between the secular and the sacred because:

God can continue to bring order into our lives...The substitution of one form of enchantment for the other linked to identity laid the groundwork for secularization in which God or religion are not absent from the public space, but are central to the personal identity of many individuals or groups, and therefore a possible factor in establishing the identity of politics. It may be wiser to separate our identity politics from any particular faith, but this principle of separation is subject to constant reinterpretation in its practical application...⁴³

This has occurred in the religious context of what Jaspers called “time axis” whose fundamental aspect has been a revisionist notion of the human good.⁴⁴ Our notions of prosperity or flourishing are always reviewable as “a feature of our own post-axial identity.”⁴⁵ Christianity was imposed on the large displacement, but also with a degree of “corruption” of itself as Taylor points out in an expression of Ivan Illich:

Perhaps in the parable of the Good Samaritan this requirement appears more strongly; it is not said, but it

⁴¹ Ch. Taylor, *Imagarios sociales modernos* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2006) p. 37, citatus ISM; ASA, 159 ss.

⁴² Taylor, *ISM*, p. 43.

⁴³ Taylor, *ISM*, p. 223.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *ASA*, 152.

⁴⁵ Taylor, *ASA*, 158.

follows inevitably from the text. If the Samaritan had respected the sacred social boundaries, he would never have stopped to help the Jew who was injured. It is clear that the Kingdom requires an entirely different kind of solidarity, one that would lead us to a network of relationships based on agape. This is where the corruption occurs: where what we achieved was not a network of relationships based on agape, but a disciplined society with industrial relations as categorical rules...It all started with the laudable effort to cope with the demands of the world, and then to redo it completely. In the NT the world is on one side a positive meaning (God so loved the world, Jn, 3:16), and the other a negative meaning: not as a judge deems the world. This second sense should be understood as the form taken by the sacred order of things with its roots in the cosmos. In this sense, the church does well when it faces the world...the world has finally won the game. Perhaps the contradiction lies in the very idea of imposing the Kingdom by means of discipline. The temptation of power was, after all, too strong, as seen by Dostoievsky in the legend of the great Inquisitor. That was corruption.⁴⁶

Religion and Social Roots (Duty/Obligation/Re-ligation)

We refer to the hermeneutic age of morality because the social bond has become problematic, not only in social and political theories, but in our imaginary. The ethical problem is not in the reality of the link but in the consciousness it takes (or absence of such). This is a central question in any program for active citizenship because it raises not only the individual's relationship with the community or the forms that this relationship takes, but the organization of these in the modern social imaginary. Accordingly, we raised the varied forms of the practice (or not) of citizenship.

If the problem was purely ethical or even moral, political or legal, it could be reduced to the nature of the rules or obligations. Playing with the terminology, we would refer to Bonds as a rule, internal or

⁴⁶ Taylor, ASA, 158; ISM, 85. Cfr. R. Girard, *Veo a Satán caer como el relámpago* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2002).

external, to which we must respond ("ob-ligation") and to account. That is why we are (or are not) responsible. But the link is not just a standard that others have had before us and which challenges us; it is also a power or force that does, or does not, drag us. Although it may be a source of rules, understood well the link is a relationship expressed as a re-ligation. This terminology is familiar to connoisseurs of the ethics of Zubiri, which raises the obligation as a requirement that I have before me and a re-ligation as a force that pushes from behind.

Taylor sees this as thinking twice when analyzing the modern social imaginary because it is not easy to separate radical socio-moral motivations and moral religious motivations. In the same way that there are two sources of morality and religion in Bergson (cohesion and aspiration), Taylor relies on Durkheim to analyze the ways in which we can raise the issue of the rootedness of the social bond. This is not a purely social or religious problem; it is a philosophical problem as it bridges between the sacred and the secular. Although secularization is synonymous with option and choice, "the life or religious practice for which I take part should not only be the result of my choice, but must say something with meaning in my spiritual development...If the central issue happens to be my spiritual evolution...there is no need that our relationship with the sacred be incorporated into any broader framework such as a Church or State."⁴⁷

The problem is much more complex than the membership in a church confession or denomination, or in a state. Taylor then raises it to show that with disenchantment with the modern order comes a new way of thinking, not in terms of vulnerability (*the porous self*) but in terms of "buffer" (*the buffered self*). Hence the "Durkheimian order" presents three interpretative possibilities of roots and their relationship with the sacred as ideal types:

i. Paleo-Durkheimian. Maintaining the link with the sacred implies membership in a church, in principle, coextensive with society. There is a commitment to God and membership in the state, whence the term "Durkheimian."⁴⁸ The integration was done through an application of social resources. People assume that it does not cost anything to obey the mandate to abandon their instincts to disorderly conduct. This is

⁴⁷ Taylor, *Variedades*, p. 103-104.

⁴⁸ Taylor, *Variedades*, pp. 102-103.

the very model of what he calls “baroque Catholic societies.” Still alive is the idea of ontic dependency on State to respect God, a pattern seen in terms of “papist.”

ii. Neo-Durkheimian. This model represents an important step towards the identification and the right to choose. One voluntarily enters a denomination because this seems correct. The link with the sacred is a matter of choice, and choice of a name or confession. This voluntary membership links the subject to a broader and more diffuse “CHURCH” as a political entity with a providential mission to fulfill. Also here is the link of the individual with the “church” or denomination and the state. God is present because society is organized around a design that arouses our commitment as a common definition of our society, what would be called identity politics.

People conform to the general framework voluntarily chosen. This merges the concepts of group membership and the religious and moral aspects of the history of the group in religious categories. When they say that religion plays an integrative role they should not raise religious faith as an independent variable as happens in a secular sociology. “It would be less biased” – holds Taylor – “to say that people find meaning in the religious language of a strong moral and political experience, regardless of oppression and construction of the state around certain moral principles.”⁴⁹

iii. Post-Durkheimian. The relationship with the sacred, whether religious or secular, has been disengaged from the political affiliation. As to really valuable spiritual intuitions-feelings, everyone must follow the path of their own spiritual inspiration, though many people do not understand this. Choosing one’s own spirituality moves and inspires one. It is associated with a non-political but spiritual pluralism. The boundaries are not political but stem from the modern new moral order characterized by freedom and mutual benefit. In the words of Taylor:

My spiritual path should respect others, should be governed by the principle of no harm. Apart from this restriction, the path you choose may be among those that require some kind of community as a necessary condition, or even national communities aspiring to be the Church of the State, but also it may be among those

⁴⁹ Taylor, *Variedades*, p. 88.

that require only vague affinity groups, or some kind of support...This quits the a priori principle according to which any valid response to religious concerns should be inside a church (paleo) or a "church" and/or society. The spiritual as such has ceased to be intrinsically linked to the company. This is the response to an expressivist identity, but, of course, things did not have to have gone well...⁵⁰

A few pages later, he sums up the scenario developed in *A Secular Age*:

The gradual shift in our post-Durkheimian social imaginary during the post-war has destabilized and undermined the various Durkheimian orders...The results are measurable, external and expected:...a growing number of people who are atheists, agnostics or not members...a greatly expanded spectrum of intermediate positions (many people abandon religious practice but declare themselves members of some religion or believers in God). As the spectrum of belief extends to a higher reality, there is a reduction in the number of those who believe in a Personal God and an increase in opting for something like an impersonal force...Every time there is a broader spectrum of people expressing religious beliefs outside of Christian orthodoxy...there is a growth of religions different from Christianity...More and more people before adopting positions that would have been considered unsustainable...In response to all this, the Christian faith is in a process of redefinition and reorganization...The situation is almost entirely new.⁵¹

Paul Ricoeur: The Useful Analogy of the Business of Translating

Ricoeur has made the road from the phenomenology and hermeneutics and from there has built an original philosophy. His approach can only be understood from the philosophical hermeneutics, and that's why talk of a "hermeneutical age of morality"

⁵⁰ Taylor, *Variedades*, pp. 110-111.

⁵¹ Taylor, *Variedades*, p. 115-117.

requires reference to his work. Everything that Gadamer brings that situates us in the hermeneutical age of reason also situates Ricoeur in the hermeneutical age of morality.

Ricoeur argues that the Ethical and Moral are different fields: the first is about the desire for the good life (the Aristotelian tradition) and the second is about duty and obligation (the Kantian tradition). He even describes the “small ethics” that *Oneself as another* offers as a short and simple way. It is not easy to place this in a teleological or ethical tradition because both are inadequate to think today with its radical moral life.

And not only to think, but to think as the moral part of life as knowing and open to other knowledge (from theology up to neurology), rather than just thinking with pretensions of universality. Not only to think but thinking to serve. What I think does not identify with immediate use but with discernment, the capacity of judge and the willingness of service. This describes a dual commitment that is not establishment but tension “From the Moral to the Ethical and Ethics.”⁵² the path from Moral to Ethical is the way of foundation while Ethics is the path of application. Both are undertaken in the same moral life that can be travelled *upstream*, to investigate the sources, or *downstream*, to guide the most immediate and urgent decisions. In turn, the business practice of constant clarification, historical analysis, and philosophical and historical responsibility is the name of hermeneutics.

The practice of translating is a valuable analogy. In this activity not only is there discovered the narrative structure of moral life, but we experience *linguistic hospitality*. More than an exercise in total appropriation or installation in another language there is an exercise of both appropriation and alienation, both the language itself as the language learned. Translation is a paradigm that is itself hermeneutic because, “to understand is to translate.”

The translation is not only a theoretical and practical task of knowledge, it poses a real ethical problem.”...There is no absolute criterion of a good translation...as this cannot expect more than an equivalence, and presumably is not based on a demonstrable sense of

⁵² P. Ricoeur, “De la Moral a la Ética y a las Éticas,” en *Lo justo II. Estudios, lecturas y ejercicios de ética aplicada*. Trotta, Madrid, 2008, 47 ss. English Version: *Reflections on the Just* (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), “From the Moral to the Ethical and to Ethics,” pp. 45 ss.

identity: equivalence without identity. Such equivalence can only be sought after....Driving the reader to the author, the reader of the author, with the risk of betraying or serving two masters, is to practice what I like to call linguistic hospitality."⁵³

This is a task fraught with difficulties: "learning to live in a foreign language, and to receive it in mine. In this sense the term hospitality engages linguistics in a great ecumenism. A kind of hospitality of conviction, it would engage not only the common expression in ethics, but take a variety of paths to reach this ethic on a basis of belief rather than the merely ethical."⁵⁴ Here Ricoeur indicates an interesting direction for inter-religious and also intra-religious dialogue. It is a direction in which the road that introduces the sacred in the public debate is conviction and the different conceptions of the sacred. Here a morality is necessary but insufficient.

This is an important point in the relations of the sacred and the secular because we start from a disproportion to the sacred, which can be a mystery, a problem or an enigma. The hermeneutic effort occurs when there is a lack of recognition in true dialogue (Gadamer), in connection with the past (Heidegger), and in a relationship of mutuality with others (Ricoeur). Here recognition is the touchstone of hermeneutics⁵⁵ and helps us to describe the three tasks: to construct an ethics that takes seriously the path of the heart, to tackle the conflicts in our deep convictions (religious or humanistic) and criticism (philosophical), and to renew the pluralism that deepens identity (whether religious or humanistic).

Take Seriously the Path of the Heart

Ricoeur's work is the path travelled by the heart, which appears explicitly in his later writings, particularly those after *Love and Justice*. It includes the letters that spoke of the dialectic of the *socius* (partner) and *proximus* (neighbour), but here I will focus on the two major categories for the sacred and the secular.

The social philosophy of the other that appeared in his history and truth is renewed here in terms of the relationship between Love and

⁵³ P. Ricoeur, "El paradigma de la traducción": *Lo Justo II, op. cit.*, pp. 108-109 (English version: pp. 106 ss.).

⁵⁴ P. Ricoeur, "Entretien Hans Küng-Paul Ricoeur," *Sens*, 5 (1998), 211-230.

⁵⁵ T. Domingo, "Del sí mismo reconocido a los estados de paz. Caminos de hospitalidad en Paul Ricoeur": *Pensamiento* 62 (2006), 203-230.

Justice. This enables updating the Golden Rule as a universal moral reference in religions that appear in "axial time," a common reference for Jaspers, Habermas, Taylor and Ricoeur. The philosophical analysis does not exclude theological terms, but focuses at a fundamental level on *agape*. This is not a theological concept but expresses semantically a vital religious origin, both philosophically and theologically, namely, the experience of mutual unconditional surrender, mutual gift and mutual recognition.⁵⁶

This initial reference may clarify the phenomenology of recognition and justice. Read from an "economy" of *agape* (that is, of gift) the ethics of justice found in the Golden Rule and Rawls' *Theory of Justice* are placed in a new interpretive framework as part of a logic of equivalence, rethought after a logic of the overabundance or donation. In the words of Ricoeur:

The order of love does not cancel the Golden Rule, but reinterprets the sense of generosity, and thus provides a way that is not only possible but necessary for an order that, by virtue of its status above-the-ethical-only accesses the area of ethics at the cost of extreme and paradoxical behaviour: the same that are recommended in the wake of the new commandment: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who accuse you. When you are struck on one cheek, offer the other also, and to one who asks for the mantle, do not deny the robe. To anyone who you asks, give, and what is taken from you do not reclaim" (Lc VI, 27-30). These are the unique commitments taken by Saint Francis, Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Yet, what criminal law in general or rule of justice could be extracted from actions based on non-equivalence as a

⁵⁶ The sacred presents a new form, "como ya confirmaron Scheler y Zubiri, cuando se plantea desde el orden del amor (*Ordo Amoris*). Lo sagrado es consecutivo de una relación religiosa, no es constitutivo de la misma." Cfr. X. Zubiri, *El problema filosófico de la historia de las religiones*. Alianza, Madrid, 1993. "lo profano no se opone formalmente a lo sagrado, sino que se opone a lo religioso...Lo sagrado es ciertamente algo que pertenece a lo religioso, pero le pertenece consecutivamente, por ser religioso...La historia de las religiones no es la historia de los valores sagrados, sino una historia de las relaciones del hombre con Dios...lo sagrado es consecutivo, pero no constitutivo de la divinidad en cuanto tal," pp. 26-27.

general rule? What distribution of tasks, roles, benefits and charges could be instituted in the spirit of distributive justice, if providing the maximum without expecting anything in return was a universal rule? If the above moral is not to lead the non-moral, and even the immoral, for example, cowardice, it is necessary to pass by way of the principle of morality, summarized in the Golden Rule and formalized by the rule of justice... Without the correction of the mandate of love, in fact, the Golden Rule would be endlessly interpreted as meaning, at most, the utilitarian formula, *do ut des*, I give in order that you give. The rule: give because you have been given, corrects in order that of maximum utility and saves the Golden Rule from a perverted interpretation which is always possible.⁵⁷

The same applies to the category of recognition. In his book *Ways of Recognition*, Ricoeur makes a bold analysis that can come only as a surprise to those who knew him. He introduces the concept of “states of peace” to show that it is a social philosophy and political alternative. If the “struggle for recognition” is the dominant social philosophy, why not raise a different alternative? An alternative approach that stems from an economy of the gift can raise *reciprocal recognition* in a more radical manner as *mutual recognition*. Faced with the challenge of Hobbes (distrust) and the response of Hegel (struggle for recognition)...why not raise the alternative of a benevolence or mutual recognition that does not scorn the similarity between humans in the great family of humanity?

The states of peace are quiet experiences of mutual recognition that find their expression in mediations far from symbolic and legal logic. Mediations are symbolic of that which was located in the practice of the ceremonial exchange of gifts in ancient societies. A state of peace is love, *agape* in the Christian sense. Where does this obligation arise? Some sociologists refer to archaic elements in these forms of donation involving a history of trade, and they interpret it as remainders present in our modern societies. The exchange of gifts expresses mutuality of social ties, proximity. As has been given to me, I do in

⁵⁷ P. Ricoeur, *Amor y Justicia* (Madrid: Caparros Editores, 1993), pp. 30-31.

turn, but not because of dependence on the donor (requirement). The gesture is an invitation to express a similar generosity (religation). Paradoxically, it does not expect reciprocity. This chain of favours, gift and recognition is a state of peace.

Speaking of a gift that is not seeking restitution brings to mind the word gratitude.⁵⁸ The word gratitude is another way of saying recognition: to thank is to recognize. In addition, this exchange of gifts is festive in nature. This is not an issue that can be reduced to the moral; it goes beyond what is moral. So the moral hermeneutics keeps open the relationship with other moral and various other dimensions of human life, whether cultural, religious or metaphysical.

This reflection is not intended for charitable institutions that seek to fill the gaps of distributive justice. Ricoeur wants to highlight the festive nature of this exchange, which is beyond moralizing. For the festive, like forgiveness, there can be no institution. These gestures radiate confidence and fall under the grammar of the optative, beyond the merely descriptive (which could end any hope) and beyond what is normative (which could convert the rule into an unattainable and frustrating end). The struggle for recognition continues endlessly, at least, the experiences of effective recognition in an exchange of gifts, mostly in their festive stage. This gives the struggle for recognition a security that is not illusory or futile, a motivation that distinguishes it from the appetite for power which cloaks violence.⁵⁹

This is the "between," the space of welcome and meeting with the area of hospitality. This "between" means not asymmetry, but mutuality. Asymmetry between the self and you, me and the other, recalls the irreplaceable and unique character of each; one is not the other. In love, friendship, community or the planet we must not fall into a fusional union, as on a scale. Therefore Ricoeur states that "preserving a fair distance in the heart of mutuality integrates a just respect for privacy."⁶⁰ This bespeaks, at the same time, solidarity and hospitality, gratitude and recognition.

⁵⁸ P. Ricoeur, *Caminos de Reconocimiento* (Madrid: Trotta, 2005). English version: *The Course of Recognition* (Cambridge-Massachusetts-London: Harvard University Press, 2005), trans. by David Pellauer.

⁵⁹ P. Ricoeur, *Caminos*, p. 251.

⁶⁰ Ricoeur, *Caminos*, p. 266.

Addressing the Conflict between the Belief (Religion) and Criticism (Philosophy)

Ricoeur has moved between criticism and conviction, between the need to practice a philosophical hermeneutics of suspicion and an existential need to the practice of a hermeneutics of trust. However, he presents not an exclusive option but the possibility of a synthesis. Such an approach seems easy, but it is not. Furthermore it is not a Hegelian synthesis that cancels the tension, but one that maintains it *at the time of discernment*. It is not Hegelian because the conviction was not present with subjective consciousness and critical reason. Nor are we referring to conviction as a matter of morality with criticism as its form. As we have stated in other writings, belief is not synonymous with individual arbitrariness or an irrational religious occurrence, but is the testimony of a presence, of "I'm here" for Levinas, whom Ricoeur described ontologically as "sameness."

Ricoeur refers to the need to bring the sources of moral life to radical thought, as if it were put to the test when it builds a rule. In terms of moral philosophy the categories are phronesis or practical wisdom, and *epiqueia* or equity. Therefore, it is not enough to go to the Ethical to clarify the Moral. It is not enough to go to the principles or the universality of the norm to promote a just decision. Today, we are required to pass from Ethics to the Ethical, namely from the foundation to the application. The hermeneutics for this application has never been a task of induction to, or deduction from, mechanical principles. The application is rather a matter of the creativity and realization of singularity. This is the time of the "concrete" universal. So it appears in the interpretation by Gadamer of Aristotle, which Ricoeur extends to multiple areas of human life.

It was his original position before the *Ethics of Justice Rawls*, the ethics of discourse of Habermas-Apel, and the ethics of recognition of Taylor.⁶¹ It is necessary to add a third dimension to moral philosophy.⁶² We must keep in mind the tragic character of action, i.e., situations where there is a conflict of duties such as with Antigone and Creon in the Greek tragedy. There, the complexity of social relationships brings the moral or legal rule into conflict with duties to the person, and duties have absolute and sacred status. It is not

⁶¹ Ricoeur, *Lo justo II*, pp. 169-170.

⁶² Ricoeur, *Lo Justo II*, p. 220.

enough to promote the good; we must learn to avoid the worst. The application of universal norms for unique situations brings into play the dynamics of historical and cultural traditions as mediators in the process of implementation. Here the analogy with translation is important:

A meditation on the diversity of languages, a fundamental aspect of the diversity of cultures, can lead to an interesting analysis of the way practically to solve the problem...in the absence of any super language, we are not completely devoid of resources, for we can appeal to translation...as a universal phenomenon that is another way of saying the same message...This bizarre family... welcomes the word of another. This phenomenon of hospitality in language can serve as a model for understanding the whole, in which the absence of a neutral third game engages the players in transfer and reception....Here universalism and contextualism are not opposed in the same plane, but come from two different levels of morality: that of allegedly universal obligation and the practical wisdom that is responsible for the diversity of cultural heritages. It would be inaccurate to say that the transition from universal to historical obligations calls on the resources of ethics for living well. This may not solve, but at least it bases the aporia which derive from the unreasonable demands of a theory of justice or of a theory of discourse based only on the principles of a formalism and the rigor of its procedure.⁶³

This criticism is essential in societies where there are many codes and moral convictions that can be arbitrary. It is based in belief in a reflective level that is immediate, naïve and arbitrary. In the same way that the symbol "gives rise to thought" when science tends to naturalism, belief is also an incentive to review and criticize public deliberations.

In modernization, convictions are subject to criticism. Understood as rationalization, modernization requires a "de-mything" process of religions, and, in fact, theology has raised the issue of de-

⁶³ Ricoeur, *Lo Justo II*, pp. 225-226.

mythification. However, for Ricoeur, the challenge that philosophy poses for religious beliefs does not require that these lose their symbolism. In fact, his analysis of symbol and metaphor is intended as a criticism of the process of demystification and rationalization, rather than of symbols.

Criticism calls for disenchantment of the world, but also for a post-critical re-enchantment. Secularization can contribute to a clarification and purification of the sacred. For those who maintained deep religious convictions, secularism can be read as an opportunity for a post-critical or meta-critical re-enchantment. The criticism does not have to cancel one's convictions and may even strengthen them.

There are pages of *The Voluntary and Involuntary* which present clearly this new relationship between the meanings of symbols of the sacred and the demands of philosophical criticism:

...If it is true that we cannot relive the great symbols of the sacred in their original authentic faith, however as modern men we can aspire to a new naivety in criticism and critique. In a word, interpretation can open new doors of understanding; in this way through the hermeneutics of gift as characteristic of the symbol, with the intelligible and rational initiative typical of the critical interpretive work of modern hermeneutics...reveals the symbol as a sign from the sacred, thus contributing to a revival of philosophy in contact with the symbols. This is one of the ways to...rejuvenate the discovery of the hermeneutic circle [believe to understand, comprehend to believe] which has violently shaken neutrality in matters of belief. This has incited thinking no longer within the symbols, but based on them, or rather, from them.⁶⁴

This approach is maintained in Ricoeur's dialogue with the psychoanalysis of Freud. The book entitled *Freud. An Interpretation of Culture*, says the following: Reflection does not entail a concession to an irrational effusiveness. The thinking back to the foundations is still thinking as intellection; there reflection becomes hermeneutics. There

⁶⁴ P. Ricoeur, *Lo voluntario y lo involuntario I* (Madrid: Taurus, Madrid, 1982), pp. 492-496.

is no other way for one to be concrete while still being in thought. The second naïveté is not the first naïve, since it is no longer precritical but a *docta* naïveté.⁶⁵

Renew the Plurality, Deepening the Identity

Ricoeur has developed an original theory about the identity narrative based on the dialectic of sameness/selfhood. In this horizon is located the reflection on identity conferred by religions with its universal and unique elements. On their relevance for the study of the sacred, in a comment in *Sources of the Self* of Taylor says: "What might be called the durability of the traits is what ensures the conjunction between the historic character of the moral concepts and character transhistoric of universal ethics. My distinction between sameness and selfhood is here perhaps a new job."⁶⁶

The relationship with the sacred historical religions is complex and tends to avoid the problem of moral identity in terms of moral religious identity. Ricoeur speaks of an identity narrative and on the issues that we have here called "the sacred" (religious, church denominations, meeting with God) he develops an approach outside the common. It dissolves identities and manifests an ecumenical spirit which makes it clear that the sacred does not have to identify with violence, arbitrariness and irrationality in public life.

There are two important moments in the final stages of their life where we find this proposal stated clearly. First, in his ongoing dialogue with Jean Pierre Changeaux in the book *What Makes Us Think?*⁶⁷ One of the chapters is entitled "The Fundamentals of Natural Ethics, a Debate" in which it is pointed out how to raise the issue of religious identity in a plural social context:

i. The religious identity is linked to the sacred existential and foundational value of the word.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ P. Ricoeur, *Freud. Una interpretación de la cultura* (México, Siglo XXI, 1987), pp. 477-478.

⁶⁶ P. Ricoeur, *Lo Justo II*, p. 167. The Relationship between Religion, Violence and Social Justice, vid. A. Domingo, "Violencia y justicia social. La deslegitimación cultural de la violencia en Girard y Ricoeur," in J. Sanmartín, R. Gutiérrez, and J. Martínez, eds., *Reflexiones sobre la violencia* (México 2008: Siglo XXI).

⁶⁷ P. Ricoeur, *Lo que nos hace pensar. La naturaleza y la regla*. (Barcelona: Península 1999), pp. 237-283. English version: *What Makes Us Think?* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 2002).

⁶⁸ Ricoeur, *Lo que nos hace pensar*, p. 245.

ii. From this foundational word, in all religions there is a quest for the foundation:

...To belong to a religious tradition is to admit at once that this language is my language, and that I can in principle have access to language only through it. If you do not know other languages, my language is the limit of my world, but also my religious vision is the limit of what is religious. It is a gesture of great culture and great religious modesty to understand that my access to the religious, though fundamental, is partial, and others, through other channels, have access to this foundation. If on the surface of a sphere fragmented into different religious sites one tries to walk the surface in an eclectic manner, he will never find universal religious syncretism. But if one delves into one's own tradition and opens the limits of one's language, one can go "fundamentally" to reach others, travelling the distance with others through the dimension of depth. On the surface, the distance is huge, but if I deepen, I can be close to another on the same path...We must renounce the idea of omnipotence and hell, although this does not prevent you from looking for another idea of the power precisely of the word, linked to the absolute weakness of a love that is stronger than death.⁶⁹

iii. The foundational world is not a single word, which does not mean that there is not a single foundation of all words and languages. The common ground is not inconsistent with the plurality of expressions or languages. Peace requires the recognition of this foundation and plurality.

We have to count on plurality. The problem is peace between beliefs and mutual assistance...Religious peace is a widespread recognition among the best of Christianity and Judaism, Islam and Buddhism, according to the aphorism that the truth lies in the background. My hope is that some mutual recognition between religions by which each waives saying it is the only truth, and is

⁶⁹ Ricoeur, *Lo que nos hace pensar*, p. 247-248.

satisfied with being in truth, recognizing equally that there is some truth outside it and accepting this difficult dialectic. This involves also other key languages, but I do not know if that road is the path of others. Only through mutual recognition of the different languages of religion can they claim recognition of something fundamental beyond its multiple expressions.⁷⁰

iv. Love is not an alternative to justice but a test of its universality. In the singular is found the concrete universal justice that should be kept in tension with love:

Love requires justice that is increasingly fair. I do not see this as substituted by a love of justice. On the contrary, love that seeks justice must be universal. But under the requirement of the universal one is culturally limited. But this is only a "claim of universality." Love goes on to say to those who defend justice: Not only must one respect universality, but also uniqueness. What is essentially religious in this hymn to love is the pressure it exerts on justice.⁷¹

The second time we refer to is April 5, 1996 when Ricoeur held a discussion with Hans Küng after the publication of the *Manifesto for a Global Ethic*.⁷² The transcript appeared in *Sens, no.5*, a magazine of Jewish-Christian friendship in France in 1999, three years later. The imperative "not to kill," is not a word we have invented, but one that has been entrusted to us. The bottom line is a "surplus" of conviction. God is not only a "fundamental reality," as claimed by Küng in his book.

To Ricoeur, we should refer this to the dynamic expression of the deep conviction that gives one the strength of ownership. The problem is not simply to pick a common belief, but indicates the path of each religion to a common foundation. Linguistic hospitality marks a great ecumenism as a *hospitality of conviction* recognized not only in

⁷⁰ *op. cit.*, 251.

⁷¹ *op. cit.*, 255.

⁷² H. Küng and K.J. Kuschel, eds., *A Global Ethic. The Declaration of Parliament of the World's Religions* (New York: Continuum, 1993). Spanish Version in Editorial Trotta, Madrid, 1998.

a common Ethical expression, but in the variety of paths to reach this Ethical principle from a background of convictions that is more Ethical.

Far from a *common declaration* this would require a *common silence* on what cannot be said. This profound silence could be brought together more than a statement or declaration. Each would look deeply into his own tradition, gathering underground. Hence we need to find a point of silence and a grouping that is not on the level of a verbal statement. We seek not only mercy petition but recognition.

The source of the Ethical is not in statements; Ricoeur insists rather on the basis of the very deep conviction. The subject is not the owner of meaning or sense that is beyond and disarms me. All religions as *a work of heart* are capable of making this journey against themselves and against their own fundamentalism. This is something similar to conversion, which is a movement of revulsion against the violent component of a conviction. "It is necessary to preserve the non-political dimension, the dimension of no power, so that the power of a word that is weak politically, such as "do not kill," "tell the truth," "righteous thirst," and "respect for the weak" will have a chance of being heard by others."

Conclusion

I chose the term "hermeneutical age of morality" to describe the state of morals in times where communication between cultures, peoples and religions are in a globalizing dimension. The term does not describe the existence of a universal language that nullifies the language of individuals. It describes the tension of our moral life as located in a horizon of global communication, yet not knowing how to interact with other cultural and religious traditions. This tension affects not only the moral life, but the whole person, including one's religious dimension.

We talk about an old hermeneutics of morality to describe the time in which religion was present in moral deliberations. Not to shift moral rationality, but to enrich it with arguments or reasons; not to break with multiple or secularized modernities, but to revise them in depth and radicalism. This requires a fundamental practice of hermeneutics: translation. Habermas, Taylor and Ricoeur present three different proposals for translation and communication between

the sacred and the secular, for clarification of the highest moral happiness.

Habermas has recognized explicitly in his last works the legitimacy of the sacred and religions in the public moral deliberation. Religions are reserves of sense that a democracy cannot afford to lose. The moral based on the religions have a cognitive plausibility that public reason cannot dispense with, so it is important to conduct translation efforts that facilitate the learning sets of belief and non-belief.

Taylor has never ruled out religion on the grounds of morality and has always recognized the positive role of religious belief in the moral traditions. The secular age could not have been built without a religion; therefore secularization is not a synonym for subtraction or disenchantment. Secularization is developed in an imaginary complex from a religious re-enchantment of world based on new philosophical coordinates.

Ricoeur responds to the challenge of the identity posed by religions. The integration of religion in the ethical does not respond to a horizon of global communication. Philosophical hermeneutics has helped reconstruct human reason and keep it open to transcendence, which he calls "the basics" (*The fundament*). The moral does not end in itself, but reminds us of an ongoing philosophical hermeneutics. Recognition and justice are also the result of gratitude, generosity and gifts.

Ultimately, three complementary approaches announce the arrival of a new age of moral philosophy: (a) regulatory developments in the field of democracy: Habermas revising the approach to public reason of Rawls; (b) epistemological developments in the field of social theory where Taylor reviews the disenchantment of modern reason from Weber; and (c) developments in the field of metaphysics where Ricoeur renews an ethics of recognition from the donation of self. These three different and complementary backgrounds put us in the hermeneutical age of morality.

**Towards a “World Ethos”:
From Habermas’ Communicative Reason, to
Ratzinger’s Communicative *Logos*, to
Rielo’s Divine Constitutive Presence**

ROBERT BADILLO

Introduction

This paper takes as its point of departure a new alliance between faith and reason developed within the context of the 2004 debate¹ between two celebrated German intellectuals of our time, the philosopher Jürgen Habermas and the theologian, then-cardinal Josef Ratzinger. For his part, Habermas rightly admits the limits of communicative reason when conceived as “secular reason” and argues instead in favor of a “post-secular reason,” one that is open in public discourse to the religious convictions of faith traditions that foster social solidarity. The sole requirement here is that such convictions be rationally translated so as to be universally accessible to all. Ratzinger, in turn, stressing the importance of reason as a corrective to the excesses of fanatical faith claims, as in the case of Islamic extremism and some forms of Christian fundamentalism, argues for a fundamental complementarity between reason and faith in an ongoing process of mutual help and purification. Moreover, Ratzinger acknowledged in this debate the desirability of an as yet nonexistent “world ethos”² capable of unifying diverse cultural spheres. Later, as Benedict XVI,³ in his 2006 Regensburg lecture,⁴ he

¹ The debate (Munich, January 19, 2004), sponsored by the Catholic Academy of Bavaria, Florian Schuller, Director, was published as Jürgen Habermas and Josef Ratzinger, *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, edited with a Foreword by Florian Schuller, translated by Brian McNeil, C.R.V. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006); henceforth Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*.

² This was proposed by Hans Küng in his *Der Anfang aller Dinge*.

³ I will use the name Ratzinger when referring to the stated debate, and the name Benedict XVI when referring to writings authored during his Pontificate.

⁴ Benedict XVI, “Faith, Reason and the University, Memories and Reflections,” a lecture presented at the University of Regensburg (Rome: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2006); henceforth “Regensburg lecture.”

advanced the significance of a Christian appropriation, via St. John's gospel, of the Greek concept of *logos* (reason/word). This came to be understood as a creative or communicative *Logos*, for it fosters a rationally intelligible understanding of God, the created universe, and the human being. Further, in his 2005 encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*,⁵ Benedict developed the biblical disclosure of God as *Agape*, loving and relational, who has endowed the human person with *eros*, a yearning for mystical union with Divinity.

Nonetheless, the Christian God as creative, loving, and communicative, the ultimate source of an ethics worthy of the human person, is without a proper rational grounding in the Western metaphysical tradition. This grounding is informed by a conception of the absolute as an *unum simpliciter* bereft of internal relationships, as monolithic and incommunicative, a veritable *solus ipse* raised to the status of Absolute Being. Fernando Rielo's "genetic metaphysics," on the contrary, proffers a genetic conception of the Absolute Subject as a "Binity" – at an intellectual or rational level – constituted by two personal beings who are relational and communicative, that ontologically fashions the human person through its "divine constitutive presence" for intimate communion with the Divinity. Rielo's divine constitutive presence may also provide a basis for a "world ethos" capable of being embraced by diverse cultural spheres. This paper will trace the contours of this development.

The Limits of Habermas' Communicative Reason

The 2004 debate between Habermas and Ratzinger stems from a prior question posed by E. W. Böckenförde: "To what extent can peoples united in states live exclusively on the basis of the guarantee of the freedom of the individual members of the society without a uniting bond antecedent to the freedom?"⁶ It is noteworthy that the issue of the "uniting bond," which Böckenförde raises, if it indeed could be satisfactorily articulated, raises the issue of what could serve as the ground for such a bond, the universal basis for a "world ethos." This said, within the context of the Habermas-Ratzinger debate, the

⁵ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2005).

⁶ E. W. Böckenförde, "Die Entstehung des Vorgangder Säkularisation" (1967) in *Recht, Staat, Freiheit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), p. 111.

question was framed in terms of the pre-political moral foundations of the democratic, constitutional state.

For Habermas the ultimate foundations that legitimize state authorities with a "neutral world view" do not derive from a transcendent reality or from the spiritual endowments of the human being, but from practical reason, the "profane sources" of seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophy. Habermas, in line with his communicative rationality, considers the "uniting bond" to be the constitution, democratically derived, i.e., by "a communicative praxis that can be exercised only in common and that has as an ultimate theme the correct understanding of the constitution."⁷ The engine, for Habermas, that should move democratic processes is communicative reason; on the basis of his theory of communicative action, he argues that the locus of this form of rationality is to be found not in the metaphysical order of the object (as in classical metaphysics) nor in that of the subject (as largely conceived in modern philosophy), but, rather, in the structures of communicative action oriented teleonomically toward reaching mutual understanding among human beings. For Habermas the key to human emancipation from social disequilibria in the direction of equality and justice is to be brought about by institutionalizing human communicative reason that has the potential for unmasking strategic or instrumental uses of rationality. He maintains that, although from a postmodern standpoint, ultimate philosophical worldviews are conceived as untenable, there can nonetheless be a universal pragmatic theory of rationality open to empirical testing of the sort the positivistic and the social sciences support. Purportedly bereft of metaphysical or transcendental ontological assumptions, any universalist claims can be validated only by testing them against counterexamples in historical social contexts.

To Habermas' dismay, the postmodern consciousness has witnessed a disenchantment with the dialectic of the Enlightenment and positivistic scientism. The process of secular modernization appears to have contributed to societal disintegration, to a "crumbling of citizens' solidarity." The limited power of bureaucracy in the face of a dynamic global economy, in which markets are taking over regulatory functions, has contributed to a "depoliticization of citizens," a limitation of the citizen's ability to coordinate action based

⁷ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 32.

on values, norms, and a vocabulary intended to promote mutual understanding. Habermas conjectures: "If the modernization of society as a whole went off the rails..., [this] would lead to...the transformation of the citizens of prosperous and peaceful liberal societies into isolated monads acting on the basis of their own self-interest, persons who use their subjective rights only as weapons against each other."⁸ Habermas thus acknowledges that neither his postmetaphysical view nor professional experts alone can undo much that already has gone wrong "with regard to lives that have gone astray, with regard to societal pathologies, with regard to the failure of individuals' plans for their lives, and with regard to the deformation and disfigurement of the lives that people share with one another."⁹

Given this state of affairs, while Habermas wants to maintain a healthy distinction between secular discourse, based on the authority of secular reason as supported by the experimental warrants of positivistic science and the universalistic principles of juridical egalitarianism, on the one hand, and religious discourse, based on faith in the alleged truths of revelation, on the other, he nonetheless points out that philosophy is not in a position to adjudicate regarding the veracity of the claims of religion.

The respect that accompanies this refusal to utter a cognitive judgment is based on the respect due to persons and ways of life that obviously derive their integrity and authenticity from religious convictions. But more is involved here than respect: philosophy has good reasons to be willing to learn from religious traditions.¹⁰

Habermas points out that in the encounter between Christianity and Greek metaphysics, the interpenetration between secular and religious culture, was mutually beneficial: Christianity was enriched by the Greek understanding of the world in the formulation of theological dogmatics, while philosophy assimilated genuinely Christian notions replete with meaning in normative conceptual clusters, as evidenced in terms such as "responsibility, autonomy, and

⁸ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 35.

⁹ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 42.

justification; or history and remembering, new beginning, innovation, and return; or emancipation and fulfillment; or expropriation, internalization, and embodiment, individuality and fellowship."¹¹

Habermas recommends, however, that secular reason accept only that which can ultimately be translated into its own terms – i.e., that which is rationally or universally accessible to all. This process of translation should not proceed in a manner that renders the term empty of its signification through a process of deflation and exhaustion. He cites as an example the notion of "man in the image of God," which he proceeds to translate in a manner acceptable to post-secular reason – i.e., as expressing the "identical dignity of all men that deserves unconditional respect."¹² A judicious appropriation, then, of religious terminology may serve to nourish the citizens of a secular, constitutional state by fostering greater consciousness of norms favoring human solidarity.¹³ In this respect a post-secular society is called to do more than merely recognize publicly religious fellowships, but to acknowledge the pragmatic contribution they offer to the "reproduction of motivations and attitudes that are societally desirable."¹⁴ Yet, at a deeper level, the sort of reconciliation between the Western tradition of secular reason and the tradition of Christian faith, which Habermas envisions, points in the direction of that common origin shaping philosophy and religion, an origin in which secular reason was open to faith and vice versa. This complementarity between secular reason and religious faith may, in turn, provide a post-secular Europe with a balanced integration of these two cultural spheres formative of its identity so that it may find its place in a world of diverse cultural paradigms.

Ratzinger's God as Communicative *Logos*

Ratzinger, in contradistinction to Habermas' grounding of the moral foundations of the secular state in practical reason, argues that secular reason, as generative of scientific rationalism, be it physical or social, cannot generate a satisfactory ethos. Positive law generated via democratic processes, though expressive of a collective consensus, adhering, say, to formal rules of Habermasian communicative

¹¹ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 44.

¹² Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 45.

¹³ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 46.

¹⁴ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 46.

rationality – i.e., to his ideal speech situation – may nonetheless be “blind or unjust, as history teaches us.”¹⁵ For Ratzinger the majority principle cannot be equated with the ethical rightness of a law so agreed upon, for there may be unjust proposals that should never become law.

While in the Western world it is widely held that only positivistic reason and the forms of philosophy based on it are universally valid, the world’s profoundly religious cultures see this exclusion of the divine from the universality of reason as an assault on their most profound convictions. For Ratzinger, the separation of reason and faith, with its religious expressions, leads to its own forms of pathologies. On the one hand, secular or scientific reason needs to be checked, for it greatly reduces the field of inquiry in a manner that relegates questions of the origin and destiny of the human person to the potentially capricious decisions of subjective conscience. In this state of affairs the “pathologies of reason,” as evidenced, for instance, in the creation of weapons of mass destruction and human bio-engineering, provide a basis for keeping reason within its own proper limits: “[Reason] must learn a willingness to listen to the great religious traditions of mankind.”¹⁶ On the other hand, the “pathologies of religion,” as found, for instance, in extremisms or in the Salem witch hunts, argue for reason as a “controlling organ”¹⁷; indeed, faith claims need to be purged of fanatical elements by reason. Ratzinger, while acknowledging unreservedly the positive contributions of Enlightenment modernity to the progress of humanity, nonetheless holds that religion and reason should mutually “restrict each other and remind each other where their limits are.”¹⁸ This said, Ratzinger – without appealing to natural law ethics (which, in the light of the theory of evolution, he feels “has become blunt,” (“capsized,”¹⁹) as an ethical instrument – concedes that humanity is without a “world ethos” that can be accepted universally by non-Western cultural spheres such as the Islamic, Hindu-Buddhist, and African-Latin American tribal cultures. He states that “...the rational or ethical or religious formula that would embrace the whole world and unite all

¹⁵ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 59f.

¹⁶ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 78.

¹⁷ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 77f.

¹⁸ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 66.

¹⁹ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 69.

persons does not exist; or, at least, is unattainable at the present moment. This is why the so-called 'world ethos' remains an abstraction."²⁰ Ratzinger, moreover, contends that the two great cultures of the West, the culture of the Christian faith and that of secular rationality, though they have made relative contributions to the world at large, are "*de facto* not universal." In this respect, Ratzinger advocates, without thereby promoting cultural relativism, for an authentic opening to non-Western cultural spheres involving the ability to listen to their views in a spirit of genuine fraternal relatedness.²¹

Rather, Ratzinger looks with prophetic expectation to "*that which holds the world together*" so that it "*can once again become an effective force in mankind.*"²² "That which holds the world together" for Ratzinger is the Divinity, the Creator God that ultimately constitutes the uniting bond which establishes its law in the hearts of human beings. He especially has in mind the God of Christian revelation, of Christian faith, the three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who constitute the sole Divinity. In his Regensburg lecture Ratzinger, as Benedict XVI, analyzes the enriched view of God as understood by the felicitous, even providential, meeting of the Greek philosophical tradition and Christianity. This is especially evident in the Prologue to the Gospel of John, wherein Jesus Christ is called "*the Logos,*" which Benedict XVI comprehends as the universal principle of creation, "*self-communication, precisely as reason.*" This is the primordial reason or word that creates a world which is rationally structured and thereby comprehensible to knowing subjects. This similitude, notwithstanding the quasi-absolute difference between the Creator and his creatures, is the epistemic basis, then, for the rationality or intelligibility of nature. This makes it possible for rational human beings to know the created universe as evidenced, say, by the repeated success of mathematical forecasts and the technological achievements of the experimental sciences. And this, in turn, argues for transcending the Kantian divide between the realm of the noumenal and the human ability to know extramental reality. This meeting, moreover, between the biblical message and Greek thought, for Benedict XVI, provides the axiological foundation for ethical action in

²⁰ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 76.

²¹ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 79.

²² Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, pp. 79-80 (emphasis added).

the sense that “not to act according to reason is contrary to God’s nature.”²³

Additionally, in his *Deus Caritas Est*,²⁴ he explains the distinctive nature of the Christian God as love. He explicitly distinguishes two related senses of love: *eros* and *agape*. *Eros* can be understood as an “ascending love,” i.e., as the ontological aspiration of human persons for union with God as the first and last end of their existence. *Agape* signifies a “descending love,” or the divine love of God whereby he seeks ontological or mystical union with his human progeny.²⁵ The length, breadth, and depth of the love of God, *agape*, for his human creatures is ineffably revealed in the *Logos*, Jesus Christ, who takes on human nature in order to offer himself as the sacrificial lamb for the redemption of the human race in the light of the original fall of Adam and Eve. Benedict XVI’s God, then, is the God of Christian revelation, a triune God who manifests his divine love by creating, redeeming, and sanctifying his human children with the ultimate aim of uniting them to himself in the ecstasy of mystical love. This is expressed most perfectly in Christ’s priestly prayer: “I pray...that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us” (Jn 17:20-21).²⁶ It should be said that the Christian appropriation of the term *logos* wholly transformed the concept insofar as it came to be understood as especially referring to God the Son, who, as Jesus Christ, enters into human history in order to ransom humankind.

The question now becomes, to what extent can we rationally understand – independently of the infused *donum fidei* – this conception of the Christian God, eminently understood as consisting of a Trinity of Persons, who, *ad intra*, emerge as the ground for communicative and loving relation and, *ad extra*, communicate existence to human persons, fashioning them for mystical union with the same Divinity? From an intellectual or rational standpoint, the Trinity emerges as a great mystery, especially when considered in the light of Greek conceptions of the metaphysical absolute – be it that of Parmenides’ One, Plato’s Good, or Aristotle’s Self-Thinking Thought. Indeed Professor George McLean, in his address at the “Metaphysics

²³ Benedict XVI, Regensburg lecture.

²⁴ The title is taken from 1 Jn 4:8.

²⁵ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, nn. 3-14.

²⁶ Biblical citations are from the *The New American Bible*.

for the Third Millennium Conference," as part of the official events celebrating the Great Jubilee 2000 in Rome, challenged Christian philosophers, in view of their religious sensitivity, to reflect, first, on an understanding of God that, in contradistinction to Aristotle's Prime Mover, "does know and love us"²⁷; and, second, on a conception of human persons in view of their sacredness – i.e., as beings constituted in relation to God and to others.

The challenge here pertains to the issue of the rationality of the Christian faith, i.e., whether – and the extent to which – the Christian conception of God as communicative, as constituted by three personal beings, can be rationally sustained.

This issue will be considered in the light of the novel contributions of Fernando Rielo, who, with his "genetic metaphysics," provides resources for asserting metaphysically, or at a rational level, the following: (1) that the Absolute consists of a Binity, an Absolute constituted by at least two personal beings, who are relational and loving; and (2) that human persons have been fashioned, by virtue of their ontological constitution, for mystical communication with the Divine Persons. Such a conception of God and of the human person may, in turn, articulate rationally the "uniting bond" generative of a "world ethos" that may serve to guide human action universally.

Rielo's Genetic Metaphysics²⁸

Genetic Conception of the Absolute: The Binity

Fernando Rielo is a Catholic metaphysician whose genetic metaphysics, or science of the Absolute Subject, presents an understanding of the Absolute precisely as one constituted by the genetic relation, at an intellectual level, of two personal beings, the ground, in turn, for communicative love at the level of metaphysics. His genetic ontology refers to the science of the relations between the Absolute and human persons. In an interview Rielo makes known the turning

²⁷ George F. McLean, "Metaphysics and Culture: The Bridge to Religion," *Proceedings of the Metaphysics for the Third Millennium Conference*, World Meeting of University Professors in celebration of the Great Jubilee, Rome, Italy (September 5-8, 2000), p. 207.

²⁸ This section takes freely from my article: "McLean's Millennial Vision in the Light of Rielo's Genetic Metaphysics," in William Sweet and Hu Yeping, eds. *To the Mountain": Essays in Honor of Professor George F. McLean* (Hsinchuang, Taiwan: Fu Jen Catholic University Press, 2004): 267-286.

point in his thought in an experiential or mystical encounter with the Absolute:

The culminating moment for the origin of my thought was on May 30, 1964, the feast of St. Fernando. I was convalescing from a very difficult operation – among the many I have undergone until the present – in which, in the middle of a massive hemorrhage, I suffered a maximum recession of the digestive tract. The night before my saint’s day, I had experienced frightful pains. My residence in Madrid was then the family home, with my mother and sisters. They wanted to commemorate that special day. I got up at about 5 a.m., in the midst of a splendid dawn typical of springtime in Madrid. I headed for what was known as “Martyrs’ Square” and then went into the woods in Western Park. I sat down on a rough bench. At that instant, with agonizing pain I cried out to my Heavenly Father, “I am nothing; You are being.” The heavens suddenly opened before me, and the lush green landscape was transfigured; at the same time a forceful voice, his fatherly voice, responded to my moan: “I am more than the being you are speaking of.” At that moment there appeared a slender stairway by which angels were going up and down before my infused gaze. My pain had disappeared when I arrived at my house before my mother and sisters got up to have breakfast together on my saint’s day.²⁹

For Riello, in stating, “I am more than the being you are speaking of,” the Absolute declares that he is *more* than “being,” that the term “being” is not congruent with the whole of his reality. Accordingly, when the interviewer, Marie-Lise Gazarian, asks Riello, “What is the key to this locution by the Father which gave rise to your system?” Riello’s answer indicates what he grasped of the reality of the divinity:

On my way back home, while I was seeing the landscape in a natural manner once again, a single term, “being-more,” was engraved upon my intelligence, with a

²⁹ Fernando Riello, *Dialogue in Three Voices*, trans. by David G. Murray (Madrid: F.F.R, 2000), pp. 127-128; henceforth *Dialogue*.

rejection of the identity of being as a metaphysical principle. This formula, contemplated by me as full of life, illuminating my thought, separated me from all philosophical systems because my feeling was that, by incurring in an identity which lacked syntactic, semantic, and metaphysical meaning, they seriously affected the field of theology.³⁰

Riello thus comprehends that his manner of addressing the Absolute as "being" is inadequate; his new understanding of the metaphysical Absolute is as *being-more*. This is to say that the Absolute is one *being* and something *more* than one being. Moreover, these two terms, "being" and "more," are either being or nothing, but since they cannot be nothing, they must be beings. Given that the expression *being-more* is constituted by at least two beings, Riello realizes that the notion of the Absolute as consisting in the identity of being, as "being is being" can no longer be sustained. The preposition "with," in the expression "the Absolute is constituted by at the very least two terms: *being* with its *more*," is employed here instead of the conjunction 'and' because the terms are not merely juxtaposed, but indicate that the Absolute is not a solitary, monolithic being but a being *with* its *more*, in relationship *to* its more. It is important to emphasize that at no point is Riello denying the existence of "substantial" reality, understood according to his genetic understanding of reality,³¹ in favor of some sort of Heraclitean world of flux; much to the contrary, what Riello is setting aside is an understanding of the *unum simpliciter* in favor of a conception of the Absolute as *being more*.

For Riello this new formulation, *being-more*, though revealed in a mystical experience, is nonetheless open to reason. All reality for Riello – whether that of the Absolute or of finite reality – is understood as *constitutively relational*, such that any reality conceived in exclusion of relation as an integral feature of its constitution – i.e., as a *perseity* – is metaphysically untenable. Since, for Riello, the principal subject of metaphysics is the Absolute itself, whatever is said of the Absolute must be raised to the *absolute*. This means, for instance, that to say the Absolute is perfect and infinite is to say that the Absolute is *absolutely*

³⁰ Riello, *Dialogue*.

³¹ See penultimate paragraph in this section on Riello's genetic conception of the absolute.

perfect and *absolutely* infinite. If, however, one conceives of the Absolute as constitutively a nonrelational reality, as being *simpliciter*, then such an “absolute” is constituted *absolutely* as a self-same identity. To say that such an absolute is “being” is to say that it is absolutely being, and that, if such a self-identity indeed existed, it would be dedicated to one *sole* aim: for itself to be – i.e., to continue in its being. Such an absolute, wholly sealed in self-identity, would have no relational *ad intra* dimension – i.e., it would be without relation in absolute terms. Not only would it be without relation *ad intra*, but without relation *ad extra*; it would be absolutely without concern or interest for the generation of any other being, for it would have no other objective than *to be itself* and that *absolutely*. To say that the metaphysical absolute is “existence” fares no better, for it, too, sealed in self-identity, would have no other purpose than for *itself to exist* and that *absolutely*. The lack of any relational dimension at the constitutive level of the Absolute could not be more devastating for the traditional subject of metaphysics, since from such a hermetically-sealed absolute *no*-thing whatsoever can possibly proceed, for, again, the only exigency with which such a notion would be affected is to be *utterly itself* and that *absolutely*.

Moreover, a conception of the metaphysical Absolute expressed in tautologies, such as “the Absolute is the Absolute,” would amount to a being that, as self-defining, collapses the distinction between a *definiens* that defines and *definiendum* that is defined. Such a being, then, as self-certifying would be a prime instance of an assertion susceptible to the charge of the fallacy of the *petitio principii*. To elevate notions such as “being” and/or “existence” to the absolute, and thus to conceive of such notions as self-same identities, as in the statements, “being is being,” or “existence is existence,” and then to identify the notions “being” and “existence” with the Absolute, is tantamount to articulating a conception of the Absolute as utterly *in* itself, *for* itself, and *by* itself, and this in absolute terms. The result would be an utterly a-relational mental construct, for such an alleged reality cannot be identified with anything *de facto* real.

Neither does it help to say that the statement “being is being” or “being *qua* being” actually expresses a “richer” affirmation than may at first appear given that the predicate-term “being” is understood as signifying the act of being or of existence or to say that “existence” is the sum of all perfections. The reason for this is that whether one says

"being is being" or "existence is existence" or "being is existence" or "being is the sum of all perfections," the tautology "A is A" remains constant. This results from the fact that the predicate-term is actually synonymous with the subject-term; the predicate-term "A" is a synthetic marker for, say, "existence" or for the longer expression the "sum of all perfections." Rielo argues, accordingly, that "traditional metaphysics" employs defective, tautological definitions lacking meaning as a result of identity.³²

For Rielo, then, the metaphysical Absolute must, rather, be constituted by at least two beings where each of the beings serves as the *more* of the other, which, though distinct, are *constitutively relational* and *complementary*. Rielo further conceives them as *persons*, for the person is the highest expression of being. Accordingly, one of the two persons is the *more* that defines the other person such that this second person is defined by the first and vice versa. In this way, the two personal beings – also termed by Rielo the "Binity" – are not self-defining, but ultimately define each other; hence such an Absolute is not susceptible to the charge of the *petitio principii*. However, the principle cannot be constituted, at a rational level, by more than two really distinct beings given that a third term surfaces as a metaphysical surplus of the absolute simplicity inherent in the elevation to absolute of the notion of relation.³³

Rielo's Absolute Subject may be understood as constituting the genetic conception of the principle of relation, the *Binity* – i.e., two personal beings in a state of immanent intrinsic complementarity: [P₁ in immanent intrinsic complementarity to P₂] or, more simply: [P₁ complementary to P₂]. To assert that the two personal beings are in a state of "immanent intrinsic complementarity" signifies, with respect to the term "complementarity," that the two personal beings, [P₁] and

³² To say, for instance, that the essence is "that by which a thing is what it is" amounts to saying: "that by which a thing is what it is" is the essence. There is no term "x," which defines what the essence is. The pseudo-definition of essence does not get free from the identity "essence is essence" because the expressions "that," "by which," "thing," and "what it is" are mere descriptions enveloped in identity. Thus, these terms do not define anything, are not defined by anything, and do not attain to the presupposed term "essence." Moreover, these pseudo-definitions incur the absurdity of begging the question: "What is that which makes 'that by which a thing is what it is' be the essence?" (Rielo, *Dialogue*, p. 130)

³³ Rielo argues that rationally there is nonetheless an "intellectual index" for the existence of a third divine person. See n. 35 below.

[P₂], while being really distinct, nonetheless are necessary one to the other in order to constitute the absolute unity of a single Absolute Subject and a single absolute act.³⁴ Moreover, the Absolute Subject, constituted by two personal beings, must be understood in complementary terms, for if one were to understand the relation in terms of opposition or contradiction, one would proffer a notion of the Absolute as constituted by two terms wholly inimical to each other and hence at absolute odds with each other and therefore without any possibility for mutual relation or communication. The term “immanent,” given the complementarity stated, indicates that the two personal beings define one another to such a degree that there is nothing that transcends them, nor is it possible for one person [P₁] to transcend the other [P₂] or vice versa (for [P₂] to transcend [P₁]), for in this case subordinationism would be introduced into the Absolute Subject. The term “intrinsic” underscores the fact that there is nothing extrinsic between [P₁] and [P₂] such that the two personal beings are *entirely open* one to the other to such a degree that [P₁] is *entirely in* [P₂] and [P₂] is *entirely in* [P₁].³⁵ This principle eradicates any conception of identity as a metaphysical principle, for there is no such a thing as a “being in a being” – i.e., a being *per se*, a *solus ipse*, a monological absolute. Rather, on an intellectual level, there is an immanent intrinsic complementarity of two personal beings who indwell one other, who are communicative with each other.³⁶

³⁴ This term has nothing to do with Neils Bohr’s use of the term ‘complementarity’ to mean jointly necessary but mutually exclusive conditions.

³⁵ José M. López Sevillano, “Introduction,” in Fernando Rielo Pardal, *Mis meditaciones desde el modelo genético* (Madrid: F.F.R. 2001), p. 18.

³⁶ Although for Rielo, the question of who may be [P₂] cannot be resolved on an intellectual level alone, he maintains that what is *sensu stricto* original to Christ’s revelation may be articulated in two truths that exceed reason unaided by theological faith, viz.: (1) that he, Jesus Christ, is himself a divine person, i.e., [P₂] of the genetic principle, in immanent intrinsic complementarity with [P₁]; and (2) that there exists a third divine person [P₃], whom he names Holy Spirit. Accordingly, Christ declares quite explicitly that the Father and he constitute the *unum geneticum*: “Ego et Pater unum sumus” (Jn 10:30). In fact, he indicates to his contemporaries that though they do not believe in him, they should believe in the light of his deeds: “Si mihi non vultis credere, operibus credite, ut cognoscatis et sciatis quia in me est Pater et ego in Patre” (Jn 10:38). He also openly affirms the existence of a third divine person: “The Spirit of truth, that proceeds from the Father, and that I will send you from the Father” (Jn 15:26). With respect to a third divine

Moreover, the "geneticity" of the principle of relation – *being (+)* – consists of the fact that [P₂] is the *more* or *gene* of [P₁]. The relation of the two personal beings is expressed in the active voice by the formula "[P₁] engenders [P₂]," and in the passive voice by the formula "[P₂] is engendered by [P₁]"; accordingly, [P₁] defines [P₂], and [P₂] is defined by [P₁]. One way to understand the geneticity of the genetic principle is to conceive of the nature of the complementarity between the two personal beings as signifying *absolute openness* or, equivalently, the metaphysical expression of *absolute love* or *ecstasy* between the two personal beings, such that [P₁] is *constitutively* open to [P₂] and *transmits* to [P₂] his own genetic patrimony, and [P₂], on his part, is *constitutively* open to [P₁] such that he *receives* the genetic patrimony communicated by [P₁]. Accordingly, the *constitutive* openness of the genetic relation between [P₁] and [P₂] arises as *complementary, dialogical, communicative, generous, and loving* or *ecstatic*.

Riello further substitutes the identitatal and a-relational notion of substance with a genetic conception of substance, termed *congenesis* – i.e., two personal beings in a state of immanent intrinsic complementarity, the form of which consists of the absolute possession of the hereditary character of [P₁] by [P₂]. For Riello, then, the metaphysical Absolute is not constituted by *being*, but, by *Being (+)*. Thus Riello replaces the formulation of the Absolute as "Absolute Being," which is an elevation of a single term, "being," to the absolute, with that of "Absolute Subject," which is constituted on an intellectual level by at least two personal beings. Metaphysically, this means that an absolute conceived of in terms of a unipersonalist monism – single person in self-identity – does not exist. If God, understood as "Absolute Being," is predicated of the Christian Triune God, its primary emphasis would be on a constitutively nonrelational *separate substance* – *substantia*

person, though on an intellectual level such a person represents a transrational surplus, there is, rationally speaking, what Riello terms an *intellectual index* in favor of the existence of such a third person [P₃] in the light of the functions it fulfills, viz.: (a) to serve as replica of the active *ingentitude* of [P₁] which does not pass to [P₂] because, in this case, [P₂] would also be unbegotten, rupturing in this manner the identity of "unbegottenness is unbegottenness"; and (b) to serve as replica of the active *ingerant* of [P₂] which does not pass to [P₁] because, in this inverse case, [P₁] would also be begotten, rupturing in this manner the identity "begottenness is begottenness." See Fernando Riello, "Hacia una nueva concepción metafísica del ser" in *¿Existe una filosofía española?* (Seville: E. F. R., 1988), p. 123.

separata – understood identitatively.³⁷ The Divine Persons would be reduced, at best, to mere modes of the substance, if it were possible to somehow paradoxically append or relate the Divine Persons to such a monolithic substance conceived as utterly without *ad intra* relation. For Rielo *the personal beings themselves and only the personal beings themselves constitute the sole Absolute Subject, substance, existence, and nature*. For Rielo the traditional metaphysical predicates typically associated with the Absolute – that the Absolute is *one* and *immutable* – are understood according to a genetic conception of unity and immutability, in which, for example, unity is not understood as excluding relation, but constitutively as a unity in relation.

Finally, Rielo provides a theological transcription of these terms: “...the absolute congenitude of [P₁] and [P₂] is a Binity constituted by two personal beings: the first one is named Father; the second one is named Son. In other words, the generation of the Son [P₂] by the Father [P₁] consists of the transmission of the hereditary character or geneticity of [P₁] *per viam generationis* [by way of generation] to [P₂].” These two personal beings, moreover, define each other mutually such that [P₁], as Father, is the being (+) of [P₂], and [P₂], as Son, is the being (+) of [P₁]. Thus [P₁] can only be *Father* if he has [P₂] as Son; and [P₂] can only be *Son* if he has [P₁] as Father. In genetic metaphysics no reality defines itself or is self-certifying.³⁸

Genetic Conception of What Is Not the Absolute Subject

Before considering the definition of the human person, a word is in order regarding the supposition for creation. Rielo argues that the Absolute Subject precisely as relational *ad intra* is also relational *ad extra*, i.e., in the realm that is not the Absolute Subject or “outside of” the Absolute. To deny the existence of what is not the Absolute Subject signifies that there is only the Absolute which leads to the absurdity of absolutism or pantheism. Moreover, the realm outside the absolute consists of *no*-thing, the void, given that to argue that there is a reality ontologically independent of the Absolute is to incur the absurdity of metaphysical dualism, whether that of the paradox of the double absolute – where an “absolute” reality allegedly exists alongside

³⁷ ‘Identitatively’ is used here to refer to an understanding of reality affected by identity, i.e., as closed and non-relational.

³⁸ Rielo, *Dialogue*, p. 133.

another absolute reality – or, equally, of the absurdity of relative being conceived as somehow existing outside of its dependence on the Absolute. In this *ad extra* realm the Absolute annihilates any possibility of an identitatical notion of "the void of being is the void of being," such that the realm *ad extra* to the Absolute Subject is rendered as *void of being* (+), the "more" referring to the presence of the Absolute in that realm by which the Absolute has *eternally* been present in the midst of the "void," as it were, sweeping it, mathematizing it, objectifying it, designing it in all of its possibilities, thereby establishing the ground for the genetic possibility, *ex genetica possibilitate*, of a free creation of the universe with its beings and things.

Additionally, without incurring the absurdity of process philosophical or theological proposals that eliminate or render relative one or more of the divine attributes of the Absolute Subject, within a genetic conception of the Absolute Subject, the rift between the absolute and the relative, the eternal and the temporal is no longer metaphysically tenable. For, neither the Absolute nor the realm *ad extra* to the Absolute are understood as closed identities; rather the Absolute Subject with its *ad extra* presence renders the void open to the Absolute and to its creative influence.

Riello further argues that the analogy of being cannot be invoked as a way to overcome the so-called problem of the "one and the many," given that this conundrum only becomes so once reality – be it divine or created – is understood in terms of the a-relationality endogenous to metaphysical proposals affected by identity. For Riello, the primary analogate, conceived identitatically, and hence as bereft of relation, cannot be understood at the same time relationally, i.e., as participating the analogues causally into existence. Hence, a genetic conception of creative activity certainly does not proceed in accordance with the mechanical model of causality and its implication of necessity and determinism; for Riello, such a model is better restricted to the more limited sphere of physical phenomenon. The creative activity of the Absolute Subject is always free and understood in terms of grace, benevolence and munificence on the part of the Creator. For Riello the essence of creatures, supposing their creation, is ontologically defined by the degree of the *ad extra* divine presence (*per praesentiam*) of the absolute act in the created entity rather than by

“participation,” given the pantheistic overtones of this traditional notion within a discourse of identity.³⁹

Genetic Conception of the Human Person and the Divine Constitutive Presence as the Ground of the “World Ethos”

The Absolute Subject as constitutively communicative serves as the sole ground, supposing the creation of human beings, for their communicative nature. For Rielo, human persons cannot be defined by the expression “the human person is the human person,” but, rather, as a *human person* (+). The “more” presupposes the action of a *definiens*, the *divine constitutive presence*, which confers upon the human person a genetic endowment or (+).⁴⁰ For Rielo the divine constitutive presence is itself uncreated because God cannot create his own presence. It is indeed the divine constitutive presence or the indwelling of the absolute subject and act, moreover, that serves as the ground for Rielo’s definition of the human person as a *homo mysticus*, as a being not only open to the Absolute, but shaped by the Absolute. Human persons, then, are a reality composed of two elements or

³⁹ Rielo discerns three forms of creation, with each form of creation as a manifestation of *being more*: (1) living *personal beings* (specifically, human beings and angels), modeled *intrinsically* by the divine constitutive presence of the Absolute Subject; (2) living *nonpersonal beings*, constituted *extrinsically* by the reverberative presence of the Absolute Subject; and (3) nonliving *things* constituted by the *actio in distans* of the Absolute Subject, involving the phenomenological character of the varied physical and chemical laws that structure material realities. To say, for instance, that “water is water” would ontologically be a meaningless proposition for the *definiendum* “water” is being defined by itself, “water,” as *definiens*. For Rielo neither is it a question of further articulating the predicate-term to say “water is H₂O.” In this case, again, the predicate-term is effectively equivalent to the subject-term and thus is another way of saying, “A is A.” For Rielo such definitions are taxonomic and descriptive and have value within the physical sciences, but they are not ontological, for they fail to provide the ground for the reality of the entity being considered. Water, then, from an ontological perspective, is *water* (+), where the “more” refers to the open structure of laws constituted and maintained by the *actio in distans* of the Absolute Subject, which renders “water” a “nonliving” of the Absolute in all its various quantifiable dimensions: mathematical, physical, chemical, and so on.

⁴⁰ Rielo, *Dialogue*, 144f.

natures: one, *created*, referring to a psychosomaticized spirit,⁴¹ and the other, *uncreated*, referring to the divine constitutive presence that, by conferring its very own hereditary character, makes human persons ontological or mystical deities of the metaphysical Divinity.⁴²

Notions used traditionally to define the human person – consciousness, rationality, autonomy, linguistic capacity – represent properties of the human person pertaining to the created nature such that they would be without effect if it were not for the divine constitutive presence that makes it possible for the human person to be conscious, rational, etc. It is precisely this indwelling presence of the Absolute in the human person that – in fashioning the human person as a being in the *imago Dei*, the keystone of the person's ineffable dignity or sacredness – provides the ontological bond or common patrimony that unites all peoples as one family.

Moreover, since the Absolute Subject, on an intellectual level, is understood as complementary, open, relational, dialogical, communicative, generous, and loving or ecstatic, the human being, as a *replica* of the Binity – i.e., as a subject created as an *imago Dei* – is a being that is constitutively formed ethically, i.e., oriented to be complementary, open, relational, dialogical, communicative, generous, and loving. This means that, by virtue of being indwelt by the divine constitutive presence of the Absolute Subject, the human person is called to act in conformity with the *ethical command* constituted by the Absolute Subject. In the very act of its indwelling presence, the Absolute Subject communicates this injunction or *ethos* to the human person which may be understood as constitutive of the desired "world ethos." To act in ways that are egotistical, a-relational, monological, or ideological is endemic to an ontological autism produced by resisting the formative loving presence, which is a non-coercive influence, of the Absolute Subject in the human person. For Rielo, then, the ground of ethics is not founded on the rationality of created human nature (psychosomaticized spirit) but, rather, on the uncreated nature, i.e., the divine constitutive presence, on the very indwelling presence of the Absolute Subject in the human person.

⁴¹ An extensive analysis of the reality, nature and distinction of the tripartite division of the created element of the human person is found in Rielo's *Genetic Conception of Method* (in preparation for publication).

⁴² Rielo, *Dialogue*, p. 144f.

The significance of Rielo's genetic conception of the human person can be evidenced in its capacity to defend the sacredness or sanctity of human life against contrary reductionistic conceptions, such as those animating abortion or euthanasia proponents. Accordingly, the ineffable dignity of the human person, in the light of the divine constitutive presence, demands that human life be integrally safeguarded regardless of the stage of biological development of a human being: unicellular zygote, embryo, fetus, infant, child, adolescent, adult, senior. Since the divine constitutive presence invalidates any identitatical conception of the human person, there is no reason for maintaining that the divine constitutive presence occurs at any moment after conception. From the moment of conception, then, the human being is structured to relate transcendently, implicitly or explicitly, to God. In the light of this sublime dignity, by virtue of the divine constitutive presence, any attempt to do violence to the life of a human person, e.g., via abortion or euthanasia, constitutes a grave moral transgression. From this perspective, all arguments given in favor of, say, abortion – whether because of violation or incest, the desire to avoid the birth of a deformed human, or personal deliberations involving physical, emotional, or economic reasons – are without moral justification, given that the life and dignity of the child, indwelt by the divine constitutive presence, outweigh any such considerations.

Conclusion

In conclusion the rationality of faith convictions promoting human solidarity among the citizenry suggested by Habermas certainly does not encompass the rationality of God or Rielo's Absolute Subject as the Binity constituted by two personal beings. Yet there is, for Rielo, in principle, no need to limit the efficacy of faith to illumine reason or to limit reason in its capacity to illustrate the reasonableness of faith. Meeting the demands of rational scrutiny, faith convictions emerge as universally accessible to all, and as a safeguard for humanity from otherwise blind or fideistic conceptions of faith, potentially harboring veiled ideological and strategic elements. It is not a question of whether faith claims may be entirely explicated rationally in a Hegelian sense, for the Absolute always exhausts human comprehension. Yet, within a view of reality that is open to the influence of the divine indwelling, the signification of the expression "*imago Dei*,"

from an intellectual standpoint, renders an understanding of human intelligence as modeled on the divine intelligence, in the image and likeness of divine intelligence, such that human intelligence, open to the infinite, may accordingly be illumined by the same indwelling divine presence.

May not the divine constitutive presence, in fact, be understood properly as the uniting bond to which Ratzinger appeals with a view to fostering human solidarity? May it not serve to foster the dialogical meeting of diverse faith traditions with a view to examining their faith claims in a manner that is open to the complementary instrument of reason? May not such an open exchange eventually lead to the endorsement of a common language for religious faiths comparable to the discovery of the common experimental method which empowered the mechanistic physical and biological sciences to make progressive strides in their discoveries? May there not be an experiential methodology proper to the non-mechanistic human or spiritual sciences for empowering human persons to agree rationally on a common ontological patrimony that, binding human persons together, open them to the perfective influence of the indwelling divine presence, as Riello suggests?

Riello's genetic metaphysics provides, in short, a novel understanding of the Absolute Subject as a Binity, involving, at the rational level, the *loving, communicative* relationship of two personal beings, commensurate with Benedict XVI's conception of God as communicative, loving and relational. Christ corroborates this genetic conception of the Absolute: "The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30) and "Do you not believe that *I am in the Father and the Father is in me?* The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works" (Jn 14:10, italics mine).⁴³ Riello's genetic conception of the human person, for its part, grounds the mystical nature of the human person by virtue of the divine constitutive presence of the Absolute Subject in created human nature. Christ, too, confirms the reality of the divine constitutive presence in the human person. On the one hand, he states, confirming the Hebrew scriptures, "You are gods" (Jn 10:34); and, on the other, "On that day, you will know that I am in my Father, and *you in me and I in you*" (Jn 14:20, italics mine).

⁴³ See n. 35 above.

In this respect Rielo's metaphysics does not provide a generic notion of the Absolute Subject conceived in terms of the identity of a unipersonalist divinity intended to serve as *preambulata fidei* for monotheistic faiths. Rather, at the level of reason, the Binitarian conception of the Divinity, constituted by two personal beings, is conceived on an intellectual level as the genuinely universal conception of the Divinity, which then is oriented towards the Trinity at the level of infused theological faith. The Binity, for Rielo, moreover, offers a "metaphysical" and "ontological" ecumenism: "My system... refers to a metaphysical and ontological ecumenism, since the first sphere of my genetic conception of the principle of relation can be accepted by human intelligence without the antecedent of infused theological faith. In my view, this is the cultural foundation for religious ecumenism, not only among the Christian churches, but also among all creeds."⁴⁴ Accordingly, the divine constitutive presence would be the ground for the concept of *dharma*, or the law of virtuous living, in the Indian world, as well as for the "idea of the structures ordained by heaven" in the Chinese tradition.⁴⁵ The universal law constituting the world ethos would then be to live as a function of the indwelling ecstasy of love that constitutes human persons, in a manner that upholds the sacredness and dignity of all persons while promoting an integral spirit of solidarity among all peoples. Indeed Rielo's genetic metaphysics may serve as a model guiding inter-religious or ecumenical dialogue in the sense that it asks its interlocutors to reflect critically on the underlying foundational or metaphysical assumptions of reality underpinning their religious convictions with a view toward considering the extent to which these are rationally compelling or, instead, rationally repugnant as in the case of pantheistic or dualistic views.

In short, what Fernando Rielo demonstrates is that the complementarity of faith and reason is misunderstood when construed merely as a way of grounding Habermas' communicative reason in faith, or as a means, via some form of instrumental rationality, of achieving Ratzinger's purgation of the potentially perilous excesses of fideistic extremism. While Habermas is correct in pointing out that communicative reason needs faith, and Ratzinger is equally correct in holding

⁴⁴ Rielo, *Dialogue*, p. 135.

⁴⁵ Habermas & Ratzinger, *Dialectics*, p. 72.

that faith and reason should restrict and remind each other where their limits lie, Fernando Rielo has linked faith and reason together as distinct yet interconnected manifestations of a cognitively accessible metaphysical vision of reality that provides an intellectual warrant for the *depositum fidei*. Such a vision of reality fosters the sort of attitudes capable of motivating persons of good will to fulfill their moral mandate, as Habermas deems essential for the integral functioning of democratic societies, while avoiding the excesses of a reason-inspired fanaticism so tellingly observed by Ratzinger. Rielo's proposal clarifies the role of reason in faith and faith in reason in a manner that bridges the oftentimes gratuitous and even precarious breach that philosophical or religious conceptions may uphold between them.⁴⁶ Indeed I think that Fernando Rielo would have found a kindred spirit in the poetic words expressed by Pope John Paul II at the beginning of his encyclical entitled *Fides et Ratio*: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Rielo puts it this way: "Every discovery, of whatever kind, is by divine inspiration, for the benefit of mankind. Everything depends on its proper use. By virtue of the indwelling of divine intelligence in human intelligence, scientific truth and revealed truth have a single source, constituted by mystical inspiration. This is corroborated by Pius IX, in his encyclical *Qui Pluribus*, when he asserts that the two forms of knowledge proceed from a single divine source. The First Vatican Council, in *On Faith and Reason*, also confirms my thesis with the assertion that there cannot be disagreement between faith and science because it is God Himself who reveals and sets the light of reason in man's interior." (*Dialogue*, p. 74)

⁴⁷John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, frontispiece.

Part IV
African Traditions

Religious Pluralism, Tolerance, and Public Culture in Africa

WORKINEH KELBESSA

Introduction

Africa's religious experience is a product of three religious traditions – indigenous, Islamic and Christian (Mazrui, 2005). Indigenous African religion is unique to specific ethnic groups in Africa. Many people that are adherents of both Islam and Christianity also practice indigenous African religion.

Christianity first entered Africa from the Middle East (Mediterranean and Palestinian). It established itself in Hellenized cities of north Africa in the first century, and expanded south of Egypt into Nubian land (Sudan), and Aksum, northern part of the current day Ethiopia. Christianity was declared a state religion of Abyssinia in Aksum in 330 AD. As Yusufu Turaki notes,

Africa has two forms of historical Christianity: (1) the Hellenistic North African Christianity which had its roots and origins directly from Palestine; and (2) Western Missionary Christianity of the 15th to the 21st centuries. This is the form of Christianity which came to Africa via Europe and North America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Western Missionary Christianity forms the largest sector of Christianity in Africa (2007:130; Concerning the history of Christianity in Africa from 1450-1990, see Koschorke *et al.*, 2007:160-274).

On the other hand, Islam entered Africa in the seventh century AD when the followers of the Prophet Mohammed migrated to Abyssinia (see below). In the following years Islam displaced Christianity in some places in Africa by relating itself to the local culture in North Africa. In contrast, Christianity disappeared, because it associated itself with Latin culture and theology and thereby ignored the local culture (Hollenweger, 1993).

Although Islam “invaded North Africa in the 7th century and destroyed the North African Christianity” (Turaki, 2007:130), the

Coptic Church of Egypt and the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia escaped from this destruction. The Muslims destroyed the Nubian Church in Sudan in the 16th century (Turaki, 2007:130). What should be noted is that Christianity and Islam have been competing to extend their influence in Africa since the seventh century AD. As Turaki put it,

[h]istorically, Islam confronted Christianity in Africa at these levels: (1) the level of religion where Islam replaced African religions or Christianity in North Africa and elsewhere; (2) the level of culture where Islamic and Arabic culture replaced African culture or Hellenistic Christian culture of North Africa and elsewhere; (3) the level of politics and economics where Islamic states and economies replaced the African indigenous kingdoms and economies; and (4) the human level where the African people as different from the Muslims/Arabs were subjected to humiliation and slavery (Turaki, 2007:136).

Islam also relied on the Sinai Peninsula and Egypt, as well as Islamic Arab and Persian traders and sailors to spread to Africa. Consequently, Islam has flourished in North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Western Africa. However, the early Islamic movement to the areas south of the Sahara was slow (Nyang, 1993:232). According to Louis Brenner, “[t]he dynastic Muslim state was one form of Islamic socio-political organization which had existed in West Africa from as early as the eleventh century in Kanem-Borno, and subsequently in the empire of Mali and Songhay” (2000:146).

In addition to the aforementioned three religions, many other religions have found a home in Africa: Judaism, for instance the Beta Israel of Ethiopia, the Abayudaya of Uganda, the House of Israel in Ghana, the Igbo Jews of Nigeria and the Lemba of southern Africa; Hinduism in South Africa since 1860, Rhodesia, Mozambique and the East African coastal nations; Buddhism in South Africa since about 1916, Rhodesia, and Zaire (see Oosthuizen, 1993), and the like.

Some studies also show that many Jews seem to have settled in Egypt, North Africa, from the fifth century on and possibly already earlier (see Werblowsky, 1993). Judaism entered East Africa from the Arabian Peninsula via the Horn of Africa. The Jewish immigrants also moved to South Africa after the discovery of diamond fields in Kimberley in the 1860s and of gold in Transvaal in the 1880s

(Werblowsky, 1993:314). “Many Jews, fleeing from persecution in eastern Europe, found refuge in Africa where at first they settled as simple and poor shopkeepers in little African townships, still speaking the Yiddish language they had brought from Russia” (Werblowsky, 1993:314-315). Currently, the largest concentration of Jewish communities is found in South Africa, though the Apartheid government forced the Jewish intellectuals and writers who opposed the regime into exile (Werblowsky, 1993:315).

In spite of the fact that Indians had established trade relations with Africa from the first century BC, the impact of Indian religion on Africa has been insignificant with the exception of the influence of Gandhi’s activities that were based on the best in Hinduism (Oosthuizen, 1993:305). Indians have not tried to colonize Africa, as their main focus has been mainly on trade. There has been no efforts on the part of orthodox Hinduism to “missionize into the hearts and minds” of non-Hindus;

neither does it care much for dialogue in Africa – this has been left to the Hindu reform movements and those with a background in Hindu thinking such as the Hare Krishna movement, the yoga schools and Transcendental Meditation with its techniques. Furthermore, it was not easy for someone to become a Hindu; one could be a Hindu by birth only. Being a member of a caste is indispensable in orthodox Hinduism (Oosthuizen, 1993:306).

In this paper, I will explore the relationship between religious pluralism, tolerance, and public culture in Africa. The vastness of the African continent makes it literally impossible to speak of a unilateral notion of religious pluralism and its impact in the continent. Thus, I will cite some examples in different parts of the continent in order to show the pros and cons of religious pluralism in Africa. I will focus on how Christianity, Islam and Indigenous religion have managed to maintain their existence and influence in different parts of the continent. Although the cases examined are largely from Ethiopia and Nigeria, most of the issues are relevant for other regions of Africa.

The first part deals with how foreign religions have challenged indigenous religion in Africa. Part two focuses on the positive aspects of religious pluralism in Africa. Specifically it discusses religious

tolerance and conflict in Ethiopia. The last part provides concluding remarks.

1. Foreign Religions and Indigenous Religion in Africa

History has shown that the introduction of religions like Christianity and Islam has challenged the very existence of African indigenous belief systems. Islam and Christianity, unlike African religions, are messianic, and as such, expansionist religions: converting other people is considered a duty. In general, African religious beliefs have been regarded as primitive and useless, and the people have been considered as pagans without 'real' religion. Christian missionaries who, ostensibly, came to save the African people from 'pagan darkness' condemned African religion. As Okot p'Bitek notes, Western missionaries believed that human societies are classified into two: civilized or primitive. They thus want to civilize the 'primitive' people. The missionary therefore "built churches and attached to them places of instruction in a number of skills. The curriculum was based on the aim of producing loyal, grateful, but inferior graduates, rootless, nay, self-hating Africans who would always look to Europe for each and everything" (1986:74, quoted in Imbo, 2004: 368). In the name of 'civilization' missionaries have sought to eradicate all vestiges of indigenous African metaphysical beliefs and religions. Christianity thus forced many Africans to abandon their myths and traditions (Thomas, 2005). Likewise, Islam has had damaging impacts on African religion. Muslims have subverted many aspects of African traditional religion. Consequently, the number of Christians and Muslims increased in the various regions of Africa by leaps and bounds within a short period of time. They divided the people into two camps – the converts who looked down upon the old traditional religion, and the devotees of traditional religion. The acceptance of modern religions was conceived as the acceptance of civilization. Accordingly, foreign religions have tried to uproot indigenous beliefs and practices in various African countries. They have forced the African people to destroy cultic symbols, shrines and sacred groves.

Although foreign religions have challenged indigenous African religions by carrying to their converts everywhere thick packages of cultural elements, including systems of metaphysics, ethics and aesthetics, the African people have managed to avoid long-lasting

religious conflict. Some Africans have followed both the traditional religion and the modern religion. In what follows, I will discuss how this has happened in different parts of Africa.

2. Religious Pluralism and Tolerance

There are three ways of looking at world religions: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Religious exclusivism is the view that one's religion is the only true religion, and that other religions are false or largely false and rivals to the one true religion. Most of the adherents of each religion share this view. Much of the world's civil unrest, civil wars, mass crime against humanity and genocide are caused by religious exclusivism.

Although inclusivists regard their own faith tradition as the only complete true religion, they do not regard other religions as wrong. Instead they believe that other religions are incomplete or partially developed faiths, because "God can be encountered and his grace manifested in various ways through diverse religions" (Reichenbach, 1999). Inclusivists thus believe that things specified by the true religion will help save adherents of other religions.

Religious pluralism is the view that "religions are legitimate, valid, and true – when viewed from within their particular culture. All faith traditions are deserving of respect" (Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, ND). Thus, pluralism teaches that God can be encountered through other religions that in turn help persons to discover and worship the true God and to lead upright lives. However, pluralism does not mean that all religions are factually true, as they hold conflicting views. Many religions can be valid without being absolutely true. I think that religious pluralism can enable a country to promote religious freedom, and to avoid religiously motivated conflict. In the light of this fact, I will explore how religious pluralism has affected Africa.

2.1. *Religious Pluralism and Tolerance in Africa*

Although sporadic historical bouts of indigenous fundamentalism and religious intolerance are known in Africa, relative religious tolerance is a common feature of many African societies. Religious tolerance gives the right of full freedom of conscience to every citizen. According to Mazrui, "[w]hen indigenous African culture join hands with Islam, it can produce a level of ecumenical tolerance unequalled

anywhere else in the world" (2005:4). Senegal is a case in point. The ecumenical spirit of Senegal and of political Islam enabled it to have a Roman Catholic President-Léopold Sédar Senghor for twenty years from 1960 to 1980 despite the fact that 94% of its population is Muslim. Islam has been reinforced by African indigenous culture in Senegal in the direction of greater political ecumenicalism (Mazrui, 2005:4). Abdou Diouf, a Muslim, replaced Senghor. The First Lady of President Diouf of Senegal was Roman Catholic. Also, Ali Hassan Mwinyi replaced President Julius Nyerere in Tanzania. In Cameroun, President Ahmadu Ahidjo, a Muslim, stepped down as president in favor of the ex-seminarian, Paul Biya (Sicard, 1993:274). Adherents of various religious communities are represented in the governments of many African countries. Egypt also permitted Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a Coptic Christian who was married to a Jew, to rise as high as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, which in turn enabled him to become Secretary-General of the United Nations.

As Mazrui notes, until 2009, a similar level of tolerance has never happened in the USA, and other Western countries. "We have never had such levels of tolerance in Western history – never a Black First Lady in the White House in Washington or a Muslim wife at No. 10 Downing Street, London, or a person of racially mixed parentage as President of France, in Paris" (Mazrui, 2001c:9). Barack Obama, a person of racially mixed parentage (a black father and a white mother), became the President of the US in 2009. His wife, Ms. Michelle Obama, is the First Black Lady in the White House in Washington. This is a good development in the US although the US is still a racially and religiously divided country.

On the other hand, the combination of Christian compassion and Africa's own short memory of hate has enabled Africans to avoid reprisals against the losers in the battle. According to Mazrui,

[w]hen Africans are fighting each other, they can be as ferocious and unremitting as any combatants anywhere else in the world. The real difference is what happens after the peace accords have been signed. African culture, especially when reinforced by a Christian spirit, has repeatedly demonstrated a short memory of hate (2005:5).

Moreover, the interaction between indigenous African culture and foreign religions, and fundamental values central to the African

consciousness, a sense of communal values, respect for elders, consensus-building, the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation have helped Africans produce a level of ecumenical tolerance and a short memory of hate – a lesson for the contemporary world. Among others, Nelson Mandela, who emphasized forgiveness after he lost 27 of the best years of his life in prison in the second half the 20th century, is a remarkable illustration of a short memory of hate. It is a fact that the Apartheid regime wrongfully harmed Mandela.

Yet Mandela was resolutely determined and made a great personal effort to transcend and overcome personal moral anger, hatred, feelings of revenge, strife, and racial divisions by forgiving those who had wrongfully harmed him even before they could acknowledge their guilt and responsibility by apologizing to him (More, 2004:212).

He had the courage to negotiate the terms of the new non-racial democratic South Africa with the apartheid regime (headed by F. W. de Klerk) rather than choose a winner-takes-all, violent revolutionary route. With reference to this move, More made the following point: “it is the post-prison, older Mandela and not the early commander-in-chief of *Umkhonto We Sizwe* who espoused non-violence as a moral principle” (2004:212). It is to be recalled that a separate armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (‘The Spear of the Nation’) was formed by the African National Congress (ANC) under Mandela’s leadership in 1961 (Dubow, 2000:66). Although Mandela did not rule out the role of people’s resistance to the Apartheid regime, it was in prison (in Pollsmoor) after he was separated from his friends that he convinced himself to talk with his enemy (see Mandela, 1994:609-668). He noted that the time had come when the struggle could best be pushed forward through negotiations (Mandela, 625-626). He preferred non-violence and negotiation as instruments of political liberation to revolutionary violence. In this connection, Mandela stresses the following:

If we did not start a dialogue soon, both sides would soon be plunged into a dark night of oppression, violence and war. My solitude would give me an opportunity to take the first steps in that direction, without the kind of scrutiny that might destroy such efforts.

We had been fighting against white minority rule for three-quarters of a century. We had been engaged in the armed struggle for more than two decades. Many people on both sides had already died. The enemy was strong and resolute. Yet even with all their bombers and tanks, they must have sensed they were on the wrong side of history. We had right on our side, but not yet might. It was clear to me that a military victory was a distant if not impossible dream. It simply did not make sense for both sides to lose thousands if not millions of lives in a conflict that was unnecessary. They must have known this as well. It was time to talk (1994:626).

Mandela's move positively influenced government officials to start negotiations and dismantle the Apartheid system and lay the groundwork for a democratic South Africa. Finally the protracted dialogue led to the emergence of the new democratic South Africa in 1994. Mandela and F. W. de Klerk, the then President of South Africa, received the Nobel Peace Prize for their role in the process. Charles Taylor also commends Mandela for creating space for the good to triumph in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa (2007:705-707). He stresses the importance of talking over fighting, of reconciliation and trust.

In this connection, we can argue that Africa's traditional value system provides a basis to integrate human values into the global outlook and evolve alternatives to dominant socio-economic and technological paradigms through its communal philosophy manifest in consensus building, social responsibility, entrepreneurship, sustainability, equity, order, reconciliation, reciprocity, fairness, at all levels of human life (Ike and Edozien 2001). The norms and values that really typify African humanism also include justice; respect for person and property; tolerance; compassion with and sensitivity to the aged, the handicapped and the less privileged; clear-cut sex and marriage controls; unwavering obedience to adults, parents, seniors and authority; courtesy, reliability, honesty and loyalty (Teffo, 1999:154). These and other related values helped different believers to live peacefully together. In short, regarding Christian-Muslim relations in Africa, S. Von Sicard maintains that the African record of peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims is unsurpassed.

In Africa, almost more than anywhere else in the world, Christians and Muslims mix freely in daily life in every field of human endeavour, be it in the market place, at the office, in business, in political parties, in schools and other institutions of learning. It is above all in these situations that dialogue takes place. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why on the whole there has been such a peaceful co-existence and co-operation between Christians and Muslims on the continent. Other contributory reasons are the tolerance and patience of the peoples of Africa in general, as well as the power of African values and traditions (Sicard, 1993:273).

Here one can raise a question: If Africans were really inspired by such high moral principles, how do we explain the horrible wars before and after colonization? This is an important question that needs to be addressed. Before colonization, different cultural groups used indigenous methods of conflict resolution that helped them maintain durable peace. However, colonial rulers and some postcolonial African leaders used conflict of different sorts to promote their vested interests. As a result, some major violent conflicts have been fought in a postcolonial Africa. African dictators have associated themselves with colonial masters and continued to exploit their own people. They have used foreign development models to address African problems. These have not yet enabled Africa to get out of poverty. Far worse, the situation of human rights in Africa is generally poor. In spite of these factors, African values have helped people of various religious persuasions and groups to live together.

In contrast to Africans, Armenians and the Irish respectively have, for instance, a long memory of grievance against the Ottoman Empire that perpetrated the Armenian massacres from 1915 to 1917, and a basic resentment of the English. The Nazi Holocaust also forced the Jews to develop a profound distrust of the Germans (Mazrui, 2005:5). However, this is not always so and the contrast is not always so marked. Sometimes Christians can also produce a short memory of hate and Africans may fail to do so.

Another important point is whether religion has any relevance to politics in Africa. Some claim that religion is a private matter that should not figure in the sphere of politics and that values derived from

religion will divide a particular nation, not unite it. Thus, they claim that religious pluralism endangers political stability. However, the situation in Africa is not as simple as this claim. As Hollenweger observes, “[f]ar from making religion ‘a private affair’, as is the case in Europe, they [Africans] try to see complementarities in the different religions” (Hollenweger, 1993:XI).

Although the world has continued to become increasingly secular, the process of secularization has not precipitated the decline of the public importance of religion in Africa. The spread and diversity of religious forms has had a considerable impact on public culture in different parts of Africa. The religious factor has become a significant component of the public, not only just the private, scene. Both secular and religious arguments have influenced public morality in Africa. In this regard, Simeon O Ilesanmi makes a cogent case for the positive role of religion in public life. He underlines that religious perspectives and concerns cannot be divorced from public life. He argues that religion can play an important and positive role in nation building, especially through the provision of education and social welfare services. Accordingly,

[p]roperly understood, religion itself is a constant reminder of the unity of public and private life, but also of the boundary between them. Although religion and politics are different realms, they nevertheless need each other. The validity and the distinctive character of each contributes to a healthy society (Ilesanmi, 1997:xxiv).

Thus, the dichotomization of religion and politics would create untenable polarity. This in turn shows the continuing role of religion in human history.

The boundaries between religious and secular spheres are not clear in Africa. “For most Africans, there is no conflict between faith and science or between faith and reason. Both are well accommodated under God in their own African worldview as well as in the biblical worldview” (Turaki, 2007:132). In this regard, one also might want to look at the ancient Egyptian view of the world. Ancient Egyptians recognized the unity of human and nonhuman, and developed a holistic view of the universe. For ancient Egyptians, *nun*, the primeval chaotic water, is the source of the universe. In the beginning, the sun-god as *Ra-Atum* appeared from *nun* by his power of self-development

to start the existence of all beings. Accordingly, the self development of matter resulted in spirit. *Ra* is the source of life and rationality (for details see Obenga, 2004:40). “*Nun*, a physical substance, and *Ra-Atum*, an intellectual and spiritual force, are different and with opposite properties, but complementary to each other. *Nun* can be described as being, and *Ra-Atum* as movement. The complementarity of ‘matter’ and ‘spirit’ clearly illustrates the unity of opposites in various processes within the universe” (Obenga, 2004:43). Therefore, in ancient Egyptian ontology, there is no radical distinction between spirit and matter. In this system, all things are interconnected.

Maat, the ancient Egyptian ethical and spiritual principle, integrates the sacred with a mundane or secular situation. It governs all aspects of creation and change. *Maat* is the totality of all things and the orderliness of the totality of existence, and represents things in harmony and in place. Moreover, ancient Egyptians personified the cosmic order as the goddess *Maat*. Without *Maat* there would be no order, no truth, and no justice. Disorder, chaos, disease and moral decay prevail in the absence of *Maat*. The organization of the Pharaonic state was based on the political principles of *Maat*. The creator-god *Ra* also lives by *Maat*. All this indicates that *Maat* was at the centre of ancient Egyptian life for more than three thousand five hundred years. Furthermore, according to Obenga, linguistically, the fundamental role of *Maat* can be manifested in numerous African ethnic groups (2004:48), reflecting the similarity between ancient Egyptian holism and contemporary African holism.

African worldview emphasizes the communal relationships among human beings. In Africa, the person is linked with the community and the extended family. Interdependence and connectedness are prominent features of traditional African society. The interconnectedness of beings is manifested through a cultural concept such as ‘*ubuntu*’. The concept *ubuntu*, a concept found in the languages of East, Central and Southern Africa, recognizes the connections of all people and the importance of relationships and of building communities. It captures the essence of what it means to be human. It means a person is a person through other persons, and I am what I am because of what we all are. We affirm our humanity when we acknowledge that of others.

Traditional African worldview recognizes the interconnection between the natural and supernatural, physical and metaphysical,

visible and invisible dimensions of the world. Currently living human and nonhuman beings, ancestors, the yet unborn, and the natural world are interconnected. The real is not only what is observable or what makes cognitive sense; it is also the invisible, the emotional, the sentimental or the inexplicable.

Many African peoples envision a kinship relationship between themselves and the natural world. They have developed an organic conception of nature that promotes an ecological interdependency among human, plant, and animal life. For example, the Oromo, the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, believe that *Waaqa*, (God), *Lafa* (Earth) and all other creations are interconnected. *Ayyaana* (spirit) is a manifestation of the one *Waaqa*. The spirits act as intermediaries between human beings and *Waaqa*. Human beings are not above other creatures and cannot despoil them as they wish. They are part of the natural world and are given a special place in the diversity of the cosmos; they are endowed with the intelligence that enables them to understand cosmic events. Likewise, some ethnic groups in Africa believe that human beings are the caretakers but not the masters of the cosmos although God placed them at the center of the cosmos (see Opoku, 1993).

In Oromo world view, *saffuu* or *ceeraa fokko*, an ethical principle, governs the relationship between the creator and the created, generations, families, human beings and nonhuman beings and so on. *Saffuu* governs the use of natural resources. Oromo worldview is partly based on the *Gadaa* system. The *Gadaa* system is a democratic egalitarian system that has its own leaders who conduct government (political, economic, social, judicial, legislative, ritual and military affairs) of the Oromo society for non-renewable eight-year terms. The Oromo national assembly formulated environmental and other laws. For the Oromo, laws are a product of human deliberation rather than a gift of God or of heroic ancestors. According to Asmarom Legesse, "[t]here is little in Oromo thought that suggests that laws are natural and, therefore, immutable. There is even less evidence that suggests that the laws are supernatural and, therefore, beyond discussion. On the contrary, they say that all their laws were created by men and can thus be changed by men" (2000:208). However, not all laws are man made. The Oromo people believe that there are some laws that were created by God.

Ilesanmi also states that the sacred and the secular were not artificially bifurcated in pre-colonial Nigeria. A dimension of ambiguity was introduced to public life by colonialism (1997:xx). Colonialism further aggravated ethnic tension and tribal conflicts in Nigeria (Orji, 2008). The point here is that politicians can be held accountable through religious means, just as religious leaders are subject to worldly laws. Thus, the view that considers religion as a threat to political stability is not always defensible.

However, the evidence shows that in recent years there have been some instances that have challenged the co-existence of a plurality of religious traditions in some African countries. Even development and unequal opportunities have led to conflicts that have been colored by differences of religion.

Similarly, new forms of religious intolerance are being generated by the insurgence of satanic discourses (Hackett, 2003). Hackett identified four principal causes for religious intolerance.

1. Increased religious pluralization that has hastened competition between religious groups over resources;
2. Mediazation of religion: religious groups have used both public and private media outlets to promote their beliefs, which often lead to tensions owing to the weakness of governments to control standards of tolerance in the private and small-scale media sector;
3. "Marked increase in religious revivalism and militancy, notably among Christians and Muslims; greater sense of exclusivism and moralism"; and
4. Increased constitutional and human rights awareness, as well as expectations of religious freedom (Hackett, 2003:69).

Hackett thinks that all these factors have diminished the opportunities for positive interaction and shared knowledge between religious organizations in many African countries.

There have been intermittent conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Sudan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana and the like before and after independence. Among others, the conflicts between the Arab-Islamic North and the South whose Bantu population follows either African traditional religions or Christianity in Sudan have been serious. The military government formulated a religious policy in 1983 to Islamize the South and introduce Islamic law (Sharia). Such a policy

has aggravated the conflict between the two groups (see Koschorke *et al.*, 2007:267).

Currently, new forms of indigenous and foreign religions, particularly Pentecostal ministries which flourish in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Ethiopia, South Africa and other African countries, have condemned other (competing) religious options, in particular, traditional African religions. They demonize African traditions and culture using modern media technologies. In the case of the Oromo of Ethiopia, for instance, various groups have been distorting the Oromo worldview and social and religious institutions for various political, economic, and other motivations. As a result even the Oromo themselves tend to forget their own Oromo worldview and sense of identity. Likewise, in recent years, in Nigeria,

there is a cultural scramble between Islam and Christianity for hegemony, a totalizing ambition to monopolize all the legitimizing structures of private and public life. Expressions of hegemonic tendencies among organized religions are, of course, not new; what is striking in the Nigerian case is the aggressive, and sometimes destabilizing, manner in which these tendencies impinge themselves upon public consciousness (Ilesanmi, 1997:xxii).

Rosalind I. J. Hackett also states that Nigeria's Christian-Muslim relations have deteriorated in the last two decades (Hackett, 2003; see also Orji, 2008).

Thus, the prevalence of discourses of demonization in the current day Africa, the new kind of 'spiritual warfare' and external factors and vested interests have had negative impacts on civil society, religious pluralism and freedom of religion. It has led to the deterioration of inter-religious relationships in some societies.

Religious tolerance is also well evidenced in the case of Ethiopia, where diverse religious communities have lived together. In what follows, I will discuss the interaction of various religions in Ethiopia.

2. Religious Pluralism and Tolerance in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is another country that has exhibited religious tolerance. According to the 2007 census, 73, 918,505 people live in Ethiopia. 40.5% (32,138,126) of Ethiopians are Orthodox Christians. 25,045,550

(35.4%) are Muslims. 13,746,787 (19.6%) are Protestants. And 536,827 (0.8%) are Catholics.

Most writers agree that the government in Axum accepted Christianity as a state religion in the fourth century. Ezana was the first emperor to be converted to Christianity. However, individual believers adopted Christianity in an earlier period owing to the influence of foreign Christian merchants.

It is worth noting that consecutive Abyssinian rulers used the *Kebra Nagast* ("the Book of the Glory of Kings") to justify the so-called Solomonic dynasty from 1270. The *Kebra Nagast* describes the origins of the Solomonic line of the Emperors of Ethiopia. It outlines how Makeda, the Queen of Ethiopia, better known as the Queen of Sheba, learned about the wisdom of King Solomon of Israel from a merchant, and visited him in Israel, and how Ethiopians began to worship "the Lord God of Israel." It states: "the night before she begins her journey home, Solomon tricks her into sleeping with him, and gives her a ring so that their child may identify himself to Solomon. Following her departure, Solomon has a dream in which the sun leaves Israel" (Chapter 30). Later she gave birth to Menelik. There has been no agreement among scholars about the author of the book, the time when it was written and the circumstances under which it was compiled. Nonetheless, on the basis of this legend, Orthodox Christian theology provided an ideological foundation for the state.

Islam was introduced to Ethiopia in the seventh century AD. When the early followers of the Prophet Mohammed were denied the right to pursue their religion, and were sorely persecuted by the anti-Muslim Arabs who worshipped idols as other gods, the Prophet Mohammed advised his followers to seek refuge in Abyssinia-Habashat. He says: "[t]ill Allah wills, to give us strength to defend ourselves go to Abyssinia and abide there. It is a land of righteousness, her king is just and none suffer under him" (Giday, 1992, quoted in Okera, ND). Consequently, Muslim refugees found refuge in Ethiopia in 610 AD. They were well received in Aksum, Ethiopia. According to Ibn Ishaq, after a'far b. Abu Talib, presented the Muslims' case, "[t]he Najash wept until his beard was wet and the bishops wept until their scrolls were wet, when they heard what he read to them. Then the Najash said, 'of a truth, this and what Jesus brought have come from the same niche'" (Guillaume 1955: 152; Surah al-Maidah, v: 86, quoted in Sicard, 1993:273). Accordingly, the then king of Ethiopia Negash

(Najash?) pronounced that all those who believe in the God that one cannot see, hear or touch were welcome in Ethiopia. Thus, the king invited the Muslims to stay as long as they wished. This was the first Christian-Muslim encounter in Ethiopia. Some Muslim refugees returned to Arabia after the Muslims defeated the kafirun 'infidels.' Islamic annals recognized these people as the "people of the ship," because they "traveled by boat to return home" (Nyang, 1993:231).

Later, Muslims came to Ethiopia through the Red Sea and Indian Ocean for various reasons including trade activities, finding the place of refuge owing to internal persecution in their countries, the promotion of Islamic education and the like. Consequently, Islam had expanded to different parts of Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Christians, Muslims and the followers of indigenous religion have managed to live together for centuries despite the fact that they hold divergent and incompatible views with regard to religious questions. In particular, the people in Wollo, north Ethiopia, have developed the environment where Christianity and Islam flourish together despite harsh government religious policies in the past. Tibebe Eshete writes, "[p]erhaps, of all the places in Ethiopia, Wello provides the scene where the shared space between the two religions has given rise to a culture of religious tolerance and an openness that allows shifting of religious loyalty as politically appropriate and sociologically beneficial" (2009:29). Ephrem Isaac for his part explained religious tolerance in the county in the following words:

In general, the highland Ethiopian Moslems, referred to as Jabarti, are of the same racial stock as all Ethiopians, equally tolerant [as the Orthodox Christians are]. Ethiopia is bordered by Islamic sovereign states to the north, the east and the west, with which conflicts have often arisen. However, within the country itself, the people who inhabit the Harar Province, as well, a large block of people living mainly in Wollo, Arusi, Bale, and Kaffa provinces in the highlands, and who comprise the significant Moslem group, have lived in peace, and even fought as one with Christians against the neighboring Moslem states in times of conflict. Some Moslems were even known to have raised money to build churches, as some Christians were also known to have contributed to

building mosques. Most of the Moslems of Ethiopia are historically engaged in peaceful pursuit of business, traders, merchants, artisans, and peasants (ND:4).

Another area that reflects the unity of diverse religions in Ethiopia is *edir*, a traditional community organization in which the members assist each other during the mourning process. Religion is not considered as a criterion to join *edir* in Ethiopia. The followers of all religions can join local *edirs*.

Despite the fact that the followers of different religions have continued to live together for centuries, there have been some instances that have negatively affected the building of a multiethnic nation. Hussein Ahmed emphasizes the fact that economic and political factors rather than purely religious factors caused prolonged conflicts between the Christian kingdom and the Muslim principalities of southern and southeastern Ethiopia from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century (2006:4).

These conflicts became more intense when the warrior-king Amda Seyon (r. 1314-44) launched a series of campaigns that led to the defeat, subjugation and annexation of Ifāt, the strongest Muslim state that had emerged in the late thirteenth century and mobilized a coalition of Muslim states in order to resist the territorial expansion of the Christian kingdom (Ahmed, 2006:5-6).

In the first half of the sixteenth century Imām Ahmed b. Ibrāhīm (fl. 1506-43) led the Muslim army and defeated the Christian forces, and advanced to, and occupied, central and northern Ethiopia until the combined Ethiopian and Portuguese forces defeated him in 1543. The wars of Ibrahim and later the weakness of the state and the Church in the Era of the Princes from 1769-1855 led to the conversion of the population in Wollo and other regions to Islam.

Consecutive Ethiopian governments had doubts about the link between Ethiopian Muslims and foreign aggressors, such as Turkish, Egyptian/Mahdist and Italian (in the sixteenth/seventeenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, respectively). Nevertheless, the rulers did not take retaliatory measures against Ethiopian Muslims (Ahmed, 2006:8).

Later in the second half of the nineteenth century the Christian-Muslim relations deteriorated, because the Ethiopian state adopted the harshest ever measure against Ethiopian Muslims. Accordingly, during the imperial era, attempts were made to force people of other religious persuasions to forsake their religions and embrace Christianity. Ethiopia was considered as an island of Christianity surrounded and besieged by Islam. For instance, Emperor Tewodros (1855-1865) forced many Muslims to be converted to Christianity. In the same way, Muslims of Wollo and Shawā in north/central Ethiopia were officially converted in the late 1870s and throughout the 1880s during the reign of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-89) (Ahmed, 2001a, cited in Ahmed, 2006:8). Emperor Yohannes IV “concentrated most of his missionary effort on Wello because the province had virtually become an Islamic state within the heartland of Ethiopia” (Eshete, 2009:27). By the 1880s, Yohannes IV’s policy led to the conversion of fifty thousand Jabarti Muslims and five hundred thousand Oromos to Christianity (Erlich, 2002, cited in Eshete, 2009:28). The emperor was against any alternative forms of Christianity. He also ordered Western missionaries to leave the country (Eshete, 2009:29 and 70).

Although Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913) applied a somewhat liberal and gradualist religious policy unlike his predecessor (Marcus, 1975, cited in Eshete, 2009:31), he believed that “Ethiopia is an island of Christians in a sea of Muslims” (Trimingham, 1950). To put matters another way, there was a systematic marginalization of the followers of indigenous religion and the Muslims who were against the official religious policy in Ethiopia. According to Ahmed, “[b]ehind the façade of religious equality and tolerance, and the fiction of national identity irrespective of religious affiliation, there were various forms of subtle and overt political, legal, social, economical and cultural discrimination against, and restriction upon, Ethiopian Muslims” (1994:797).

On the other hand, following the occupation of south and south Western regions in the nineteenth century, Abyssinian rulers imposed their rule and religion on the local people. Christianity had uprooted indigenous religions in these areas. A great number of indigenous people were forcibly compelled to convert. Sacred groves were cut down, and churches were built on the sites of former sacred groves. However, for some Oromo conversion to Christianity was not a total break with the Oromo indigenous religion. Their religious practice is

in continuity with aspects of the Oromo past. However, those who were converted to Islam have detached themselves from their indigenous religion.

According to some writers, the conquered people in south and southwestern Ethiopia preferred Islam or alternative forms of Christianity (Braukamper, 1988, Ronne, 1997, cited in Eshete, 2009:373, note 82). Ex-slaves, such as Onesimos Nesib and social outcasts like Gidada Salon took their own initiative to expand evangelical Christianity in Wellega and Illubabor (Solon, 1972, cited in Eshete, 2009:34).

Among Ethiopian leaders, it can be argued that Lij Iyasu (1913-1916) had a liberal religious policy that had annoyed the ruling establishment. According to Bahiru Zewde,

This was untimely and effectively used against him by his domestic and external enemies. What he tried to do in this sphere could be briefly summed up as trying to introduce an equitable system whereby both Christians and Muslims would live as equal citizens. While, like preceding emperors, he built churches and gave endowments to Christian institutions, he also felt that similar encouragements should be given to Muslims. It was largely such considerations that dictated his marriage into the families of Muslim *balabbat* [land lord]. He developed particularly close relations with the Somali, who considered him a great national hero and rose in anger when he was deposed in 1916 (1998:174-175).

The conflict between Ethiopian Christians and Muslims was further aggravated by the Fascist government's pro-Islamic policy after the Italian occupation of the country in 1936 (Ahmed, 2006:8). The Italians used the conflict between the two groups to gain political and military advantages (Sbacchi, 1985, cited in Ahmed, 2006:8).

The restoration of the monarchy in 1941 further aggravated cultural discrimination against Muslims. Ethiopian Muslims remained second-class citizens until the 1974 Ethiopian revolution (Ahmed, 2006:9-10), despite the fact that the 1931 and 1951 imperial constitutions stressed equal protection for all people. Although the 1931 Constitution did not state Christianity as a state religion, the

revised Constitution of 1955 states that the Emperor should follow the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Orthodox Christianity supported and reflected the established order until 1974.

It should also be noted that the established Church in Ethiopia regarded all other non-Orthodox variants of the faith as invasive species that threatened its existence (Eide, 2000; Eshete, 2009). Accordingly, it regards evangelical Christianity as an imported religion. The Italian colonial administration also suspended all foreign missionary activities in all parts of Ethiopia during the occupation, because it had the aim of promoting the Roman faith as the national church (Eshete, 2009:77).

The Haile Selassie regime (1930-1974) and the military government (1974-1991) harassed evangelical Christians on the ground that they were connected to the West owing to the fact that their origins are linked with Protestant missionaries (Eide, 2000; Eshete, 2009). About 2,500 church buildings were closed during the Ethiopian revolution (Eide, 2000). "Large numbers of church employees and lay members were imprisoned for long periods, and many of them suffered severely from torture and harassment" (Eide, 2000:250). Moreover, the military government suspected that the evangelical churches in Wellega, west Ethiopia, had some links with the Oromo Liberation Front that was against the Ethiopian government (Eide, 2000). Currently, there is no persecution against evangelical religious movement in Ethiopia.

The traditional link between the state and church came to an end when the military government proclaimed the separation of the Church and the state in August 1974. Accordingly, the myth that legitimized the emperor as well as the Amhara claim to power came to an end after the 1974 revolution. In the 1987 Constitution, Article 46, sub article 3, it states that state and religion are separate. All religious groups were given the freedom to promote their beliefs although the government later interfered in religious matters. The 1995 Ethiopian Constitution also clearly indicates the separation of the state and religion. It stresses that the state should not interfere in religious matters and religion shall not interfere in state affairs either.

Messay Kebede (1999) discusses how modern education has also influenced Ethiopian intellectuals to negate indigenous traditions. The latter are determined to promote secular values even at the expense of Christian values adopted by the government. In particular, radical

students in the 1960s and 1970s were against religion in general. They were of the opinion that all religions are opposed to social progress. The only way out is thus the establishment of a socialist system based on Marxism-Leninism.

Likewise, as I have noted elsewhere, (Workineh 2002), some Western scholars and Western trained intellectuals in many developing countries have challenged the value of indigenous knowledge. Both groups have tried to promote scientific knowledge by belittling the accumulated knowledge of the local people. They tend, in effect, to argue that the African must in the name of 'development', 'democracy' and 'human rights' simply dissolve and become Western. The irony is that many of these 'scholars' did not take the time to critically study indigenous knowledge in Africa.

On the other hand, in spite of the current official policy, there have been clashes between different religious groups in different parts of the country. Ahmed reported that in 2001, local Christians and Muslims had conflict in Kamise (Wollo) and Harar (2006:17). This shows that there have been occasional frictions and clashes of interests between the two communities. Ahmed writes,

Contrary to still-prevailing outsiders' perceptions, scholarly interpretation and official representation, Christian-Muslim relations in Ethiopia have not evolved along a perfectly smooth and unilinear path marked by a progression of Muslims from the mentality of an oppressed and helpless minority to one of genuine equality, and from an inferiority complex to confidence, pride and dignity, and of the Christians from a claim to inherent superiority and domination to recognizing the rights of their Muslim compatriots (2006:19).

Moreover, there were religious clashes in Arsi (Koffele Zone), central Ethiopia, in 2005, in Gimma and Illubabor, Western Ethiopia, and Harer, eastern Ethiopia, in 2006 and 2007 (Abba Samuel, 2008, Liqe Kahenat Kinfu Gebrel Altaye, 2008, and Efreem Eshete, 2008, cited in Beyene, 2009:59) and in Addis Ababa in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century (see Beyene, 2009:60-61). Why do Ethiopian Muslims and Christians fight? The major reasons are socioeconomic factors, the desire to extend the influence of one's religion and to justify one's existence, political interests, government policies and the

like. The spread of literacy and the access to mass media have enabled some religious groups to promote their beliefs, and incite conflicts. There are some local newspapers that are exclusively concerned with the promotion of religious beliefs in Ethiopia. One may argue that unless they promote exclusivism, religions are not conflictual by nature although they hold different truth claims that set them apart from one another. In other words, although it is true that there are many religious traditions that, in many cases, hold conflicting and contradictory viewpoints, the existence of different religions does not necessarily lead to disagreement, intolerance, or, worse yet, violence. In most cases, they become conflictual when they get connected with sociopolitical interests. The rise of intolerance in Ethiopia and elsewhere in Africa seems to be associated with the increasing fusion of interests with religious identity in the process of a failed modernization.

3. Conclusion

It has been argued that different religions coexist in Africa despite intermittent clashes among people of various religious persuasions and groups. Religious exclusivism has often been a major cause of conflict in some places.

On the other hand, this study shows that religious pluralism is not necessarily the cause of conflict. Instead, it can help gain a deeper understanding of one's own faith and an appreciation of the rights of other people to hold diverse beliefs. If all players participate in genuine dialogue, religious pluralism can be used to create a peaceful society that can promote peaceful conflict resolution, political tolerance, and cultural negotiation.

However, there are some obvious limitations that need to be taken into account. One can object that to continue to call for 'cross cultural dialogue' is idealistic and unrealistic. Clearly, 'ethical dialogue' has not had enough influence or power to adequately limit and ultimately end transnational corporations' and powerful countries' *unjust* and destructive exploitation of the environment and weaker countries and peoples. Furthermore, dialogue among cultural traditions does not seem to produce positive changes. The World Council of Churches (WCC) from the late 1950s to the 1970s and the United Nations Organization (UNO) from the 1980s to the present tried to promote dialogue among religions and cultures. As Turaki observes,

from the late 1970s to the present, the world has increasingly become more belligerent than being understanding, peaceful and tolerant of other religions and cultures. We have witnessed a prevalent and increasing rise of violent Christian fundamentalism, the resurgent militant Islamic fundamentalism and other vicious ethnic and cultural wars of genocide and ethnic cleansing in many parts of the world (Turaki, 2007:134).

As I argued elsewhere (Kelbessa, 2008) this does not however undermine the fact that dialogue among traditions helps us to understand diversity as constitutive of reality. A creative cross religious dialogue can help us recognize and reveal the importance of difference, and enable us to hear and benefit from important voices which would otherwise be unrepresented or underrepresented, and to create an atmosphere of deeper understanding, mutual esteem and respect. It will enable us to cultivate understanding of each other's point of view, to be more sensitive to the needs and aspirations of others, to better appreciate our differences and embrace our diversity, to look beyond differences and to work together on matters that are crucial for the survival of all beings and thereby recognise that we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. Thus, we need to participate effectively, efficiently, and appropriately in the dialogue of cultural traditions. Besides dialogue, governments should introduce social reforms aimed at preventing the use of religion for political purpose.

However, religious pluralism can be manipulated to incite inter religious conflicts that can disrupt the unity of the people. The close examination of the current situation in Africa shows that various groups have used religion to promote their vested interests in the name of democracy and freedom of expression. It is, thus, important to observe the impact of neoliberalism on Africa. It is an undeniable fact that liberal outlook enables religious individuals and communities to represent themselves and to participate in the public sphere. However, these new opportunities can equally lead to new forms of separatism and demonization of religious others (Hackett, 2003).

The situation in Africa also requires a reexamination of the traditional conception of a wall between religion and state. Religion can play a positive role in public life. This has been supported by the

increased presence of religious belief and practice in the public arena. Thus, African countries should accommodate religious and cultural diversity, and maintain harmonious pluralism that can be the basis of durable peace and development. There is a need to protect the rights of all religious groups unless they are threats to the security and development of the people.

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Philosophy and African Salvation

MADUABUCHI DUKOR

I

African peoples are, indeed more than ever, in need of apocalyptic and dramatic emancipation from the shell of the Dark Ages and the pathology of traditionalism. The continent needs to move into a rationally and scientifically defined metaphysical worldview for the sake of the salvation of the race and its individuals. For the moment what there is as African philosophy is varying and contradictory thoughts that work against themselves and humanity in Africa. It is up to Africans to take their destiny in their own hands, and to work value into nature and into their labour. "After primal man had discovered that it lay in his own hands, literally to improve his lot on earth by working, it cannot have been a matter of indifference to him whether another man worked with or against him..."¹ Africans must be capable of living in a competitive world.

The focus of this paper, therefore, is not the metaphysical and existential questions of being and nonbeing, becoming and unbecoming, essence and existence. These questions border tangentially African salvation, as an individual person, as the human species, and concerning spirit or soul. This paper proceeds with the assumption of the interplay of freewill and determinism in human activities and in particular in Africa's attempt to emancipate itself technically. Hence, there is an implicit acknowledgement of Sigmund Freud's notion of determinism and the notion of freewill as necessary categories for Africa's development. Against the background of African religions and its metaphysical worldview, there is a need to advocate what Jurgen Habermas characterized as "the change in the form of religious consciousness that can be understood as a response to the challenges of modernity, where the secular

¹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilisations and its Discontents*, trans. by James Strachey (London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1961), p.46.

awareness of living in a post-secular society gains sophisticated articulation in the post-metaphysical mindset.² This kind of response to modality will adapt what Habermas calls a “clearing process”³ that would combine effectively in an *apriori* synthetic way the metaphysical worldview of the African and the secular challenge to their humanity.

II

The African is faced with two choices for her salvation; to leave the shell of panpsychic animism and enter into the kingdom of Theistic monotheism or to remain in the kingdom of theistic panpsychic animism and find her salvation therein. The kingdom of monotheism is the kingdom of the universal mighty God and His order as symbolized by Jesus Christ. The constructive attribute of this order is its universal, all embracing characteristics that unify all races, that transcend myopic understanding and comprehension of things and values, that explores and mirrors and expresses the mind of God in nature and beings, and which transcends panpsychic animistic levels of being and becoming into the universal vicissitudes and apperception of the unity of the cosmos as a created and creating process. Theistic monotheism is the metaphysics and science of the creative process in the physical and social sciences. It is perfection in motion caused by the perfect Being and set in motion by Him who is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscience. Theistic monotheism as a principle, a theology and development, is the motif force behind the Egyptian mystery school, Roman Empire, Greek philosophy, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. These periods not only represent the historical progress of mankind but also the integral realization of Divine Being and integral liberation in the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo. It is a state of realization and liberation in which the individual being attains unbroken contact in all parts with the divine and by which the divine

² See Jurgen Habermas, Religion in the Public Sphere, *Lecture presented at the Holeberg Prize seminar*, 29 November 2005, p.5.

³ J. Habermas, *op. cit.*, p.5.

nature is acquired by the transformation of the lower being. Transformation, for Sri Aurobindo, means:

some change of the nature – I do not mean for instance, sainthood or ethical perfection or logic siddhis (like the Tantrics) or a transcendental (*cinmaga*) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness, radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so concerned as to bring about a striving and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being of greater and higher kind and of a larger sweep and completeness than what took place when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards this fulfillment, then my objective is not accomplished. A partial realization, something mixed and inconclusive, does not meet the demand I make on life...⁴

Theistic monotheism and its power over consciousness and nature is the essence that Sri Aurobindo is pursuing, and its link between the supernatural and the physical nature is undoubtable in any of its ramifications. There is no incipient bifurcation or tangential opposition between the two worlds, for as Rene Descartes and the school of interactionism pointed out, there is a relation that subsists, not because one has overwhelming influence on the other, but because none can subsist without the other. Yet, by the fact that the conscious is the creative platform or the motif of the creative process, a superior duty is therein assigned therewith to maintain the ontological balance in life of Spinoza's monistic universe. It is a matter of both theoretical and practical interest to note here that the "supermind" in Sri Aurobindo and Nietzsche as well as the super 'ego' or 'I', which

⁴ Kirest Joshi, (ed.), *Philosophy of Supermind and Contemporary Crisis: A Compilation of Passages from Sri Aurobindo's Writings* (India Council of Philosophical Research, New Delh, 2003).

informed the enlightenment's conquering of nature and the subsequent European colonization of Africa, are fallouts of the theistic monotheistic monologue, for supramental transformation must of necessity precede natural transformation. Dualism is one characteristic that pervades being and the universe. This is a form of being, a necessarily dualistic source confirmed by philosophers ranging from Plato to Descartes. The mind and body exist in everything, in the supermind of scientists and naturalists, for humanists as well as nature, between the mind of the creator and the physical universe.

African salvation is predicated not only as Sigmund Freud held, regarding neurosis and dreams, but also on the need to confront nature boldly as the West has done, to depersonalize the African mind from empty concentrations and the accompanying aesthetics and poetics of tradition, folklore, and proverbs. All of these in a linguistic paradigm are narcissistic glorifications of the past without yet the super mind, the abstract power of abstraction, the force or purity to control and conquer nature. In short, they do not use the mind to confront nature, or one aspect of dualism to overcome the other as the West has historically and ontologically done. This requires the employment of the special self-observing and critical agency in the ego, i.e., the ego ideal, the censor or conscience beyond narcissism and instincts and their vicissitudes,⁵ for the positive exploitation of nature and emancipation from mental slavery to technological breakthrough and civilization. In Africa, happiness in life is predominantly sought in the enjoyment of beauty, wherever beauty presents itself to our senses and our judgment: the beauty of human forms and gestures, of natural objects and landscapes, and of artistic and even scientific creations. However, according to Freud, "aesthetic attitudes to the goal of life offer little protection against the threat of suffering, but can compensate for a great deal."⁶

The African, just like the European, has her umbilical cord attached to nature, the more reason for the exploration of

⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Trans) James Strachey (New York, W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1961), pp. xviii – xx.

⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Civilisations and its Discontents*, *Op.cit*, p.29.

nature's space for a better life and scientific breakthroughs. Yet, this umbilical cord is between a mind driving the body (not a robot) and nature. The mind qua European has confronted nature to yield the vast world of scientific and technological breakthroughs: This European mind is in search of the avoidance of doubt. The African needs this mind to confront and conquer nature. The ontological tie between this mind and nature is an ontological relationship understood in abstract and dualistic terms. In deciphering these categories many meta-linguistic platforms and paradigms are set in motion, either as religious, mystical, traditions and customs of races and societies, aesthetic and poetic ways of periscoping nature. Here again I assert that Africans should de-emphasize attaching themselves to secondary qualities as in the celebration of religious and aesthetic categories but rather should confront the primary qualities of space, taste, feeling, touch, odour – the Lockean senses – with a view to understanding and tapping nature. Yet, this task could be accomplished only with appropriate logical employment of the mind as a quality and essence of the aesthetic and the religious. That is, as a dualistic component of the body or nature the universe and above all, a superior, conquering entity steering nature toward a preternatural world.

According to Freud our suffering comes from three sources: “the superior power of nature, the feebleness of our own bodies, and the inadequacy of the regulations, which adjust the mutual relationships of human beings in the family, state and society.”⁷ In this era of globalisation Africans must submit to the challenge to confront nature and exploit it for their benefit. There is a complex syndrome and fallacy in the defeatist approach of the African in relation to the European in terms of using the yardstick of the West as paradigmatic for the study of the African condition. Examples are situations of African X or Y as challenges of the European X or Y, or more sequentially as the African religion versus Christianity, African history versus European history, and so on. The Africans could be salvaged not merely by imitating the methodologies of the West or

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.33.

adopting their paradigms; they could more effectively do that by their own existential assertion in all spheres of life. Yet, there is a sense in which assertions could legitimately, logically and ontologically be made on linguistic and ideological fulcrums simply because the aesthetics and the ideological are the forms of consciousness or mind, which must be cultivated and pitted against physical nature for the values of the physical. Recapturing the Hegelian in the sense in which history is universal, unified and progressive means that the West leads in shaping and directing world history, while the African and her culture falls by the wayside or is under-utilized.

An advance in converting the African theistic panpsychic superstructure into a scientific one could be achieved by what Habermas calls the learning process of the secular and religious kingdoms, albeit with special emphasis here in transforming the dogmatic ethos of theistic panpsychic science into a deep science of African origin that could challenge cultural modernity in all of its ramifications. The African mind and its adaptability to the process of nature depends to some extent on what might be called a post-metaphysical mind-set that “represents the secular counterpart to a religious conscience become self-reflective.”⁸ It draws a “line between faith and knowledge, but rejects a narrow scientific conception of reason and the exclusion of religious doctrines from the genealogy of reason.”⁹ A little analysis is needed here. The post-metaphysical consciousness would not require total seclusion of the religious in the African context because many structures upon which theistic panpsychic animistic elements are configured, like mythic gods, spirits, etc. would be undermined. A post-metaphysical analysis of these elements should re-confirm their objective significance to science and nature. According to Habermas, post-metaphysical thought “refrains from passing ontological statements on the constitution of the whole of beings.”¹⁰ Yet some aspects of beings are ontologically entailed, like theistic panpsychic animistic science. Even natural science

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

stands on an ontological framework. There is a sense in which science could even be said to have begun from ontology. Rather post-metaphysical thought should be a special kind of ontological constitution that demystifies mysticism and dogmas.

III

How will the African be at the pinnacle of world history? This could be achieved by self-exaltation over and above that of the West, accompanied by the utilization of the greatest potentialities of the mind in tapping physical nature's potentials and values. World history, as of now, is European history because of its scientific prowess, which means that African history is part of the world history that European history is spear-heading. The question is, what will be the role of Africa in this history? Is it to be that of a servant or slave? For Africa to escape from this historical and ontological absurdity, perhaps it must fight its way out by playing initially the European historical game of ego exaltation, narcissistic, monological, monotheistic and ideological dance of imperialism and intimidation. However, this different game must go on with experimenting and conquering nature, and forging ahead with scientific progress.

Africa must have a radical break with the past and all its inhibitions in the subconscious as a means of destroying the deterministic impulses and elements that hinder development. As Freud remarked, historical experiences and group or personal actions and such behaviors as slips of the tongue, faulty actions and dreams are determined by hidden causes in a person's mind,¹¹ which more often than not are a replay of past actions or activities. While this might seem to be a denial of freewill in African culture, that freewill must confront the deterministics in African destiny in order radically to break away from the shadow of the primitive era to enter the global and technological era. For Sigmund Freud, "nothing which a person does or says is really haphazard or accidental; everything can in principle be traced to causes which are

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, "Psychoanalysis" in *Seven Theories of Human Nature* (ed.) Leslie Stevenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.75.

somehow in the person's mind."¹² In other words, historical experiences are also matters or subjects of subconsciousness in a dialectical and apperceptive continuum. This is manifest in the conscious, preconscious and unconscious – the *id*, the *ego* and the *superego*. The *id* contains all the instinctual drives, the *ego* deals with the real world outside the person, mediating between it and the *id*, and the super egos contains the science, the social norms acquired in childhood, etc.¹³ The *superego* reconciles the conflicting demands of the *id*, the *superego* and external reality. The African *ego* in question here is the determination to ideologically, monologically and scientifically confront nature, all aimed at technological development. The *Ego*, therefore, is the force behind every human achievement and, in as much, is the same for all races, nations and societies.

African salvation requires pursuits that tend to unite the African with humanity on things that stand for the exploration of nature and the advancement of science. This must precede the aesthetic, the religious, the poetics and the politics that belong largely to the secondary agenda of African salvation, namely, its ideological and monological narcissism. In discovering this truth about western civilisation and the question of African salvation, spirituality is central; it is the bridge between the scientific and the aesthetics in authentic and progressive human advancement. It is the common and constant factor and denominator in the transitions from antiquity, through religion and philosophy to science. Sri Aurobindo captures this challenge very bluntly as follows:

The strongest of these favourable forces is the constant drawing close of knots of international life, the manipulation of points of contact and threads of communication and an increasingly community in thought, in science and in knowledge. Science especially has been a great force in its direction, for science is a thing common to all men in its conclusions, open to all in its methods, available to all in its results: it is international in its nature and

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.8.

science also has created that closer contact of every part of the world with every other part, of which some sort of internationalism which is the idea of humanity as a single race of beings with a common life and a common general interest is the handwork of science, unifying element of human race in the era of globalisation and the torch bearer of Hegelian history.¹⁴

The African must unite with the global family on the same and equal level in order to become global and scientific. Falling by the wayside or remaining in the lowest part of the evolutionary ladder is out of the question. We are here reminded by Reinach¹⁵ that the ability to gaze at the sun without being dazzled belongs only to the eagle, who, as a dweller in the highest region or the air, was brought into especially intimate relation with the heavens, with the sun and with lightening. We learn from the same source that the eagle puts its young to a test before recognizing them as his legitimate offspring. Unless they can succeed in looking into the sun without blinking, they are cast out from the eerie. It is important to say that what is ascribed to animals is nothing more than a hallowed custom among men. The eagle's procedure with its young is an ordeal as a test of lineage, such as is reported of the most various races of antiquity. In this global era, therefore, in order to join other races in the scientific global race, the African is required to gaze at the sun without blinking so as to draw down the culture of technology and science.

IV

Africans should embrace the need to globalise along with others. This need is again predicated on science by and for Africans in Hegelian universal world history. This has less to do with empty celebrations of culture and traditions, which are meaningful only in the realm of aesthetics, analytics and poetics that I call residual culture, which celebrates only the

¹⁴ Kirest Joshi, *Op.cit*, p.39.

¹⁵ Reinach, *Cults, Mythes et Religions*, 1908 quoted in Freud, *Three Case Histories* (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p.184.

progressive culture of science and nature's prowess. Prowess in science and nature is *a priori* the means and ends of knowledge, which *aposteriori* is a progressive value for the unity of humanity. Accordingly Sri Aurobindo asserts that "the growth of knowledge is interesting the people in each other's art, culture, religions, ideas and is breaking down at many points the prejudice, arrogance and exclusiveness of the old nationalistic sentiments."¹⁶ There is no gain in saying that natural pride is often foisted on the ambers of national culture, art and religion, but not before scientific attributes must have been achieved as the fulcrum of survival and happiness. The African question is nonetheless predicated on putting the cart before the horse as entailed in the ideological importance of African religion, African history, etc., or the lot of religion which is the heart of Africa. It is not the celebrations inherent in it that matter, but the spirituality which calls for an estachalogical renewal of African personality and being in the direction of theistic panpsychic humanism, as a metaphysical and empirical superstructure from which a unique science of African origin could emerge. "Religion is beginning to realize a little dimly and ineffectively as yet, that spirituality is after all its own chief business and true aim, and that it is also the common element and bond of all religions."

Africans have to awaken from their spiritual slumber, from a diminished humanity to an enlightened species of being, not only by embracing and emphasizing God in the African panpsychic and pantheistic universe and theistic humanity, but also by apocalyptic political, economic and political liberation. Franz Fanon rightly remarked that every people must, out of relative obscurity, either discover itself or miss it.¹⁷ This entails spiritual and material emancipation from the doldrums of spiritual and political dwarfism.

V

He must recapture the base and must understand the secular in the universal vision of one humanity. The liberal conception of politics in the separation of the state and the church had been

¹⁶ Kirest Joshi, Op.cit, p.39.

practiced in the land of African for nearly three decades since the departure of colonial rulers, thereby leaving behind a body of politics with reference to the rule of gods and ancestors. The consequence of this is also in the weak nature of states and political instability in African as demonstrated in the condition of the Nigerian state. The dislocation of the state from within the religious and metaphysical world of the African is therefore part of the problem.

The argument here is that a post-independent Africa with post-secular and post-metaphysical worldviews synthetically combined in post-modern reason is the epistemic reason for the justification of a state, which depends on religious legitimation, and the liberal conception of democratic citizenship. In this context the liberal ethos of law and politics and obligations and demands of religion would influence each other in a consanguineous atmosphere where the learning process by which alone religious and secular thinking can achieve the self-reflective attitude on which the democratic ethos hinges.”¹⁷ From the point of view of contemporary history, African political instability – characterized by a breakdown of the rule of law, civil strife, famine, wars, hunger, poverty, etc. – is something whose solution demands not only the liberal political ideology, but a unity of an authentic African personality with the salient challenges of modernity, culminating in post-modern reason and accommodation.¹⁸ These are the challenges Africa faces in reaching for a metaphysical and epistemic solution to her problems. At the same time post-metaphysical thought in a cultural post-modernity, as in African salvation, would reject “a kind of scientism that reduces our knowledge to what is at each time represented by the state of the art in natural science.”¹⁹ In the spirit of post-modernity metaphysical thought processes should reflect on the metaphysical world heritage of both Western and African philosophies and discover the internal relationship among world philosophical heritages in the period

¹⁷ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

¹⁸ J. Habermas, *Op cit*, p.25.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

which Karl Jaspers calls the 'Axial age.'²⁰ What I have construed as the theistic panpsychic animism of African philosophy could also be applicable to Western and Eastern philosophies. While we may agree with Habermas that post-metaphysical thought insists on the difference between the certainties of faith and the validity claims that can be publicly redeemed or criticised, we disagree that the thought process can remain "agnostic"²¹ where God, gods and spirits remain variables in the scientific culture of theistic panpsychic animism. In a formidable post-metaphysical and post-secular superstructure of the scientific theistic panpsychic animism of global relevance a complementarity of cultural needs to be evolved, instead of a polarization of ideas. Hence while self-reflection is introduced into the religious consciousness of theistic panpsychic animism "there is a similar step towards the self-reflective overcoming of a secularistic stubbornness."²²

Africa is a panpsychic and animistic world prone to the kingdoms of God and of Satan. God and Satan are mutually necessary but exclusive concepts, i.e., the existence of one entails the other: the reason for the existence of God is the existence of Satan, and Satan exists because there is God with whom he entered into competition. The paradox of the African theistic panpsychic animistic ontology and worldview is that the almighty God to whom it owes ultimate obedience is not appropriated in its nature, dispositions and perfections. There is an imperialistic acculturation of the panpsychic and animistic subterranean world by the forces of Satan and demons to the exclusion of the place of God and his perfections. The sharp contrast between Europe and Africa in terms of rule of law, politics and development is the appropriation of perfections in the former and the malignant imperfections in the latter. Similarly, the absence of the culture of demons and devils in advanced countries and the predominance of Satan and its attacks on individuals and societies in Africa is because of the order of perfection in European society and the absence of the

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

²² *Ibid.*, p.13.

same in African society and governance. The symbolic nature of perfection is light and where there is no light there is darkness. There is no perfection, and therefore no light but darkness in the African world, and hence the dominance and inhabitation of demons and devils. The departure and fleeing of demons depends not solely on prayer but largely on working out a system of perfection in the polity and in traditional society. Demons exist and they are realities but their existence is predicated on imperfections on the part of man. In Africa imperfections have accordingly constituted the board of demons and devils.

Demons, imperfections exist, and walk a shoulder higher because Africans, though they rightly worship and adore gods, refused to surrender everything to, and to worship the highest God, the universal and scientific God. The African has refused to acknowledge the perfection in existence and that God exists therein; hence, the metaphysics and the ontology of the African predicament presupposes perfections and the lack of rule of law in Africa. God loves perfection, order and holiness. Satan or Lucifer is symbolic of all imperfections, disorders, corruptions, lawlessness, underdevelopments, backwardness, primitivism, dwarfism, wickedness, racism, ethnicism, political instability, wars, rumours of wars, etc.

VI

Lucifer is the head of demons and devils that realize all these imperfections and disorders. The African universe and mind is subjected by Lucifer to help him achieve his purpose on earth after he had been refused dominance by the developed worlds. However, the categories of the African mind are adequate and sufficient in the Kantian sense to grapple with development, but yet are subjected and underdeveloped by agents of Lucifer who cripple leaderships, development, economy, politics and visions. These agents of Lucifer include man, gods and some traditional institutions, which subsist only at the mercies of the gods and demons of localism, nativism and backwardness. Africa must not be alone in the struggle for survival, emancipation and development; there is need for a union with other races in the spirit of globalization. "Just as a planet revolves around a

central body as well as rotating on its own axis, so the human individual takes part in the course of the development of his mankind at the same time as he pursues his own path in life.”²³ Africa’s salvation will require a radical retirement of traditional institutions subordinated to the almighty God, preferably through Jesus Christ and the subjection of local, environmental, village, community gods and ancestors, in favour of the scientific and universal God. They have to go back to history to rediscover themselves in the old and new testaments as God’s chosen people, for understanding according to God’s precepts and testimonies in order to see like God, feel like God, and walk in His righteousness, scientific and universal like Him. And above all, to be perfect and developed in His likeness, and not blind, dumb, short, dwarfish, imperfect, visionless, paralysed and unintelligent like gods and goddesses who pay no homage to the Almighty God. Psalm 135:15-18, says “the idols of the heathen speak not; they have eyes and ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouth. They that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusted in the work of men’s imagination and powers of spoken words cast in images and objectified, they speak not, see not, hear not and are breathless;²⁴ the Africans that make them are like unto them. Again Psalm 33:12 tells us: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He had chosen for His own inheritance.”²⁵ The African race is not blessed because it is yet to go beyond its gods to the universal almighty God, who consequently is yet to chose it for His inheritance on earth.

²³ Sigmund Freud, *Civilisations and Its Discontents*, Op.cit, p.88.

²⁴ Holy Bible, Psalms.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Which Sacred Can Save Us? A Free Reflection on the Meaning of Human Existence

HIPPOLYTE NGIMBI NSEKA

Introduction

The title of my contribution to this volume devoted to “The Secular and the Sacred: Complementary and/or Conflictual in Global Times?” is a question echoing the well-known saying of Heidegger in the interview he granted to *Der Spiegel*, published shortly after his death: “Only a god can save us.”¹ This title was also suggested to me by the diversity of experiences and expressions of the sacred; and in particular, by the contradictory attitudes of Africans before the sacred. For example:

- Africans believe in a very powerful God (Nzambi Mpungu, in my language of Kikongo), and in the sovereignty of the Supreme Being, who is the maker of all things: visible, invisible, material and immaterial. Yet, Africans do not seem to grant a saving power to that God.
- When Africans are suffering or in distress, they prefer to seek the source of that situation by consulting a soothsayer or magician. Even today (just as in olden times, and more so than before independence in my own country) many people resort to magic practices – including the most enthusiastic and devout Christians, and even some bishops.
- African politicians and businessmen believe that to obtain success in their enterprises they must be “protected,” and so they make covenants with “spirits,” both good and evil.
- Sometimes, university professors make their students believe that if they achieve a Ph.D, it is thanks to their “initiation” by “Masters” of secret societies to which they belong. These same

¹ *Der Spiegel*, “Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten,” May 31, 1976, pp. 193-219. An English version of the interview can be found here: <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~other1/Heidegger%20Der%20Spiegel.pdf>.

professors ask the students to join these societies under penalty of not succeeding.

- “Wizards” (one of the figures of the sacred) appear more powerful than “the Almighty God.”
- In certain cases the traditional healer (who remains a figure of the sacred) holds much more power than the modern doctor. The practice of resorting to him is common and often considered indispensable.

Thus my question: Which Sacred can save us?

Words and Things

To try to answer the question, we must turn to the understanding of the very term “sacred.” The Romans bequeathed this concept to humanity, and in their view, the sacred and religion are not separated from other spheres of community life, but are well-integrated.

That fact confirms the position concerning the relationship between the sacred and the secular that far from being separated, antagonistic or conflictual, these are rather in symbiosis and seen as complementary in less secularized societies. But that does not mean that one should not distinguish between the two – the difficulty is to discern exactly how.

To seek the significance of this distinction, underlined with force by certain eminent scientists, let us turn to Rudolf Otto. His work, which gave rise to many critiques that continue to this day, can usefully enrich the debates over the distinction to be made between “sacrality” and “holiness.” According to the problematic raised by Jacques Derrida, and taken up again by Jean Greisch, the alternative between “a sacrality without belief” and “a holiness without sacrality” “confronts us with the thorny question of the possibility and impossibility of ‘translating’ the sacred in the ethical register of holiness.”²

² Cf. Jean Greisch, *Le buisson ardent et les lumières de la raison. L'invention de la philosophie de la religion. II. Les approches phénoménologiques et analytiques* (Paris: Cerf, 2002), p.110.

Between the Sacred and the Holy, Must One Choose?

Terminological Difficulty

Many studies on this topic turn to the work of Rudolf Otto. His work *Das Heilige* had world-wide repercussions at the time of its appearance in 1917, and remains a classic text of philosophy of religion.

With respect to the problem of terminology or translation, the original German title of the book, *Das Heilige*, is translated into French with the English equivalent of the word "Sacred,"³ while the English translation of the book uses "Holy."⁴ The question arises here whether *das Heilige* is translated better as the *Sacred* or the *Holy*. In English, one could very well have used *The Sacred* for the title – as the title of this volume in illustrates. There is also the additional question concerning the choice between the terms: *Secular* and *Profane*.

This difficulty in terminology is dealt with by many authors, including the philosopher Gabriel Marcel. Indeed, in a conference on "The Sacral in the Era of Technology,"⁵ Marcel was tasked with specifying the significance of the word "Sacral." He began as follows: "First of all, we will have to define the relevant notions with added precision. And it is only fitting that we begin by distinguishing between the sacral and the holy. This becomes more necessary owing to the fact that in German we are apt to confuse the two, as the word *heilig* can be used for either notion. In English the word *holy*, as well as the word *saint*, can be defined with relatively greater ease. For instance, I can appeal to what Paul Tillich says in the first volume of his *Systematic Theology*: 'The sphere of the gods is the sphere of holiness. A sacred realm is established wherever the divine is manifested. Whatever is brought into the divine sphere is consecrated. The divine is the holy.'⁶

Marcel comments further:

³ Rudolf Otto, *Le sacré*, translated into French with preface by André Jundt (Paris: Payot, 1995).

⁴ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. by John W. Harvey (New York, Oxford University Press, 1969).

⁵ Cf. Gabriel Marcel, "The Sacral in the Era of Technology," in Gabriel Marcel, *Searchings* (New York: Newman Press, 1967), pp.41-53.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.41.

In this sense one might assert that God alone is holy, and that holiness (*sanctitas*) belongs to him and him alone. Consequently when we refer to someone as a saint, our reference is only true to the extent he appears to participate in the holiness God. With this in mind one might well ask whether Tillich really has a right to say that holiness is something we can experience and something that lends itself to phenomenological description.⁷

Here Marcel notes a rather difficult point that arises because “Tillich, in his peculiar fashion, would say that the holy is that particular quality of whatever concerns man ultimately; it alone can give man ultimate meaning and vice versa.”⁸

And so, Marcel finds that the sacral is accessible phenomenologically – to believers and non-believers alike – while with the holy, we are dealing with something not so accessible:

Without going into rigorous analysis, it already seems clear enough that when we talk about the holy we are attending to something that is extremely nebulous. Furthermore, philosophical investigation might well go to show that this something is apparently related to holiness, that is to say, the holiness of God. But this is far from being self-evident, and in my estimation we should meditate on what it actually means to experience the sacral, and how it is that even non-believers, or, more precisely, people who do not regard themselves believers, can also experience it.⁹

And so, Marcel’s conclusion is that the sacral can be treated phenomenologically, while holiness, ultimately, cannot. Holiness, strictly speaking, is exclusively a property of God, and can be allotted to other realities only in a derived way.¹⁰ In this Marcel is not

⁷ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁰ Marcel’s position here has to be situated at a certain stage of his thought. Elsewhere he recognizes that holiness can be assigned as well to men, and even to things; there it has a kind of reality similar to life. In a text titled “Life and the

completely wrong, and would not be contradicted by Otto, who estimates that the primitive sense of the sacred (*sanctus*) is its “religious” one, while the sense which Kant gives it, the moral sense, is derived.¹¹

Indeed, in his search for that fundamental element without which religious experience cannot take place, Otto takes particular care to find the word or the term most suitable to qualify it: “It will be our endeavour to suggest this unnamed something to the reader as far as we may, so that he may himself feel it. There is no religion in which it does not live as the real innermost core, and without it no religion would be worthy of the name.”¹² In common usage, as is well known, the term that is appropriate to indicate this element is “Holiness” or “the Holy.”¹³ These represent a category of interpretation and evaluation peculiar to the sphere of religion. Otto points out that, indeed, the term can be applied, by transference, to the sphere of ethics, but it is not itself derived from this.¹⁴ Since people of today associate complete moral goodness with the term “holy,” Otto sees it necessary to find another term that approaches more this fundamental

Sacred,” he writes: “Even leaving aside any belief in a divine creator, the naturalist experiences a kind of wonder before the fineness and the complexity of the structure he observes. Here, in an unexpected way, beyond our world of the profane and ignorant, some connection is realized between the scientist and someone who must perhaps be called the saint. But we have to specify what we mean by the word ‘saint.’ ‘Sanctity’ here does not refer to a quality or a moral disposition in the properly rational sense of this word. We are rather on the level of ontology. The saint is someone who has arrived at a way of being that overcomes the current separation between man and nature. Perhaps the example of the non-Christian saints is just as instructive here as that of the calendar saints.” Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, translated by Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp.117-118. Nevertheless, it is in this sphere of various meanings – the religious original and the moral derivative – that the question arises concerning whether we have to choose between the “sacred” and the “holy.”

¹¹ See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 5.

¹² Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 6.

¹³ To which correspond the Hebrew *qādōsh*, the Greek *ἅγιος* and the Latin *sanctus* or especially *sacer*; see Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 6.

¹⁴ See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 5, “It is true that all this moral significance is contained in the word ‘holy’, but it includes in addition – as even we cannot but feel – a clear oversurplus of meaning, and this it is now our task to isolate.”

element of religion, a term that will express this surplus of meaning *without* the ethical meaning.¹⁵ “[I]n our inquiry into that element which is separate and peculiar to the idea of the holy it will be useful, at least for the temporary purpose of this investigation, to invent a special term to stand for ‘the holy’ *minus* its moral factor or ‘moment...’ By means of a special term we shall the better be able, first, to keep the meaning clearly apart and distinct, and second, to apprehend and classify connectedly whatever subordinate forms or stages of development it may show. For this purpose I adopt a word coined from the Latin *numen*.”¹⁶

The “holy” is thus the qualifier of the “numinous,” the term derived from Latin adopted by Otto: a “terrible power” in front of which one experiences primarily feelings of fear and fascination. Other terms employed by Otto are: “*mysterium tremendum*” and “*mysterium fascinans*.” The numinous is made conspicuous and appears as the “Wholly Other” of a radically and completely different nature from the human or the cosmic. In this connection man is made to feel his nothingness, that is, his being “nothing but a creature: dust and ashes,” as Abraham felt before the Lord when pleading for the people of Sodom (Gn 18: 27).

So for Otto, the holy, or the fundamental element of religious experience so qualified, always appears as a reality of a “very other order” than “natural” realities. Through many references to the religious men of the Old and New Testaments, as well as to the mystics and to Luther, Otto fills out his meaning of “the idea of the holy.” It is in fact this “living God” (the God of the religions and particularly of the Christian religion) that one often opposes to “the God of the philosophers.” Otto singles out Erasmus as problematic in this regard, since he held that the moment of the numinous in God should be withheld from the common people.¹⁷

Isn't Fear Driven out by Love?

If I had to enter the debate on the conception of Otto, I would

¹⁵ See Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 5, “[H]oly’, or at least the equivalent words in Latin and Greek, in Semitic and other ancient languages, denoted first and foremost *only* this surplus: if the ethical element was present at all, at any rate it was not original and never constituted the whole meaning of the word.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁷ Cf. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, pp., 23, 98

propose to discuss *inter alia* the preponderance that he, followed by so many others, gives – at least in the initial experience – to the feeling of *fear* before the Holy: the stress he lays on *tremendum*, rather than on *fascinans*. Of course, Otto does imply the experience of “fascination,” “attraction” and “desire” in the experience of the *numinous*. Yet for Otto, this experience is secondary compared to the feeling of fear. For example, with respect to the mystics to whom he often refers, he says, quoting in French a certain Réjéjac that “mysticism begins with fear, with the feeling of a universal domination and only later becomes a desire for union with what thus dominates.”¹⁸

We should note in passing, of course, that “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” but the true mystics – “complete mystics” as Bergson calls them – are the imitators of Christ who, according to him, teach us rather that God is primarily Love. The New Testament can be called upon in support of this conception of the Divine: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love.”¹⁹ And in the whole Judeo-Christian experience it is difficult to justify the preponderance of the feeling of fear (and its equivalents) over that of love (and its equivalents).

With respect to Luther, Otto acknowledges borrowing from him the terms which represent the religious experience: “And the reason I introduced these terms above to denote the one side of the numinous experience was in fact just because I recalled Luther’s own expressions, and borrowed them from his *divina maiestas* and *metuenda voluntas*, which have rung in my ears from the time of my earliest study of Luther. Indeed, I grew to understand the numinous and its difference from the rational in Luther’s *De Servo Arbitrio* long before I identified it in the *qādôsh* of the Old Testament and in the elements of ‘religious awe’ in the history of religion in general.”²⁰

Without re-reading the *De Servo Arbitrio* in which one can perceive the nature of the experience of the numinous in Luther, Otto invites us to consider a passage drawn from Luther’s sermon on *Exodus 20*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.22: “Le mysticisme commence par la crainte, par le sentiment d’une domination universelle, invincible, et devient plus tard un désir d’union avec ce qui domine ainsi.” Otto cites: Réjéjac, *Essai sur les fondements de la connaissance mystique* (Paris, 1897), p.90.

¹⁹ 1 Jn 4: 18.

²⁰ Otto, *op. cit.*, pp.99-100.

which, he says, says makes us understand, by the impression which it produces, "the well nigh daemonic character of this numinous feeling"²¹:

Yea, for the world it seemeth as though as God were a mere silly yawner, with mouth ever agape, or a cuckold, who lets another lie with his wife and feigneth that he sees it not.

But He assaileth a man, and *hath such a delight* therein that He is of His jealousy and wrath impelled to *consume* the wicked.

Then shall we learn how that God is a consuming fire...That is then the consuming, devouring fire...Wilt thou sin? Then will He *devour thee up*...For God is a fire that consumeth, devoureth, rageth; verily He is your undoing, as fire consumeth a house and maketh it dust and ashes.²²

And from another place, Otto notes this text of Luther:

Yea, He is more terrible and frightful than the Devil. For He dealeth with us and bringeth us to ruin with power, smiteth and hammereth us and payeth no heed to us...In His majesty He is a consuming fire...For therefrom can no man refrain: if he thinketh on God aright, his heart in his body is struck with terror...Yea, as soon as he heareth God named, he is filled with trepidation and fear.²³

One might think that we are dealing with a particular religious experience located at a level of depth and intensity reached only by privileged people, namely, the mystics. Yet, Otto notes, that "We are not here concerned with the many strands, strong at the outset, weaker later, but never altogether disappearing, that connect him [Luther] with mysticism,"²⁴ but that Luther held that these

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²² See Rudolf Otto, o.c., p. 99.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 99. Otto's citation: "Vide the Erlangen edition of Luther's works, xxxvi, pp. 210 ff., 222, 231, 237; xxxv, p. 167; xlvii, p. 145; l, p. 200."

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 97.

experiences are a “central part of the religious experience of the Christian, who must know them in order to have faith and have life.”²⁵

This then explains the reservations detected in Gabriel Marcel, and partly justifies the move of many authors to distance themselves from Otto’s position. I am thinking in particular of Mircea Eliade²⁶ and Roger Caillois.²⁷

With respect to the question which concerns us, I have to refer also to Max Scheler. Scheler does not seem to me ready to grant the conception of Otto. In Scheler’s conception, while conceding to the author of *Das Heilige* that the holy is indeed characterized by the moment of *tremendum*, he nonetheless places the elements of fascination, attraction and love in the primary position. Whereas for Otto these two dimensions exist in a certain oppositional tension with the *tremendum* prevailing over the *fascinans*, for Scheler the Holy is an undivided burning flame primarily constituted by love. Scheler holds that “love is the core (Kern) of the divine spirit,” its fundamental attribute, and that “[i]n the beginning was not action, but the Logos guided by the love.”²⁸ Without doubt feelings of respect, repentance

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁶ In the Introduction to his book *The Sacred and the Profane* he writes: “After forty years, Otto’s analyses have not lost their value; readers of this book will profit by reading and reflecting on them. But in the following pages we adopt a different perspective. We propose to present the phenomenon of the sacred in all its complexity, and not only in so far as it is *irrational*. What will concern us is not the relation between the rational and nonrational elements of religion, but the *sacred in its entirety*.” Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane. The Nature of Religion*, translated by William R. Trask (San Diego: Harcourt, 1987), p.10.

²⁷ Distinguishing himself from Otto in relation to his analyses of the Sacred, Caillois writes: “Mr. Rudolf Otto is the author of an extremely widespread work on the ‘subjective’ dimension of the topic; I want to say treating the *feeling* of the sacred. Here the Sacred is analyzed from the psychological point of view, in an almost introspective way, and almost exclusively in the forms which it took in the great Universalist religions. I thought that in these conditions I would avoid confronting that aspect of the problem, without nonetheless being able to refer to it each time I deemed it useful for me to do so.” Roger Caillois, *L’homme et le sacré* (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), p.18.

²⁸ Max Scheler, *Vom Ewigen in Menschen (Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Maria Scheler, t. V), Berne, Franke, 1954, p. 483), quoted by Jean Greisch, *Le buisson ardent et les lumières de la raison. L’invention de la philosophie de la religion*. Tome II. *Les approches phénoménologiques et analytiques* (Paris: Cerf, 2002), p. 131. See also Maurice Dupuy, *La philosophie de la religion de Max Scheler* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1959), p. 110 ff.

and fear also give us the “divine;” but for Scheler these must be understood in some way as an extension of the love which they presuppose.

My contention is that if the sacred were grasped more from this last point of view, then perhaps the process of secularization which, as it is, culminates in the “death of God” would be altered and no longer seen as a conquest by autonomous men against the “terrible crushing power” which alienates. One thinks here of the “revenge” of Nietzsche and other atheistic systems, philosophical or theological, which have arisen, such as “modern humanism.” It seems to me that an important question in this regard has not yet been given sufficient attention: why are the majority of atheists who have marked the history of human thought (including the “theologians of the death of God”²⁹ who flourished in the USA) of the spiritual family of Luther?

In addition, the history of religions teaches us that the sacred which inspires terror is not the same as that which “fascinates” or attracts. Indeed, the sacred can be divine or daemonic, and feelings of fear are caused in the first place by the daemonic. Otto himself understands it in this very way when speaking about the *mysterium tremendum*. Indeed, after having explained that the German terms to qualify sacred terror do not have the adjective “sacred”: *grausen*, *Schauer*, or the more popular *gräsen* or even *grässlich*, and that one could also say “*religiöse Scheu*” (religious awe). He adds, “Its antecedent stage is ‘daemonic dread’ (cf. the horror of Pan) with its queer perversion, a sort of abortive offshoot, the ‘dread of ghosts.’ It first begins to stir in the feeling of ‘something uncanny,’ ‘eerie,’ or ‘weird.’”³⁰ Otto further invites his readers to consider the “first crude, primitive forms in which this ‘numinous dread’ or *awe* shows itself. It is the mark which really characterizes the so-called ‘religion of primitive man,’ and there it appears as ‘daemonic dread.’”³¹

Yet, along these lines one will also understand that when man no longer has to “fear the spirits any more,” he can drive both the divine and the daemonic out of his universe – but in this he ‘throws the baby out with the bath water,’ which results in the so-called phenomenon

²⁹ See Maurice Corvez, *Dieu est-il mort?* (Paris: Aubier, 1970).

³⁰ Rudolf Otto, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³¹ Rudolf Otto, *op. cit.*, p. 15-16.

of the disenchanting world. Some forms of atheism are generated by this mode of presenting the sacred.

But let us turn now to the ambivalence or ambiguity of the sacred which has been clarified by authors who have studied this phenomenon with an emphasis on the “elementary forms of religion.”

The Ambivalence of the Sacred and the Opposition between the Sacred and the Profane

The Ambivalence of the Sacred

The ambivalence of the sacred figures prominently in many studies of the concept; indeed as one of its essential characteristics. Emile Durkheim, in particular, has strongly emphasized this element of ambiguity, crediting Robertson Smith with rendering a great service to the science of religions by illuminating it.³²

There are, Durkheim holds, two contrary poles around which any religious life revolves, and they entail a certain opposition between the pure and the impure, the saint and the blasphemer, the divine and the diabolic. “So the pure and the impure are not two separate genera but two varieties of the same genus that includes all sacred things. There are two sorts of sacred, lucky and unlucky; and not only is there no radical discontinuity between the two opposite forms, but the same object can pass from one to the other without changing its nature. The impure is made from the pure, and vice versa. The possibility of such transformations constitutes the ambiguity of the sacred.”³³

No one can dispute this feature of the sacred. And it is seen more clearly in these “transformations” than in the feelings of fear and desire that the sacred causes *at the same time* in the faithful one (the *inholoresco* and *inardesco* as St. Augustine has it). As I mentioned, it seems to me that the sacred which causes terror is not the same as that which attracts or fascinates. Roger Caillois has a felicitous formula to

³² Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, translated and with an introduction by Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 412.

³³ Emile Durkheim, *op. cit.*, p. 415. In the pages leading up to this text Durkheim gives many instances of this; for example, “An impure thing or an evil power often becomes a holy thing or a tutelary power – and vice versa – without changing in nature, but simply through a change in external circumstances. We have seen that the soul of the dead person, at first a dreaded principle, is transformed into a protective genie when the mourning is over. Similarly the corpse, which at first inspires only terror and distance, is later treated as a venerated relic” (pp. 413-14).

express this ambivalence: "The pact with hell is no less a consecration than divine grace."³⁴

The Opposition between the Sacred and the Profane

The ambivalence of the sacred as such does not pose a problem, but its opposition to the profane does. Roger Caillois states, "At bottom, with respect to the sacred in general, the only thing which one can validly affirm about it is contained in the definition of the term: that it is opposed to the profane. As soon as one endeavors to specify the nature and modes of this opposition, one runs up against the most serious obstacles."³⁵ This difficulty is often expressed with terms such as: *opposition, separation, distinction, differentiation*. Durkheim who uses them in the same context³⁶ seems to solve the problem by speaking about a type of absolute heterogeneity, a "heterogeneity which is such that it degenerates into real *antagonism*. The two worlds are conceived of not only as *separated*, but also *hostile* and *jealous rivals*."³⁷ He adds: "Since the condition of belonging fully to one is fully to have left the other, man is exhorted to retire completely from the profane, in order to live an exclusively religious life."³⁸ To illustrate the point the author takes the example of monasticism and mystic asceticism. I find this a curious example in a text on "the elementary forms of religious life" where the relations between the sacred and the profane are otherwise dialectical. We know what to think about this position. The various representatives of our civilizations are unanimous in rejecting such an opposition. But that does not mean that we must erase any difference between the two fields. Because, to put it simply, if I can

³⁴ Cf. Roger Caillois, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

³⁶ Cf. Emile Durkheim, *op. cit.*, p.36: "In the history of human thought, there is no other example of two categories of things as profoundly *differentiated*, or as *radically opposed* to one another. The traditional opposition between good and evil is nothing beside this one: Good and evil are two opposed species of the same genus, namely morals, just as health and illness are nothing more than two different aspects of the same order of facts, life; by contrast, the sacred and the profane are always and everywhere conceived by the human intellect as *separate* genera, as *two worlds with nothing in common*. The energies at play in one are not merely those encountered in the other but raised to higher degree; they are different in kind" (emphasis added).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37 (emphasis added).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.37.

pray everywhere and constantly, it does not follow that any activity that I carry on is prayer.

I would like now to present some ideas in order to see whether a culture which is unaware of the separation of these kinds and thus, perhaps necessarily, integrates the sacred among its fundamental elements, might suggest some solutions to the problems with which globalization and secularization confront us.

African Anthropocentric: Autonomy or Heteronomy?

In various forms and to varying degrees, all peoples have known a process of "secularization," if by that one understands the progressive conquest by man through his autonomy of the "higher powers," the "divinities" and even God on whom man depended in what one could call his "childhood" or "youth."

The Anthro-cosmo-theocentric Structure of the African

I will begin by looking at the history of subjectivity in Western philosophy and in African thought. Briefly, on the one hand there is a movement going from cosmo-centrism to anthropocentrism, while passing by theocentrism. On the other there is a movement of the human being taking part in the cosmos and related to the divinity. This latter I call anthro-cosmo-theocentrism.

Let me first describe anthropocentrism in an African context. In African thought man is defined as the most invaluable capital. This is the case even though in certain hierarchical societies the exploitation of man by man does occur. Man (the human) is in the center of the African vision and experience, not the cosmos and the world of objects; not even Being or the One. This does not mean that man is isolated from the cosmos or other living beings, but rather that everything, in the long-term, is for man. Everything is a symbol and a sign for man and everything is understood in the light of man. Even religion itself is not understood as contemplation or a search for the divine, but as a way for man to secure his life and to understand himself. One African philosopher strikingly expresses this anthropocentric character of African spirituality, "I state a heresy, while expressing in my conclusion a religion whose God is not the center. Such is however the religion of the Bantu...God plays a determining part in this religion. But Bantu holds that the Creator himself had installed man in the center of the religion...The ultimate end of the

mntu is not God, but obtaining the three goods essential for man and his good fortune: health, honor, and longevity, and within this also, offspring. The categories of *Ntuisme* are made up beginning with man."³⁹

Let us turn now to cosmocentrism. Anthropocentrism even as just described is not exclusive of cosmocentrism. As another author affirms: "One does not find here the need for domination of the world, but a feeling of alliance between man and the cosmos, a kind of communion with nature and a feeling of balance or harmony, maintained with vigilance thanks to a whole set of techniques and compensation rites."⁴⁰ For this author, African civilization is a "civilization of agreement between the universal and social orders."⁴¹

Finally, the theocentrism present in the African experience revolves around the idea that man is fully man only insofar as elements of the supernatural are incarnated in him. Until this occurs, he remains incomplete. That is to say, man attains his destiny as man only in rising to the Divine.⁴²

In sum then, the anthropocentricism in African experience is not an expression of an absolute and proud assertion of man against God. The divine is not understood as a presence in the universe that would be incompatible with human autonomy. If the African is a religious man, and this fact has finally been recognized, this is manifested in that he is related not only to the cosmos and the group, but also and especially to the divine, to God, on whom his existence depends. In this sense within the structure of African religion, God, the Supreme Being, does occupy the first place, at the top of the pyramid.

"Secularization" Visits Africa

Such is man in traditional Africa, and Africa has retained this vision up to the present time. Yet, while its cultural foundation remains marked by a symbiosis between the sacred and the secular (i.e., the anthropo-cosmo-theocentric structure we have just seen),

³⁹ Alexis Kagame, "La place de dieu et de l'homme dans la religion bantou," *Cahiers des Religions Africaines*, vol. 3, no. 5 (1969), 8-9.

⁴⁰ Alassane N'Daw, "Peut-on parler d'une pensée africaine?," *Présence Africaine*, 58 (1966), 38.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴² Cf. Roger Bastide, preface by D. Zahan, *Réincarnation et vie mystique en Afrique noire* (Paris, 1965), p. 3.

Africa also presents some differences today. First of all, African society as a whole has been “injured” in large part by individualism. Some features of this are found: in the personal self-promotion which now dominates in schools and business; in the cash economy, paid work, and town life where there is poor infrastructure and the “rules” are those of the clannish mentality in village life; in the search for personal freedom, emancipated from the supervision of old men and exacerbated by the emigration of young people; and in the modern “civil codes” which tend towards liberation (in the sense of license) of people, young people in particular.

And who will regret this state of things, when it is seen as progress for man to be released from “the slavery” of the city, the tribe and the clan? We are dealing with a move from a communitarian anthropocentrism to an individualistic one.

Unfortunately one notices more and more a regression from what we can call “ethical individualism” towards “buffered individualism.”⁴³ In fact, while in Europe the evolution or the revolution took place, and still does, towards a world of equals (politically, legally, socially and internationally) and while many quarters in the West see a need to leave “buffered individualism” behind, it is on the rise in Africa. This is proven in that one sees the nuclearisation of traditional solidarity, and in addition a dramatic rise of new classes of people who pile up all the riches for themselves, and believe that they alone have all the rights, thereby excluding great masses of people from enjoying the rich resources of Africa. In Africa now one sees clearly the development of deep inequalities rooted in this buffered, egoistic individualism. This in turn suppresses the blossoming of a democratic political system which is the only guarantee of basic human rights. All of this entails, sadly, a loss of “the sense of the other.” And a consequence of that is the further loss of the sense of the sacred. This in turn, in Africa, has led to an increased reliance on magical behavior by which the “elites” of this new world seek to increase their “knowledge” and “power.”

With respect to the sacred par excellence, if, on the one hand, the African recognizes the sovereignty of the sacred as a Supreme Being and creator of all that exists in the visible and invisible worlds, on the

⁴³ Following the terminology of Charles Taylor in his *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2007).

other, he or she does not seem able to grant to that supreme Being, an undeniable saving power.

The Sacred and the Secular in Global Times: The African Perspective

Globalization is not a phenomenon of today only. But one does speak about it today in a much more restricted sense, that is, with an economic and mercantilist connotation in the forefront. According to certain studies,⁴⁴ we are dealing with a reordering of the world economy into a single open market under the impulse of the multinationals and their liberal management of capital and goods. Among the positive advantages of this process many note the following:

- An optimism nourished by the increase in wealth of many families
- A stronger resistance by nations to engage in war as a result of the “village-like” nature of the global situation
- The improvement in international exchange which promotes a new form of solidarity
- The abundance of information provided by new technologies of communication.

However, the negative disadvantages seem more dominating compared with those real and potential benefits. Here we find the following:

- An ever widening gap between the rich (or just the well-provided-for) and the poor.
- The resultant gap not only between rich and poor individuals, but between rich and poor nations.
- The unrestrained pursuit of profit which causes a lack of care for nature, generating serious environmental problems.
- Extreme uncertainty concerning salaries and job security and the ensuing maximization of competition.

⁴⁴ I allow myself to begin by simplifying the main part of the very rich results of the VIIe Colloque international du Centre d’Etudes des Religions Africaines (CERA) of the Facultés catholiques de Kinshasa (FCK) on the topic: *Religions africaines et mondialisation. Enjeux identitaires et transculturalité*, p. 76 et suivantes.

- “Tendencies towards standardizing ways of life and flattening cultural differences.”
- “The standardization of cultural practices and cultural consumption.”
- The creation of a “monoculture...produced according to massive standards of industrial production and spread by techniques of massive diffusion.”⁴⁵

After looking at this list, one understands why globalization as economic domination causes faintness of heart and serious concern.

There are some, however, even without ignoring its multiple negative effects who prefer to give globalization a positive meaning finding in it a powerful mobilizing factor of a moral nature capable of generating spiritual energies likely to contribute to the creation of a new society marked by mutual respect. In this view globalization would become an undeniable transforming force on our way of life. However, the specific form this would take remains to be seen. This view prefers to refer to pluralism rather than globalization as it implies an awakening to the multiplicity of cultures and civilizations within humanity.

The unavoidable fact of globalization poses the challenge concerning how to assume it and how to respond responsibly to the multiple interpellations which it addresses to humanity today. We must explore how resourcefully to engage “the current of globalization by absorbing the good it has to offer (e.g., performance improvement through competition) without destroying the natural communities and systems of solidarity that should form the foundation of our societies. In other words, how does one participate in globalization without losing one’s heart, and thereby endanger the cultural and spiritual values of human societies? How does one promote a coextensive ethics, that is, a global ethics, but one respectful of national, cultural and religious identities? And how can this global ethics enable the management and control of conflicts and promote a durable development towards peace and wellbeing?”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ These last three items in the list are from Gaston Mwene-Batende, *Mondialisation des cultures et reconstruction identitaire africaine. Défi à relever face à la nécessité de survie*, in Théodore Mudiji (dir), *op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁴⁶ Cf. René Haes, *Sectes en milieu africain et mondialisation*, and *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

Thus, just when it seems that human life and the dynamics of societies, cultures and identity symbols have been put uniquely into play by globalization, it appears urgent to reconsider it in order to capitalize on its assets and to “live” it differently on the common home that is our planet.

With regard to Africa, and particularly, the perspective of the DRC, two tasks seem to take priority, (1) theoretical work founded on archaeology and epistemology which would elaborate the rich heritage and symbols of identification of African cultures; and (2) the development of a teleological field worthy of humanity expressing the bonds of responsibility of all, *for* all, and all *with* all. These tasks concern the advent of new modes of living with each other in the global world. They should take an evaluative distance in an effort to discover the new foundations that will be necessary for cooperative human flourishing.

In this, one must conceive of culture and tradition as elements through which one heads towards the future. This conception in no way entails a falling away of elements that promote human development, but integrates into the new order those elements from culture and tradition which support this development. In this vast work of re-founding our modes of living together in a world which offers reasons and opportunities for a good life to all, it is important that one give to globalization an ethical, and indeed a religious foundation, by giving primacy of place to spiritual over material values.

Conclusion

The African perspective that I have developed in the previous section coheres with the social teaching of the Catholic Church, especially as it confronts the problems of globalization from an economic perspective. I will begin my conclusion, then, with a consideration of a text of John Paul II from his Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*.

According to the Pope, interdependence among nations must be understood in terms of a solidarity which is “based upon the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all” so that “[s]urmounting every type of imperialism and determination to preserve their own hegemony, the stronger and richer nations must have a sense of moral responsibility for the other nations, so that a real international system

may be established which will rest on the foundation of the equality of all peoples and on the necessary respect for their legitimate differences." On the other hand, continues the Pope, "[t]he economically weaker countries, or those still at subsistence level, must be enabled, with the assistance of other peoples and of the international community, to make a contribution of their own to the common good with their treasures of humanity and culture, which otherwise would be lost for ever."⁴⁷

There is no doubt that when John Paul speaks here of the "treasures of humanity and culture" of the weaker nations, he is thinking in terms of the sense of family, solidarity and the sacred which are contained within what we called above "the cultural and spiritual values" of our societies that are endangered by certain dimensions of globalization.

My point of departure for this paper, namely, the question concerning "which 'sacred' can save us?" is posed because of the loss of the sense of the sacred in my society in particular, and in Africa in general. A certain religiosity still permeates African societies in the form of attention to "spiritual forces." And there is also a strong belief in God as the Supreme Being who is sovereign and who created all things, which is expressed throughout Africa by enthusiastic religious practice. Nonetheless, one finds Africans, especially among the young but not only there, who live in total indifference to the religious question. Still others, influenced by ideologies from both the West and the East, have become atheistic. Experience teaches that the loss of the sense of the Absolute is sometimes, and in fact often, accompanied by a loss of the sense of the other, which necessarily entails a loss of respect for the humanity of the other. This is clear enough from the many cases of the exploitation of one people against another, the fruit of which always entails the cultivation of hatred of one against the other.

To conclude, then, I return to my initial question (which sacred can save us?) with a consideration of those who, while believing in the sovereignty of the Supreme Being – the Sacred par excellence – nonetheless do not recognize His power of salvation and thus resort to the lower "divinities." My conviction runs as follows: First, it is not

⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987) par. 39. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis_en.html.

necessary to eliminate the many intermediaries (ancestors, spirits, geniuses, etc.) which solicit and captivate the attention and respect of many. Secondly, however, one has to achieve, or re-achieve, a central focus on the Unique Necessary One, the “absolutely absolute Absolute” (the “divine god” of Heidegger or Nabert). Only this can bring about a unified sense of the meaning of life, for this Supreme Being is the only One who can “save.” And in the history of peoples, this Unique Necessary Being is revealed to be Love.

Part V
South Asian Traditions

The Ontological Basis of Deontological Liberalism: The Limits of Right-Based Politics

ABDUL WAHAB SURI

The universality of the abstract human rights framework and its institutionalization as a criterion for socio-political justice can be defended from several viewpoints. As expounded by Rawls, deontological liberalism presumably provides one of the most profound defences of the priority of rights over good in contemporary political philosophical discourse.

Deontological liberalism claims that the system of rights must be derived independently of any specific conception of good. Thus the priority of right over good is presumed to be the condition for socio-political justice. Ironically this deontological conception of justice has specific ontological underpinnings and the institutionalization of the "Priority of Rights over Good" as a criterion of fair justice is in fact an attempt to impose a particular ontological account which not only provides grounds for the development of a particular moral discourse and a specific way of life, but it also restrains the competing moralities and ways of life which undermine the priority of right over good.

In this article we will try to explore the ontological roots of deontological liberalism. The article is divided into two sections. In the first section we will discuss the ontological roots of deontological liberalism expounded by Rawls. The second section will deal with the non contestability of the priority of right as a criterion of socio-political justice.

Deontological Liberalism

Deontological liberalism is a philosophical doctrine which presumes the "priority of right over the good" as a fundamental condition of justice as fairness. In a more substantive sense the deontological liberalism claims that a system of rights should be derived independently of any specific conception of Good. Since societies are not monolithic, therefore the plurality of goods, aims, interest and preferences of individuals is the factual reality of

pluralistic societies. Rawls believes that the plurality of the good can only be protected in concrete socio-political arrangements if it is governed by the principles which have not been derived from any specific conception of the Good. In other words conform to the concept of "right" which has been derived independently from any specific conception of the Good.

The precedence of right over good distinguishes deontological liberalism from other brands of liberalism and provides a theoretical justification of rights-based politics which is in fact one of the most effective mechanism for the universalization of liberal values.

Deontological liberalism, on the one hand, rejects teleological approaches because they categorically prioritize final ends or purposes and certain prohibitions which can disturb the balance of a pluralistic social order. On the other hand it imposes certain duties and prohibitions which do not presume any "telos" or are independent of any specific conception of Good.

For this reason deontological liberalism is claimed to be "a theory about the primacy of justice amongst other political and moral ideal."¹ By the primacy of justice Rawls simply means that the prioritized rights of an individual can never be sacrificed for the realization of any conception of Good or telos, even for the general welfare of the people.

We will try to argue that this deontological defence of the priority of right has specific ontological moorings, and that the prioritization of abstract system of right is infact an attempt to prioritize a particular ontological account or the conception of Good from which this prioritization of right has been derived.

In order to excavate the ontological roots of deontological liberalism there is need to critically evaluate the constraints of the original position which provides the rationale for the liberal conception of justice.

Rawlsian conception of the original position and the principles of justice are derived from the work of Aristotle, Locke, Kant and Mill, but at the same time it stands apart from them. Aristotle prepares us to follow the general rules for deliberate action (conduct), because they are the legitimate routes to happiness. However he recognizes

¹ Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians* (Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), p. 42.

the significance of the subjective influences regarding the sanctity of “virtuous actions” and the limitations of generalization. On the other hand Kant’s project is to discover a universally valid principle of conduct; the idea at the heart of his “categorical imperative” is that of duty. But the problem is that this provides a general guideline, so that the moral status of an act would be evaluated merely on the basis of its universalizability. Mill advocates the individual’s freedom of judgment, subject to the constraint of the “greatest happiness for the greatest numbers.” Rawls seeks to transcend all of them by his idea of the “original position” which provides an abstract sphere for the consociational agreement regarding the basic principles of justice which we ought to heed. Rawls believes that the original position is the redefined form of the “state of nature” which is presumed by the contractarian theorists, but unlike traditional contractarian models the original position is not an actual historical state; rather it is a hypothetical choice situation to derive fair, objective and just principles of justice. The abstraction of the fair principles of justice is the sole objective of the original agreement. It is a hypothetical contract situation or a bargaining place for free, rational and equally self-interested individuals. The contractors in the original position decide rationally, “once and for all what is to count among them as just and unjust.”²

The limited knowledge available in the original position legitimizes the objectivity and neutrality of the chosen rules. On the other hand the theoretical instrument which makes this selection possible is the “veil of ignorance.” The veil of ignorance “blocks out knowledge of who they are, their place in history, their talents, skills and their individual “plan of life” or conceptions of the good.”³ A concise version of the information available in the original position can be presented as:

1. Each person in the original position knows the general facts about human nature.
2. The motivational instrument which is provided in the original position (to the contractors) is their “self-interestedness.” It is

² John Rawls, “Justice as Rational Choice behind the Veil of Ignorance” in *Justice: Alternative Political Perspective* by J.P. Sterba (California: Words Worth Publishing Company, 1980), p. 127.

³ Daniel Norman, *Reading Rawls: Critical Studies on Rawls’ Theory of Justice* (California: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. XIV.

unquestionably presumed that the contractors must be purely motivated to maximize their own self-interest and welfare in society. In Rawls' own words "...in drawing up the conception of right the parties take their interests into account as best they can."⁴

3. The contractors in this original position act and choose rationally.

4. The original position is a bargaining position for mutually disinterested and rational contractors.

Justice as fairness begins with the "choice" of the most fundamental principles of justice which provide a "fair" basis for socio-political institutions. These chosen principles of justice guide our choice of a fair constitution and enacted legislation. Justice as fairness does impose certain constraints which Rawls calls reasonable, on the individual's capacity to choose any particular conception of the good. These constraints are in fact our point of departure regarding the exploration of the ontological underpinning of right-based-liberalism. The legitimacy of the constraints is dependent on its consistency with the original agreement, which has taken place in a hypothetical choice situation among equally free, rational and self-interested contractors.

The original agreement provides the basis of a public conception of justice. Rawls believes that socio-economic inequalities stratify social structure. Such stratifications do affect individual's "choice of good," virtues and meanings of good life. Since individuals are not placed in social hierarchy by their choices, therefore the derivation of the fair principles of justice must not be influenced by both individual's own conception of good and his social position. But it is important to note that Rawls has no intention of eliminating social stratifications which are the unintended consequences of the socio-economic inequalities.

Rawls offers two necessary constraints on the choices made in the original position, firstly no one knows his own position in society which is to be governed by the principles of justice being selected and secondly each individual must choose principles of justice with the full realization and recognition of the fact that the selected principles are those under which he and all his descendents will have to pass

⁴ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 135.

their lives. Thus we can say that the “essence” of the fairness lies in this fundamental instrument (veil of ignorance) of Rawlsian theory. Rawls believes that the individual’s specific knowledge about his own conception of the good, is one of the major causes of social injustice. The individual’s knowledge of his specificities necessarily influences his choice of the principles of justice. This reveals the deontological spirit of Rawlsian methodology that the principle not only be desirable without any reference to the Good and cultural particularity of an individuals but it is infact a fundamental condition of the fairness of the principles which are to be chosen behind the veil of ignorance. Therefore Rawls believes that the abstraction from the particularities of the contractors is a fundamental condition of the fair bargain. On the basis of the above mentioned constraints Rawls claims, that “the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain.”⁵ The veil of ignorance controls variables like contingent social positions, circumstances, religious, racial, cultural differences, talents and natural endowments that affect the possibility of fair bargain. The rationale of the original position is claimed to be such that no one is able to reduce the interest of others in favour of his own. In the original position the choice of the principles must be “rational” (in the Rawlsian specific sense of “being rational”). Rawls presumes that the contractors in the original position are rational and by rationality he simply means the most effective and efficient mean to realize one’s end. This conception of rationality prevails in economic theory and Rawls acknowledges that he has interpreted rationality in this narrow sense.⁶ The justification he has behind the assumption (that individuals act rationally in the original position) is that the contractors in “choosing between principles each tries as best as he can to advance his interest.”⁷ This implies that there is an organic relationship between being rational and being self-interested. Rawls claims that the choice of the two principles is determined by the contractor’s urge to choose “conceptions of justice...most to their advantage.”⁸ He thinks that self-interested attitude is a rational expression of an individual in the uncertain conditions of the original

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁶ Rawls acknowledges that his conception of rationality is not profound enough. See *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

position. Rawls presumes certain characteristic of a rational person which he must have, for instance a coherent order of preferences and the desire to maximize the chances to successfully execute them; he is does not suffered from the feeling of envy, he has a sense of self-respect and his conception of good, virtues, ends and plan of life are not dictated by others. In short we can say that the conception of rationality which emerges from these constraints is “mutually disinterested rationality.”⁹ Rawls believes that being rational individuals they “will not enter into agreement they know, they cannot keep or can do so only with great difficulty.”¹⁰

Thus, mutual disinterestedness and self-interestedness are the key motivational forces which make the original agreement possible in the uncertain conditions of the original position. Rawlsian dependence on “self-interestedness” as a motivational instrument is pragmatic in nature; otherwise the contractual conditions will not be realized.

The following are the principles of justice which will be chosen by equally, free, rational and self-interested individuals in uncertain conditions, i.e., behind the veil of ignorance.

Two Principles of Justice

First Principle

“Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive system of basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberties for all.”¹¹

Second Principle

“Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, and b) attached to offices and positions open to all under the conditions of equality of opportunity.”¹²

The most important aspect of the methodology adopted by Rawls is that principles of justice are derived without any reference to the Good. The conception of the “right” and its relation to the “good” determines the nature of ethical and political theory. Liberals consider

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 302.

the individual as an antecedently individuated self. Therefore the “good” becomes a matter of the arbitrary expression of preferences. Historically, the meaning of the good is determined by what Rawls calls the “impartial spectator.” This impartiality legitimizes the imposition of one man’s order of preferences or desires over that of all others. This prioritization of the “good” negates an individual’s “value difference and it is by this construction that many persons are fused into one.”¹³ Rawls believes that this sort of methodology has been adopted by the utilitarian version of liberalism in its most sophisticated form. Since the prioritization of the good (maximization of satisfaction) eventually determines a particular or preferred system of desires which eventually negates some basic rights, Rawls thinks that there is a need to contrast the “right” to the “good.”

Principally liberty has been contrasted to satisfaction, utility and welfare, however Rawls believes that one should not absolutely negate the significance of the other. There is no doubt, however, that in Rawlsian conception of justice liberty does have precedence over welfare and satisfaction.¹⁴ This prioritization is justified by the presumed neutrality of “right” which every individual possesses (the right of self-determination) by the fact of being human. Thus it is unjust to sacrifice the freedom of an individual for the maximization of general welfare. Justice as fairness then has a two dimensional approach. Firstly, it is an attempt to sustain this neutral right which is the precondition of the legitimate realization of any scheme of desires or preferences. Secondly, justice as fairness is an attempt to counter-balance liberty and welfare. Rawls prioritizes liberty but does not negate the significance of the distribution of material welfare in the constitution of a just social order.

Another contrast between the good and the right is that in a well-ordered society people are allowed to have different conceptions of the good, but they are not allowed to have different conceptions of rights. Justice as fairness presumes a society in which all the “citizens hold the same principles of right.”¹⁵ This is the neutrality and universality of rights which justifies the claim of equal liberty for all.

¹³ John Rawls, “The Right and the Good Contrasted,” in *Liberalism and its Critique* by M. Sandel, ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 38.

¹⁴ See *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁵ See *Ibid.*, p. 49.

The first principle is concerned with the liberty related aspect of the theory. The derivation of the first principle is possible due to the contractor's ignorance of his own conceptions of the good. Individuals are ignorant about their own substantive conceptions of the good, but being self-interested participants of the bargaining process it is in their interest that they remain capable of "...framing revising and rationally pursuing conceptions (of the good)."¹⁶ Thus it is necessary to endorse equal freedom for all so that they can frame, revise and unobstructedly pursue their own (personal) conceptions of the good. This reveals another contrast between the good and the right. If the prioritization of any particular conception of the good (for instance, greatest happiness for the greatest number) becomes the only governing principle for the construction of social order, the prioritized good eventually fails to sustain the innumerable possibilities of pluralist societies. In order to counter this deficiency, justice as fairness prioritizes the "right" over the "good." The legitimacy of such prioritization lies in the fair principles of justice. Rawls claims that "the principles of social choice, and so the principles of justice are themselves the object of an original agreement."¹⁷ This means that the prioritization of "right" actually de-legitimizes any absolute principle for the justification of social organization. There are two natural outcomes of this prioritization of the right, pluralism and antecedented individualism. Thus we can say that the equality of basic liberties sustains the equality as well as the triviality of all substantive goods. Only freedom, according to Rawls, justifies the pursuit of any individualistic conception of the good. In the private sphere everybody has a right to pursue his own conception of the good subject to the constraint that the only public good is the "will to freedom."

The structure or constraints of the original position tell us how Kantian metaphysical conceptions are incorporated by Rawls. The derivation of the principles of justice behind the veil of ignorance reveals that the choice of the fair principles is not on the basis of the value or interest perspective of particular individuals rather as if they are anyone. Since individuals are ignorant about their own conceptions of good and social position therefore they must choose

¹⁶ Mulhall and Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, op. cit, p.7.

¹⁷ Rawls, "The Right and the Good contrasted," op. cit, p. 40.

principles of justice which protect their interests irrespective of those interests and values which are organically linked with the type of person they turn out to be in real world. The structure of original position and the theoretical instrument of the “veil of ignorance” is an intellectual attempt to reconcile the pure reason and desires in an organic whole. The original position is a hypothetical choice situation in which the empirical self and its rational self combine together in order to derive fair principles of justice. The individuals in original position are both phenomenal beings, in the sense that they are self-interested and noumenal beings, in that they choose abstract and fair principles of justice as if they were anyone (i.e. independent of their particularities). In this way Rawls provides a reinterpretation of the functioning of “Kingdom of ends” in contemporary modern democratic societies.

Rawls’s idea of the “original position” helps us to unveil his metaphysical assumptions, which sustain his liberal political theory. The constraints of the original position embody “the fundamental principles governing our moral powers (and) our sense of justice.”¹⁸ It implies that original position presumes a schematic representation of a particular mental process of most human beings.¹⁹

There is an important relation between Kant and Rawls, although both consider the individual as an end in oneself. The difference is that Kant is primarily concerned with duty while Rawls is primarily concerned with right. Where Kant emphasizes the importance of duty to determine the moral quality of an act, the Rawlsian approach is rights-based. Rawls is not interested in discovering the intrinsic or essential worth of a moral act or value. In his framework, all human actions are legitimate if they are consistent with the prioritized system of rights.

The prioritization of right over good is the defining characteristic of Rawlsian right-based-liberalism. The basic right (i.e. the right of an individual to be treated equally) is claimed to be natural because the prioritization of right is not the products of legislation or a hypothetical contract. This prioritization emerges from the metaphysical assumptions which are interwove in the fabric of original position. The prioritization of right is not the product of a contract; rather it

¹⁸ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁹ See *Ibid.*, pp. 49-63. Rawls uses the analogy of grammatical structure in order to explain schematic presentation of different mental capacities.

constitutes the independent grounds for judging legislation, customs and convictions. The principles of justice and its corresponding institutions protect the priority of fundamental rights (i.e., the right of a man to be treated equally); all other rights all actually derived from this natural right.

In the Rawlsian framework the self "is prior to the ends affirmed by it."²⁰ This implies that an individual autonomously chooses his ends while the ends (an individual possesses) do not constitute his self. So an individual is ontologically free to determine, change, revise and frame his own conceptions of the good, and in such determination he is not dependent on anything other than himself. Thus according to Rawls a "moral person is a subject with ends he has chosen and his fundamental preferences are for conditions that enable him to pursue a mode of life that expresses his nature as a free, equal rational being."²¹ The worth of the self is not determined by the ends it chooses. Since ends are determined by equally free, moral and rational individuals therefore, all ends are of equal worth and value. As Rawls claims, "imagine someone whose only pleasure is to count blades of grass...the definition of the good forces us to admit that the good for this man is indeed the counting the blades of grass."²² This Rawlsian example is very revealing for analyzing the unity and possessions of the self. If all the ends are of equal value (because individuals are naturally free to determine their ends) then the unit of the self is achieved by an arbitrary act of will. This means that Rawlsian self is ontologically dispossessed, because it is always at a distance from its ends. Thus his ends and conception of goods are possessed by it but they (ends) can never be constituent of a self. So the self is always devoid of any specific, inseparable good which constitutes its selfhood, and thus remains empty. This hollow self is ontologically incapable not only of understanding others, but also him/herself. It is because of this dispossessed self, that one can choose any "good" or "end" that one likes in the liberal democratic institutional structure provided by Rawls. So Rawlsian determination of the role of "Good" preferred by an individual in the derivation of the fair principles of justice reveals that the worth of the self is not determined by the ends it's preferred. Secondly the good does not play any significant role in

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 561.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 561.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 432.

the constitution of individual selfhood. Since ultimate self-knowledge is not ontologically possible (by implications) in Rawlsian framework, therefore an objective ordering of desires is also not possible in it. The relative merits of desires are determined simply by the concatenation of desires. Thus the moral life of an individual becomes insignificant or trivial regarding the sustenance of a just socio-political order.

Rawls tries institutionally to protect the postulate of “man as an end in himself,” which is embrionically Kantian and which reflects the moral intuitions of Western culture. He protects this notion by the prioritization of right over the good, i.e., the individual’s liberty as a first principle of justice.

Rawls considers Locke, Kant and Mill as liberals due to their commitment to individual’s autonomy. The defining characteristic of liberalism, which contrasts it from the work of Plato, Aristotle and Christian thought represented by Aquinas and Augustine is the possibility of a plurality of conceptions of the good in a free democratic society. For Rawls the conception of the person presumed by utilitarians is a major obstical to the realization of pluralism. He categorically claims that “classical utilitarianism and the contemporary version of utilitarianism imply a conception of the person which makes this doctrine incompatible with the presupposition that there are many rational conceptions of the good”²³. Rawls believes that the priority of right over good reflects the highest order interest of the individual. He considers:

1. Each person to be a moral person.
2. Each person is defined as “someone who desires to take part in social cooperation.”²⁴
3. The moral life of each person rests upon the highest order of interests of that individual.
4. The highest order of interests of the person are:
 - a. The realization of his own interests.
 - b. The exercise of two capacities
 - i. Capacity to acknowledge or honour the fair terms of cooperation.

²³ Rawls John, “Social Unity and Primary Goods” in *Beyond Utilitarianism*, Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 160.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

ii. Capacity to define, decide, revise and rationally pursue his own conception of the good.

So the conception of the person which sustains the Rawlsian procedural conception of justice as fairness in a concrete life situation is a person who has, "both the capacity and the desire to cooperate on fair terms with others for reciprocal advantage"²⁵. So the defining characteristics of Rawlsian conception of person are equally free, rational and self-interested. These qualities are claimed to be necessary for the realization of fair bargaining among mutually disinterested individuals in the original position.

The Priority of Right Contested

Rawlsian deontological liberalism has mostly been interpreted as a philosophical defence of the universality of liberalism in general and the "priority of right" in particular. Despite this fact that Rawls himself consider his conception of justice as political and not ontological, Rawls insists that justice as fairness does not rely on any comprehensive theory of good which provides the moral, ontological and epistemological justification of how man should lead his life.

The priority of right and its institutional protection through a democratic political procedure is a rational attempt to provide a legitimate area of non-encroachment, so that people can autonomously order their preference and determine their own conceptions of good. Rawls acknowledges that the theory of justice has a potential to be interpreted as a comprehensive doctrine because by implication one can claim that, "the members of a well-ordered society...accept the same conception of justice and also, it seems, the same comprehensive doctrine of which that conception is a part, or from which it can be derived."²⁶ Rawls is trying to emphasize that there is no need to be committed to any comprehensive doctrine in order to accept justice as fairness and the moral claims which are associated with such political conception of justice.

Rawlsian silence on the issue of "Truth" and his obvious indifferent attitude to providing any philosophical justification of

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

²⁶ John Rawls, "The Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus," *New York University of Law Review*, Vol. 64, (2) 1989, p. 248.

“universally valid truth” is not because he is skeptical about the possibility of “universal truth.” The suspension of the issue of “objectively certain truth” on the basis of skepticism is itself a philosophical standpoint, according to Rawls, which may contradict other reasonable philosophical doctrines. He is trying to institutionalize “philosophical tolerance” through the mechanism of political liberalism (1992).

Rawls considers “justice as fairness,” as the political conception of justice. Although the ontological dimension of this deontological conception of justice is not to be ignored. The critical understanding of his conception of the political reveals the organic relationship among the issues of public justifiability, overlapping consensus and pluralism. The sustenance of this organic whole according to Rawls demands an intellectual attitude, which prioritizes politics (i.e. democracy) over philosophy for the establishment of a just socio-political order.

Rawlsian emphasis on “philosophical tolerance,” on the one hand and clear prescription of the fundamental principles of justice which will directly shape the basic structure of society, its political procedure and its moral discourse, on the other hand, may be interesting for culturally liberal societies but it may be devastating for non-liberal (in the philosophical sense) societies. This tolerance may lead to the extension of a particular way of life and erosion of other ways life, not because they are necessarily inhuman, but because they are not compatible with the principles which have been filtered out from the constraints of the original position.

“The deontological nature” of justice as fairness and “priority of right over good” are the two major thesis of Rawls’s argument which are consistent in both of this major works i.e. *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and *Political Liberalism* (1992).

Whereas the issues of “unencumbrance and the encumbrance of the self,” and the “role of community” in the constitution of self, derived from the principles of justice, these are the areas where we can trace some reformulations. Thus, the strength of Rawls’ theory lies not in its individualistic or communitarian nature but rather in his deontological justification of the “priority of right over good.” We will try to question the deontological justification of this priority of right.

Initial exposition of the theory of justice reveals that justice as fairness is a morally grounded political defence of a-social

individualism. Lukes and Milton Fisk etc.²⁷ try to establish that the Rawlsian description of the parties in the original position is an attempt to universalize the antecedently individuated conception of self. Sandel believes that the constraints of the original position prioritizes a particular conception of self which is ontologically independent of its communal attachments.²⁸ The framework of the original position detaches it (i.e. self) from its ends.

Kant provides the basic philosophical assumption underlying the rights-based liberal conception of the person in general and that of Rawls in particular, although Kant abandons the epistemological validity of rational psychology and acknowledges that if there is a self it is not empirically demonstrable. However, it can be implied both from this epistemological as well as his moral analysis that he does presume a unified foundationalist conception of self. For instance at the epistemological level he claims "...I can grasp the manifold of the representation in one consciousness, and do I call the one and all mine. For otherwise I should have as many colored and diverse a self as I have representation of which, I am conscious to myself."²⁹ This reveals the ontological possibility of a unified and individuated self which synthesizes diverse perception and holds them together in a single consciousness or awareness. The Kantian reconciliation of the epistemological antagonism between empiricism and rationalism through the framework of transcendental idealism, no doubt explicates the limits of human reason, but it does not mean that Kantian epistemology and moral theory is devoid of metaphysics. We can easily trace the glimpses of ontological presumptions throughout his epistemology, moral theory, philosophy of history and political theory. Kantian distinction between theoretical and practical reason justifies different domains of self. The conception of reason presumed by Kant is two dimensional. He believes that individual can relate himself to the object of knowledge, rationally "either by merely

²⁷ See Lukes Steven, *Individualism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973) and Milton Fisk, *State and Market*, in Rawls; *The Agenda of Social Justice*, ed. by B. Ray (New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, 2000), pp. 241-256.

²⁸ See Sandel Michal, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 2-15.

²⁹ I. Kant, (1887) *Critique of Pure Reason*, (II ed.) trans. by N.K. Smith (London: Macmillan, 1927), p. 154.

determining it and its concept...Or making, it real."³⁰ He considers the first function as theoretical and the other function as practical. Kant believes that the experiences and object of experiences are not the source of moral obligations, but it is the reason which provides the moral basis of obligation (das Sollen). Kant acknowledges that external factors, for instance, natural causes, sensory stimulations, cultural particularities, historical preferences, do affect the individual's derive to "will" something, but interestingly he claims that, "they cannot produce (my state of) being under obligation..."³¹ This rational sense of moral obligations helps us to unveil the conceptions of the self presumed by Kant, namely, that it is transcendental, independent of history, culture and the naturalistic chain of causal connection, as far as the moral considerations of an individual are concerned.

The Kantian idea of the categorical imperative is also helpful in understanding a particular kind of "self" and the "ontological" possibility of individual autonomy. He believes that everything in nature is determined by the Law. But "only rational being has the ability to act according to the presentation (Vorstellung) of the law i.e. according to principles."³² This means that the individual's capacity or autonomy to adopt maxims makes man's existence moral or immoral. This reveals the inevitable link between the individual's liberty and his morality. Kant's emphasis on the practical necessity of the categorical imperative makes his claim vulnerable because in his framework the choice of ends is governed by the order of desires the individual has. Thus in concrete life situations people may have different ends and because of this they may order their desires differently. So the difficulty arises that "our subjective qua-rational beings to the categorical imperative cannot be explained in terms of our seeking ends which depend on our desire."³³ In order to resolve this difficulty Kant introduces a conception of the self, which is, an end in itself. Thus the transcendental "self" itself provides the ground for the necessity of practical law. This notion of "end" is independent of any kind of desire. This emancipation of the self from

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

³² I. Kant, *Ground Work of Metaphysics of Morals*, in trans. by H.J. Paton (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 412.

³³ S. Kornor, *Kant* (New York: Penguin Book, 1954), p. 145.

the instrumental chain of the means/end relationship, holds the harmony of every rational "will" and binds them together in a coherent moral order. But at the same time this establishes the ontological priority of individual over his community.

The theoretical corollary of this absolute end is that "man stands outside all causal chains and consequently outside every hierarchy of means and ends."³⁴ The Kantian commitment with the prioritization of the rational self as an absolute end compels him to reformulate the structure of the categorical imperative in a manner that "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, both in your own person and in the person of all others, never as a means only but always equally as an end."³⁵ Korner believes that this new formulation reflects the moral intuitions of the human being in general and Western man in particular. Therefore the postulate, "man as end in himself," corresponds to the "moral experience of our culture."³⁶ In order to sustain the autonomy of the self, the value of non-interference has lexical priority over all other substantive values. The natural corollary of this precedence is that the right has priority over the good, i.e. "the subject is prior to his end"³⁷. This legitimizes the priority of right over the good. The rational self is not only subject to moral law (universal principle) but also the creator of it. This transcendently rational, unencumbered and antecedently individuated self is ontologically capable to legislate. The nature of legislation is universal, because the "idea of the will of any rational being (is interpreted) as a universally legislative will."³⁸

The communitarian critique of this de-ontological liberalism is double edged, firstly it tries to establish that the "priority of right over good" does presume an ontological account i.e. it presumes an unencumbered self. Secondly they claim that this ontological account is fundamentally incoherent. The communitarians like Taylor are not satisfied with the ontological possibility of abstract realm of rational functioning, which transcends the historical particularity and the specificity of the linguistic community. Because these particularities

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

³⁵ Kant, *Ground Work of Metaphysics of Moral*, op. cit, p. 249.

³⁶ Korner, *Kant*, op. cit, p. 148.

³⁷ M.J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 7.

³⁸ Kant, *Ground Work of Metaphysics of Morals*, op. cit, p. 43.

are ontologically prior to the self. It means that the individual's capacity to interpret him/her self and his/her identity depends on the matrix in which he/she has been situated, "creatures whose identity as person depends upon their orientation and attachment to the conceptions of the good which they derive from the matrix of their linguistic community." ³⁹ Taylor defines the human as a self-interpreting animal. The unencumbered self is ontologically incapable to interpret it self. The self is embedded in a particular community and answers to the questions which have emerged and are organically related to the ontological basis of that community. This means that the self is incapable of escaping form the linguistic/moral space in which it has been situated: "to understand our predicament in terms of finding or loosing orientation in moral space is to take the space which our framework seeks to define as ontologically basic."⁴⁰

The self according to Taylor is situated in a hermeneutical sphere of meaning and there is no possibility of transcending this hermeneutical activity. This essentially negates the possibility of an historically, culturally and linguistically abstract Archimedean standpoint. This means that cultural particularities and communal specificities are the necessary preconditions for the derivation of the meaning of self because it provides the content of interpretation. This implies that "the relationship between a person's inner life and the vocabulary available to him for characterizing or interpreting it is an intimate one."⁴¹

Self always has a virtue which legitimizes its meaningful existence in the hermeneutical sphere which provides the ground for the culmination of intersubjective consensus. In Taylor's words, the self always finds itself in a "web of interlocutors."⁴² Because of this intersubjective domain of interpretation every interpretation will be just an interpretation and does not provide fixed meaning. But there is a possibility to objectively evaluate and order these interpretations on the basis of the meta-ethical narratives, which provide the substance of rationality and are themselves supranational. For instance liberalism, communism, socialism, welfarism, fashism etc. are all

³⁹ Mulhall and Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁴⁰ Charles Taylor, *Sources of Self; The Making of Modern Identity* (Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 29.

⁴¹ Mulhall and Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁴² Taylor, *Sources of Self*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

different interpretations which claim to objectify the meta-ethical narratives which have emerged during the particular course of European history.

This implies that self is basically encumbered. Taylor rejects the possibility of the existence of an unencumbered self; rather the self is a "self only in relation to certain interlocutors."⁴³ The unencumbency of the self presumed by Rawlsian analysis is also questioned by Sandel, he thinks that it is the unencumbency of the self which detached the "self" from the ends and virtues it prefers. Sandel considers this detachment as illegitimate and fictitious. He claims that determination of ends and virtues is not a matter of choosing among given preferences; rather they must be explored or discovered because "one's fundamental preferences in morality as well as politics, would surely be for the conditions of self knowledge rather than the condition of choices."⁴⁴

MacIntyre is also not satisfied with this right-based-liberalism because it is devoid of any "telos." Because of this deliberate silence regarding the teleological dimension of justice as fairness Rawls can not justify morality per-se. MacIntyre believes that human "telos" is "vital to morality, understood as a rationally justifiable or objective enterprise, because it alone can license immediate transitions from "is" to "ought."⁴⁵

The significance of "right" regarding the institutional realization of socio-political justice is not questioned by any of the thinkers but the issue is whence these rights and their priority will be derived. In a substantive sense, what is questionable is the priority of right over good.

The communitarian position can be summarized in Taylor's words as follows:

...where "good" means the primary goal of a consequentialist theory where right is decided simply by its instrumental significance for this end, then we ought indeed to insist that the right can be primary to the good. But where we use "good" in the sense of this discussion in which it means whatever is marked out as higher by a qualitative distinction, then we could

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁴ Mulhall and Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

say that the reverse is the case, that, in a sense the good is always primary to the right...the good is what, in its articulation, gives the point of the rules which define the right.⁴⁶

Concluding Remarks

The prioritization of the abstract-right-framework as a transcendental criterion of legitimate political framework is in fact an attempt, to institutionalize a specific ontological account which presumes an unencumbered, dispossessed and hollow self. Such self is ontologically detached from the ends it chooses. Therefore in such political order it will be the legal duty of the community not to determine the worth of the individual on the basis of the ends he/she prefers. This will radically transform the socio-cultural fabric of a society which is not fundamentally liberal. Secularization and a-social individualism will be the unintended consequences of this political formalization, communal disintegration will be the ultimate consequence of such prioritization and interestingly state structure will be instrumentalized in this whole process of transformation.

“The priority of right over good” not only affects the basic structure of political procedures but also opens up a domain of morality no matter how narrow the conception of morality. Morality in “this narrow sense is meant to include only all those principles which restrict the individual’s pursuit of his personal goods and his advancement of his self-interest.”⁴⁷ It not only guarantees a legitimate space for such personal morality but it also abandons the practice of any kind of morality which undermines the individual’s pursuit of personal goals and the advancement of his own self interest. It compels the state structure to restrain those moral view points which do not acknowledge the determination of “Good” as an individual private concern. Such privatization of morality which is the unintended consequence of deontological liberalism rested upon a fundamental mistake about morality according to Raz, “the mistake is to think that one can identify, say, the right of others while being completely ignorant of what values make a life meaningful and satisfying and what personal goals one has in life.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Taylor, *Sources of Self*, op. cit, p. 89.

⁴⁷ J. Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 213.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

Rights are always practiced in a community and “rights are tied to duties.”⁴⁹ The formalization of political structure in reference to the “precedence of right” not only protects a prioritized body of rights but also imposes a framework of duties corresponding to the acknowledged system of rights. In a substantive sense the institutional structure acknowledges that it is the duty of community, family, tribe, religious authorities or any other form of collectivity to allow individuals allowed to determine and practice their own conception of the Good irrespective of the fact that this conception of the good preferred by an individual is directly in-conflict with the prioritized order of preference of a community or any other form of collectivity. This priority of right imposes innumerable duties upon all forms of collectivities to tolerate any individualistic expression of good preferred by an individual. It means “right-based moralities consist of rights and those special requirements which we call duties.”⁵⁰ A right-based-liberal in this sense considers “duty as equivalent to ought.”⁵¹ Thus the only morality which will be protected by the state structure is right-based-morality.

The deontologists’ commitment with the priority of right over good and a-social individualism justify communitarian reservations against Rawls. However it is important to note that the conclusions these liberal communitarians have deduced regarding the fairness of the socio-political order are not very different from that of Rawls. There is no such thing as non-liberal politics emerge out of Sandel, MacIntyre, Taylor and Raz. They provide a communitarian rationale for a-social individualism and pluralism. The issue which differentiates them from Rawls is the “priority of Good” and the “role of community” in the constitution of self-hood. The post-postmodern theory of justice literature produced by Rawls reveals that he acknowledges the role of community in the constitution of self-hood. He specifically recognizes that in a well-ordered society citizens “may regard it as simply unthinkable to view themselves apart from certain religious, philosophical and moral convictions, or from certain enduring attachments and loyalties.”⁵² Political liberalism does not

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁵² See J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 31.

deny encumbered personal identity but in the political sphere the citizens must bracket their encumbrances according to Rawls. This means that in the public sphere the identity of the citizen must be independent of his encumbrances. The theoretical corollary of this dichotomy between encumbered (private sphere) and unencumbered (public sphere) identities is that in public sphere (i.e. in political sphere) every citizen is regarded as a "self-authenticating source of valid claims."⁵³ Therefore Rawls believes that priority of right over good cannot be sacrificed for the satisfaction of the encumbrance of the citizens who will ultimately be the stakeholders of such prioritization.

The above discussion reveals that although Rawls is directly concerned with the resolution of the issue of the un-encumbency and encumbency of self, what is significant is that, that he does not reject the ontological possibility of the encumbency of the self. If the communitarian rejection of the ontological priority of right over good is consistent, it means that the actual "prioritization of right" is in itself the hyper good⁵⁴ or internal⁵⁵ good of a particular community and it reflects the moral intuition of at least the Western part of the world which has emerged from the metaethical narratives of Western civilization. In a very real sense, these are historically specific and culturally determined. Therefore the institutional formalization of the "priority of right" as a fundamental criterion to judge the legitimacy of the political structure is in fact an attempt to impose an abstract system of rights which has been derived from a culturally specific and historically determined conception of the Good. Thus, that formulation reflects the moral intuition of a particular community.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵⁴ "Hyper Good" is the term used by Taylor to signify the qualitatively higher order goods. See *Sources of self* op.cit, pp. 69-70.

⁵⁵ The "Internal Good" is the term used by MacIntyre to signify the teleologically superior good. See *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981), pp. 175-178.

The Liberal Metamorphosis in a Human Rights Framework: The Future of the Nation-State

ABDUL WAHAB SURI

The Man of Knowledge must not only love his enemies,
he must also be able to hate his friends. *Thus Spoke
Zarathustra* (190)

Introduction

We are living in an age in which a unilateral world order is spreading liberal values and regimes across the globe. This phenomenon leads to a transformation in the structure, ideals and virtues of the Nation-State in general and of non-liberal States in particular. This dynamic change is marked by cosmopolitan liberalism and is aided by many political, legal and economic international bureaucratic institutions.

In this cosmopolitan world order, the old Westphalian State structure which acknowledged the absolute right of the State has been put in question. The legitimacy and the sovereignty of the State are conditioned by constitutional guarantees and an institutional framework for the realization of human rights.

In this sense, an abstract human rights framework is considered a tool for restructuring non-liberal statecraft. Underlying this presumption is the idea that "right" has an ultimate priority over "good," and that this hierarchy is natural rather than a recent historical development. On this view, then, a cross-cultural application and theoretical acknowledgment of liberal values is seen as the natural culmination of the potential already existing in Neolithic man.

This article attempts to establish that the priority of rights over the good does not ensure a neutral procedure of justice and that the institutionalization of the priority of rights over the good is not the foundation of a just order, but rather acts as a bridge to transform a non-liberal order into a liberal one. The institutionalization of an abstract "rights" framework is actually an attempt to undermine the sovereignty of non-liberal statecraft and to gradually transform it into

the liberal socio-political model. This imposed liberal criterion of decency does not reflect the strength of liberalism, but rather its weakness.

The paper will begin with an account of the philosophical defense of the priority of rights over the good in liberalism, and proceed to describe its role in the metamorphosis of non-liberal States. It will then challenge the theoretical priority of rights over the good and its legitimacy as a criterion of a just socio-political order.

Liberalism, Neutrality of Principles, Nature of the State, and the Criteria of Justice

The Notions of Liberty and Equality in Rights-Based Liberalism

The ideas of equality and liberty seem to reinforce each other, but in the political sphere the extension of the one eventually limits the sphere of the other. Discovering the best possible compromise between these competing ideals (liberty and equality) is one of the central problems of contemporary political theory. Deontological liberalism claims to reconcile the paradoxical co-existence of equality and liberty.

Another important problem associated with the issue of liberty and equality is that while neither is quantifiable, it is necessary to presume that they are. The quantifiability of liberty and equality is a necessary "postulate" for the constitution of concrete political structures. This presumed quantifiability principle raises the question of how to demonstrate "lesser" or "greater" liberty or equality in different political arrangements. Thus, the extension of the one and the restriction of the other becomes a matter of interpretation. In contemporary political philosophical discourse the many "isms" (liberalism, socialism, libertarianism, communitarianism, etc.) are all different attempts to reconcile the relatively incompatible issues of liberty and equality within a single framework.

The human rights framework is widely presumed to be the criterion not only for reconciling the paradoxical co-existence of liberty and equality, but also as the quantifiable criterion for assessing the amount of freedom and equality granted by the State structure. The amount of freedom is directly proportional to the number of liberal rights guaranteed and institutionally protected by the State. Moreover, the human rights framework is considered a legitimacy

criterion for the approval or disapproval of State policies and international agreements.

The history of political theory reveals that the priority of rights over the good was first acknowledged as a criterion to judge the legitimacy of political procedure by liberals. Classical contractarians such as John Locke quickly realized that freedom without order does not guarantee a just socio-political society, but also that controlled freedom is a contradiction in terms. In order to resolve this problem Locke introduced the idea of civil society, contrasting it with the "state of nature" which guarantees absolute freedom to the individual in the absence of any legal order. He tried to demonstrate that in the absence of any order, freedom of the individual is unprotected and unsustainable. The unintended consequence of this perfect state of freedom and equality would be the arbitrary expression of ruthless power. This reveals a clear contrast between liberals and anarchists with respect to the relation between freedom and order. Liberals want to enjoy freedom, yet within an ordered structure. That order they derive from an abstract system of rights.

The political theory which has emerged from the politics of rights is generally known as liberalism. Theoretically, we can define liberalism under three core headings: first, liberalism is a socio-political movement which prioritizes the individual over all forms of collectivities, considering man as an end in himself rather than a means towards the realization of certain ends; second, liberalism considers freedom of the individual as the highest ideal and then institutionally protects that freedom through a system of abstract rights; and third, liberalism considers tolerance to be a fundamental value subject to the constraint that the only public good is the will to freedom.

Liberalism is also a socio-political movement which presumes an organic relation between liberty and commerce.¹ The society which emerges from this organic whole of liberty and commerce is considered a commercial or civil society. Such a society ensures freedom of the individual through the institutional protection of fundamental rights and eliminates poverty through market mechanisms (improving labor productivity) and extra-market

¹ See John A. Hall, *Liberalism: Politics, Ideology and the Market* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), pp. 35-38.

strategies (modernizing educational systems and other infrastructures).

The harmony of non-liberal States, including their structure, ideals and virtues, will be determined by the compatibility of the given State with the presumed conception of justice promoted by liberal cosmopolitanism.

Rawls' Vision and an Inherent Contradiction

The Rawlsian principles of justice² provide a presumed foundation for a just and fair socio-economic mechanism and also determine the parameters of a just State.

Contractarian theorists such as Rawls do not reject non-neutral principles on the basis of their possible misuse; rather they consider non-neutral principles impractical regarding their application to particular cases in concrete socio-economic and political affairs. Due to their inconsistent and controversial outcomes, non-neutral principles fail to provide generally agreed upon criteria for distinguishing between correct and incorrect decisions.

According to Dworkin such non-neutral principles "must be replaced by principles whose application to particular cases commands widespread agreement or for which neutral procedures for determining the correct application can be devised."³

Rawls has differentiated pure procedure from perfect or imperfect procedures. The difference between a pure procedure and a perfect/imperfect procedure is that the former is non-consequentialist and formal. Its validity is not judged by its empirical plausibility. However the perfect/imperfect procedure is consequentialist, functioning as an instrument towards the realization of desirable

² See Rawls' principles of justice: "*First Principle*: Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all. *Second Principle*: Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:

a. to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and
b. attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity."

In, John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p.302.

³ Gerald Dworkin, "Non-Neutral Principles," in Norman Daniels, ed., *Reading Rawls* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 135.

outcomes. Deriving the specific method to obtain the desired outcome will be considered a perfect procedure. On the other hand, an imperfect procedure does not guarantee a specific method to achieve the desired outcome. Non-neutral principles are fundamentally imperfect according to Dworkin because the concepts (justice, truth, goodness) derived from such “non-neutral principles are defined independently of the processes by which they are achieved.”⁴

According to Dworkin, the Rawlsian prioritization of liberty of conscience as a first principle is the “strongest substantive argument that has been developed against non-neutral principles.”⁵ He believes that the strength of the Rawlsian moral argument lies in its epistemological validity. Rawls’ “veil of ignorance” provides a framework in which those creating the social contract are deprived of information which directly affects their personal decisions to regard one way of life as objectively better than others. In such an uncertain situation “no policy of suppression will be adopted and toleration will emerge as the solution of the decision-making problem.”⁶ Dworkin notes Rawls’ view that “the flow of information is determined at each stage by what is required in order to apply these principles intelligently to the kind of question of justice at hand, while at the same time any knowledge that is likely to bias and...to set men against one another is ruled out.”⁷ But he claims that this makes Rawls’ theory vulnerable to critique regarding the neutrality and fairness of his procedure for exclusion or inclusion of information does indeed directly affect the nature of the derived conclusion at each stage.

Adina Schwartz, Thomas Nagel, et. al., are not satisfied with the substantive claims and political implications Rawls has derived on the basis of his idea of the veil of ignorance.⁸ The conventional view regarding the neutrality of the principles of justice is that Rawls has revitalized the organic relation between “one’s epistemological views and one’s political views.”⁹ Also, the Rawlsian derivation of the

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁷ Cited in *Ibid.*, 138; Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁸ See Adina Schwartz, “Moral Neutrality and Primary Goods,” *Ethics*, 83 (July, 1973), 294-307, and Thomas Nagel, “Rawls on Justice,” in *Reading Rawls*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16.

⁹ Dworkin Gerald, “Non-Neutral Principles,” *op. cit.*, p. 139.

primary good – on the basis of hypothetical moral situations – as “desirable goods” is a generally accepted moral assumption. Rawls, then, is raising the question concerning what is logical for social contractors to choose behind the veil of ignorance. And so Rawls holds to a prioritization of the principles of justice and primary goods through the institutional procedure of constitutional democracy. But while this view seems to him merely logical, it is actually an epistemological pursuit.

Rawls is actually attempting to provide a socio-political framework in which different ontological accounts regarding the meaning of life are not just able to be realized, but are also not to be restrained by the realization of the others. Due to the blockage of knowledge through the veil of ignorance in the original position, the prioritization of any particular ontological or teleological account is epistemologically not possible according to Rawls. As rational and self-interested individuals, the contractors “cannot risk their freedom by authorizing a standard of value to define what is to be maximized by a teleological principle of justice.”¹⁰ Rawls has emphasized that the primary good index (income, power, wealth, authority, and self-respect) should not be confused with the teleologically derived good. He believes that “the index plays a subordinate role in any event, and primary goods are things that men generally want in order to achieve their ends whatever they are.”¹¹ Rawls acknowledges that the principles of perfection cannot be completely excluded from all spheres of life. This is so because in everyday life we cannot make comparisons between intrinsic values in the absence of principles of perfection. And so he holds that “judgments of values have an important place in human affairs.”¹²

However, Rawls identifies within the idea of prioritizing principles of perfection the following two problems:

1) The conception of justice derived from such a system of values or one of right/duties may not necessarily be secular or politically liberal.

2) The conditions of the original position will not allow for the derivation of any principle of perfection.

¹⁰ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 328.

Rawls believes that the infiltration of any form of perfectionism will eventually lead to the deconstruction of the conditional structure of the original position. For this reason the State apparatus should not be used to enhance the distributive share or liberty of any particular group on the grounds that “their activities are of more intrinsic value,”¹³ i.e. teleologically superior to that of others. Therefore he does not consider perfectionism to be a just political principle.

In this context Ronald Dworkin has shown that there are two different ways to answer the question concerning how a State can and should treat all of its citizens equally.¹⁴ The first runs in this way: the State should remain neutral regarding the prioritization of any conception of the “good,” and provide a neutral framework such that every individual can equally pursue his own conception of the good autonomously. The second answer runs as follows: the State must not remain neutral on the question of the good. Rather, it must endorse a theory of the good in order to determine what ought to be. In this second sense equality would mean that the State is to enforce its theory of the good upon its citizens equally and in an unbiased way.

According to the first perspective political decisions are to be made abstracting from the personal life of any individual. That is, since every individual presumes a different order of preferences, practically speaking it would be impossible for the State to treat them equally on the basis of their private conceptions of good.

According to the second perspective, in the absence of a definite theory of the good the claim of equal treatment would be fictitious because “[g]ood government consists in fostering or at least recognizing good lives; treatment as an equal consists in treating each person as if he were desirous of leading the life that is in fact good.”¹⁵

It appears that Rawls affirms the first interpretation of equality. But is this conception of equality reconcilable with a general theory of distribution, i.e. the distribution of political rights, resources and opportunities? A naïve egalitarian may claim that political right, opportunities and resources should be equally distributed irrespective of the private ambitions of the citizens of that State. In this context neutrality simply means that an equal share should be given

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

¹⁴ Ronald Dworkin, “Liberalism,” in Michael J. Sandel, ed., *Liberalism and its Critics* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), p. 64.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

to everyone. But a serious problem here is that not only do people have different conceptions of the good and/or orderings of their preferences, but additionally, they are naturally unequal in their talents, skills, needs and natural endowments. Since the "moral relevance of different sorts of diversity are very different,"¹⁶ it follows that this theory of equality is not only impractical, but in fact contradicts the very meaning of individual justice.

Liberals traditionally rely on two different institutions to resolve the problems inherent in distribution. The first is the market, which provides a mechanism for the distribution of material resources through the process of competition, i.e. an efficient market mechanism. The second is representative democracy, which provides the mechanism for the distribution of political rights. It is expected that the combination of these two institutions will provide the best egalitarian arrangement. The market provides an efficient price mechanism compatible with the purchasing power of the consumer, as well as "the cost in resources of material, labour and capital that might have been applied to produce something different that someone else wants."¹⁷ The market also helps the individual to rationally quantify "how much should be credited to his account for his choice of productive activity over leisure, and for one activity rather than another."¹⁸ The market provides price mechanisms and it also sets the standards for wages, credit, loans, interest etc. In short, the market provides a distributive mechanism of goods and services. This distributive mechanism satisfies the wants and desires of the people having different conceptions of the good and orders in their preferences.

The distribution of goods and services is not egalitarian in a substantive sense. In the market individuals are not treated equally since they are unequal in their skills, physical abilities, mental capacities and natural endowments. As a result of this their capacity to accumulate capital is also not the same. In the market the distributive mechanism prioritizes the principle of "efficiency" over the principle of "equality." And in the market effective demand is determined by the one who has capital. Therefore, anti-egalitarian consequences are inevitable in a free market economy.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

The socialist alternative to counter these anti-egalitarian consequences through a planned economy is not appealing to liberals because such political economy legitimizes the “invasions of privacy to determine what decisions individuals would make if forced actually to pay for their investment, consumption and employment decisions at market rates.”¹⁹ This invasion eliminates the delicate demarcation between the private and public spheres of life and makes individual freedom impossible at least at the individual level. On the other hand in a socialist economy the distributive and productive functions are determined by the prioritized conception of the good presumed by the State. For example, “in a socialist economy books are simply valued more, because they are inherently more worthy uses of social resources, quite apart from the popular demand for books.”²⁰ This prioritization of the “good” over “rights” not only affects the efficient market mechanism but it directly affects the autonomy of the individual’s order of preferences. Therefore this alternative is not acceptable for a liberal like Rawls.

Ironically, the free market mechanism is also not acceptable; because in the market individual decisions are not determined by one’s order of preferences but by one’s capacity to accumulate capital. Since individuals are not equal in their capacity to accelerate the rate of capital accumulation, it follows that in the market every individual is not considered equal. The problem is that in the market there is no substantive mechanism to address these inequalities and this results in catastrophic effects on the lives of individuals.

Two sorts of inequalities are considered natural in a free-market system: (a) Monetary inequalities, and (b) inequalities in natural abilities. Rawls may tolerate monetary inequalities because they are explainable in terms of an individual’s order of preferences, and some preferences are more expensive than others. However, inequalities in natural abilities directly affect the:

- 1) The prioritization of the first principle of justice,
- 2) The assumption that man is an end-in-himself, and
- 3) The priority of rights over the good.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Thus, in a free market mechanism the principle of efficiency dominates both the principle of equality as well as that of liberty. Due to the prioritization of the principle of efficiency there is no substantive agency (other than the myth of the invisible hand) which has the capacity to compensate those unfortunates who are left behind due to inequalities in their natural skills and endowments.

It is important to note that in the Rawlsian framework, the principles of Justice not only act as a binding force to harmonize different socio-political institutions but also provide an evaluative criterion of the justice of the socio-political order, “[the] principles of justice apply to the basic structure and regulate how its major institutions are combined into one scheme.”²¹ This implies that the socio-economic irregularities (with respect to the principles of justice) should be resolved within the constraints of deontologism. In order to realize this objective Rawls believe that “it is necessary to set social and economic processes within the surrounding of suitable political and legal institutions”²²

The free-market mechanism to regulate the distributive share of the citizens lacks the background institutions which harmonize the overall state processes (i.e. socio-political and economic) with the rationale of the prioritized principles of justice. “[Without] the proper arrangement of the background institutions the outcome of the distributive process will not be just.”²³

In order to conceptualize the framework of such back ground institutions Rawls has derived idea of four branches of government explicated by R.A. Musgrave.²⁴ According to Rawls, “each branch consists of various agencies or activities thereof, charged with preserving certain social and economic conditions.”²⁵

This reveals that Rawls acknowledges “the competitive market by itself is not sufficient for the job of stabilizing.”²⁶ Secondly, the free

²¹ Rawls., *A Theory of Justice, op.cit.*, p.274.

²² *Ibid.*, p.275.

²³ *Ibid.*, p..275.

²⁴ See R.A. Musgrave, *The Theory of Public Finance*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939), chapter 1, cited in Rawls, *A Theory of Justice, op.cit.*, p. 275.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.273.

²⁶ See Milton Fisk “The State and the Market in Rawls” in *John Rawls and the Agenda of Social Justice*, B.N.Ray, ed. (New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, 2000), p. 249.

market mechanism does not guarantee an adequate minimum income or a degree of equality that conforms to the difference principles.²⁷

Therefore, in order to avoid the socialist threat there is need of strong interventionist state is not only to institutionize justice as fairness but also for “developing a strong basis for its [competitive market] own stability.”²⁸

Rawls therefore acknowledges the need of a redistributive agency other than the market in order to sustain the liberal order. This agency will not only perform the efficient redistributive function of resources, but also systematically reconcile the paradoxical co-existence of the principles of equality and liberty. The Rawlsian prioritization of the second principle reveals that he is not convinced by the myth of the “invisible hand.” He believes that there is need of a “visible foot,” i.e. the State, to counter socio-economic inequalities and market failures. In the Rawlsian framework the State seems to be interventionist. Therefore in the Rawlsian framework taxation or subsidization is legitimate and it serves to eliminate absolute poverty. It is important to note that Rawls acknowledges that a well ordered society is not a classless society; there is an open possibility of relative poverty along with the elimination of absolute poverty since the State ensures that the greatest benefit goes to the least advantaged section of society.

Rawls claims that representative democracy is a legitimate and institutionally possible political framework because liberal democracy ensures individual rights. A constitutional democracy ensures a system of rights. In it a body of prioritized rights is constitutionally guaranteed and institutionally protected. However, Rawls acknowledges that while the framework of constitutional democracy ensures “equal freedom and rights,” there is no institutional guarantee that economic equality is ensured by the State.

The Rawlsian idea of the State is claimed to be anti-perfectionist in that the State deliberately ignores perfectionist ideas (i.e., ideas which direct individual’s lives such as the autonomous pursuit of their private conceptions of the good). The Rawlsian State remains neutral regarding the conceptions of the good held by individuals because the purpose of the State is to provide a workable framework within which

²⁷ See Rawls (1971), p.277, cited in Milton Fisk, *op. cit.* p.249.

²⁸ Milton Fisk “The State and the Market in Rawls,” *op. cit.* p.249.

individuals are free to frame, revise, and rationally pursue their own conceptions of the good.

The Rawlsian idea of the “veil of ignorance” provides a secular framework in which substantive values have no significance in the establishment of just socio-political arrangements in general and principles of justice in particular. It is important to note that in the Rawlsian political theory the role of the State is neutral, but not in all matters. The liberal State protects the system of rights and provides a framework in which private conceptions of the good are freely realizable. This implies that the State remains neutral regarding the issue of the good, but not neutral in the case of rights.

Thus, in the Rawlsian framework those “ways of life” which contradict, or are in conflict with the body of rights are considered illegitimate. Moreover, it is legitimate to suppress such conceptions of the good and such ways of life in order to restore the sanctity of the body of fundamental rights. Therefore, within the framework of a rights-constrained system there is the open possibility of a hierarchy among substantive conceptions of the good. This is so because in such a State some ways of life are definitively not realizable, since they stand in conflict with the abstract fundamental rights. Thus, while the Rawlsian conception of the State claims to be neutral regarding conceptions of the good, it is not so in its effect. In fact, the State necessarily promotes some ways of life and constrains others.

Those ways of life and conceptions of good which are consistent with the rationale of the liberal rights framework will be protected, or rather should be protected by the state. Therefore, the just state can not be neutral between “the religions fundamentalist and secular liberal.”²⁹

It is important to note that the state’s suppression of religious fundamentalism which would want to establish a religious order, is legitimized not by virtue of any substantive conception of good but only that the liberal public order survive. Despite this fact, the basis of favoring one conception of good life “does not involves reference to judgments about the relative merits of those different ways of life”³⁰

Secondly, it is obvious that the prioritized system of liberal rights not only compels religious fundamentalists to revise their conception

²⁹ Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians*, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993), p.30

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.30.

of the good according to the spirit of deontology. It also inculcates that the only valuable life is the life which has autonomously been chosen by the individual, as if he/she is ontologically able to determine his/her conception of good independent of history, cultural, communal attachments and the truth revealed by the God.

The Nation-State and the Human Rights Framework

We are living in an age in which two emerging tendencies are obviously affecting the nation-state structure and ideals, and reshaping the legitimacy criteria for the sovereignty of the State. First, there is the tendency inherent in the political side of liberalism, i.e. the emergence of a cosmopolitanism which is concerned with the globalization of liberal values and its corresponding institutions. Secondly, there is the tendency within the market side of liberalism that the concentration of capital is no longer of a domestic nature, but is intrinsically global.

In this section we will focus on globalization with respect to the political side of liberalism, namely, the implementation of a liberal rights framework and its impact on non-liberal State structures. It is an acknowledged fact that liberal democratic States are “spreading across the whole globe liberal democratic values and regimes.”³¹

Both of the above mentioned tendencies presume an antagonistic relation towards those nation States which have the institutional capacity to counter the domination of liberal cosmopolitanism and market globalization which are being imposed externally. The authority and sovereignty of non-liberal nation States has been directly challenged. Contemporary political discourse, particularly after the collapse of the former USSR, has been markedly influenced and dominated by liberal theory. The unavailability of any viable political alternative to liberalism has radicalized the discourse of political theory and the legitimacy of political procedures and institutions. As a direct result of this one-dimensional discourse different spheres of sovereignties are clashing with each other. The nation State has been identified as the common enemy. Liberal discourse has created a theoretical environment in which non-liberal Statecraft has been considered a disease and the ultimate source of

³¹ P. Gowan, Leo Panitch and M. Shaw, “The State, Globalization and New Imperialism,” A round table discussion, in *Historical Materialism*, vol. 9, (2001), p. 4.

injustice. Therefore, it should, it is thought, be countered on all levels. Indeed, it is as if each dimension of liberalism is set up against the State: The market vs. the State, civil society vs. the State, the individual vs. the State, market forces vs. the State, human rights vs. the State and so on."³² Another very important question has been raised by Gowan who wants to know in this antagonistic discourse who, exactly, is against whom? On a theoretical level, it is claimed that the cosmopolitan order is that which is against the particular nation State. But this is not true according to Gowan because he believes that there are some States who are pushing for this order. This means that the specific conflict and antagonism is *not* between the so-called international community and the non-liberal nation State. Rather the conflict is one of the liberal State against the non-liberal State.

Fareed Zakaria believes that the scope of illiberal democracy is rising and democratic political procedure has been instrumentalized to abandon the liberal agenda and to legitimize illiberal practices and institutions. He claims that "half of the 'democratizing' countries in the world today are illiberal democracies."³³ He suggests to liberal forces (i.e., to liberal state actors) that there is a need actively to counter this tendency of illiberal democracy because "illiberal democracies gain legitimacy, and thus strength, from the fact that they are reasonably democratic."³⁴

Zakaria considers the liberal socio-political order to be uncontestable, and presumes that the institutional realization of liberal rights is the ultimate condition or guarantee of socio-political justice. He thinks that in-order to counter the "spreading virus of illiberalism,"³⁵ there is a need to encourage the "gradual development of constitutional liberalism across the globe" through active intervention of the world community (i.e., the *liberal* world community) and "most importantly the United States."³⁶ But the pertinent question remains: Is the liberal order meta-historic? Is it part of human nature to accept the liberal order? Or, rather, is liberalism an historical phenomenon? It is obvious that Zakaria prioritizes

³² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³³ Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracies," in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 74.6, (Nov./Dec. 1997), p. 24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

constitutional liberalism over democracy because he thinks that “constitutional liberalism has led to democracy, but democracy does not seem to bring constitutional liberalism.”³⁷ This is clearly an empirically derived claim that is essentially historical and not an *a priori* truth.

It follows from Zakaria’s analysis that democratic rights should be conditioned by the institutional protection and prioritization of a liberal rights framework, even at the cost of democracy itself. He claims that “[m]any of the countries of Central Europe...moved successfully from communism to liberal democracy...as other European countries did during the nineteenth century.”³⁸ In order to justify a liberal dictatorship, he is ready to embrace British colonization just because it was liberal.³⁹ Yet, on the other hand, he is not happy with some procedurally democratic, yet practically illiberal Islamic States. “In the Islamic world, from the Palestinian Authority to Iran to Pakistan, democratization had led to an increasing role for theocratic politics, eroding long-standing traditions of secularism and tolerance.”⁴⁰ The Western hemisphere has taken four hundred years to become liberal democratic, but Zakaria is not ready to give 40 years to other non-liberal cultures to become liberal. Rather, he wants to change non-liberal cultures and Statecraft by transcending their democratic rights and their religious value structures. This desperation does not show the strength of the promoters of liberalism and its corresponding socio-political institutions, rather it reveals the theoretical fragility and the intellectual bankruptcy of liberalism. The process of mutation in democratic theory – in for example: Dryzek’s “Deliberative Democracy” (2002); Young’s “Inclusive Democracy” (2003); Goodwin’s “Reflective Democracy” (2002); the World Bank’s promotion of “Participating Democracy”; and so on – reveals the intellectual confusion of the liberal intelligentsia regarding the democratic experience of Western Europe. Or in Ansari’s words it reveals the “The Living Death of Western European Democracy.”⁴¹

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28-29.

³⁹ See *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴¹ See Javed A. Ansari, “The Living Death of Western European Democracy?,” in *Market Forces*, vol. 4.1, (April, 2008), p.32.

Democratic theory reveals that democratic political procedure is theoretically compatible only with systems of thought that are essentially anthropocentric. Anthropocentric systems acknowledge an absolute right of the individual, as a free and autonomous law-giver, to determine his own conception of the good, and consider man as an end in himself. Democratic political procedure, which is theoretically (i.e. ontologically and epistemologically) consistent with liberal ideology, is in fact the only political procedure to have attempted to institutionalize the liberal socio-political order. But if that procedure to institutionalize the liberal socio-political order has failed, as Zakaria admits, it follows that the democratic political procedure is not the only ultimate political procedure capable of establishing individual sovereignty and autonomy. Here the following question arises: How does Zakaria know that the political procedures, practiced in the above mentioned Islamic world, will not lead to human freedom and individual autonomy just because they are not culturally liberal? Democracy, the known political procedure derived from liberal political theory, has failed to make society and the State liberal. Therefore, the strategy (suggested by Zakaria) to transform the State and society to liberalism is to impose a human rights framework to protect individual freedom in order to then bring about the institutional condition for a legitimate democratic political procedure. This implies the view that if the socio-cultural transformation is not guaranteed by the political procedure – no matter how democratic it is – then the political procedure should be conditioned within a framework of abstract liberal rights (by considering them universal and culturally neutral) implemented by international bureaucratic institutions. In this sense “individual freedom” is interpreted exclusively in a liberal sense.

Globalization through “Glocalization”

The human rights framework is thus coming to be seen as a much more effective means of transforming society or a State into a liberal one. The prioritization of abstract liberal rights is presumed to be a necessary condition for the legitimacy of any political order. Generally, there are five kinds of abstract rights which are to be prioritized above all other conceptions of the good, whether those conceptions are derived from the history of a particular community or revealed by God. The five rights are: the right to participate in the

political process, the right to freedom of expression, the right to own property, civil rights, and the right to peaceful association.⁴²

It is important to note that the Human Development Report which outlined these five rights not only defines the conditions of legitimate socio-political order but also identifies the institutions through which such rights will be realized: The right to participate in the political process can only be actualized through fair and free elections; the right to freedom of expression is actualized through free media (which leads to commodifying the news); the right to own property is actualized only in a capitalist economy and in extreme cases through a free market economy; civil rights are actualized only through the decentralization of the State; and the right to peaceful association is realizable only within the framework of a "civil society," i.e. a contractually structured society in which individuals are held together by the impersonal bonds of interests, rather than the bonds of kinship, religious particularities, or communal attachments.⁴³

The nation-state is in fact the omnipresent structure in all discourse regarding the institutional realization or violation of fundamental rights. Therefore, in such discourse it is expected that the nation State "often has to be ready to act against itself."⁴⁴ This expectation is not realizable without substantial reforms in the legal structure of non-liberal State craft. In these discourses the human rights framework is presumed to be the ultimate foundation on which the imposition of conditions and pressure on non-liberal States is based in order to bring about major revisions in their penal codes and constitutional amendments. By this same means, the abolition of supra constitutional bodies is sought, i.e. the Veliate-e-Faqui in Iran, the Islamic ideology Council and Federal Shariat Court in Pakistan and Nigeria, etc. This is done irrespective of the fact that the legitimacy of these institutions is acknowledged through some democratic means. The justification given for this is that these democratic decisions do not respect abstract human rights, and in many cases are instrumentalized, often through an illiberal, but democratic framework, to violate fundamental rights.⁴⁵ For these reasons, many human right

⁴² *Human Development Report in Asia: The Gender Question*, (Karachi: Mahmood-ul Haq Human Development Center, Karachi University Press, 2000), p. 56.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-58.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

activists stress the need for independent auditing of nation States by international bureaucratic institutions, NGOs and other civil society organizations which apply pressure “aimed at advancing the freedoms of the press, speech, and the right of association.”⁴⁶

The old Westphalian concept of world order, which acknowledged the absolute right of the State, is not in practice anymore; rather, the only legitimate world order in this discourse is liberal cosmopolitanism. In the contemporary emerging world order, or in Gowan’s words the “liberal cosmopolitan order,” State sovereignty has been conditioned upon the constitutional guarantee and institutional protection of abstract liberal rights, and “thus the old Westphalian concept of sovereignty becomes conditionalized rather like a dog license in Britain.”⁴⁷

Since this cosmopolitan order has been pushed by some States, i.e. liberal States, the license for the legitimacy will be issued by the Union of these liberal States or in Michael Doyle’s words the “pacific union.”⁴⁸ If a nation State has failed or created obstacles to either the process of the accumulation of capital in general (which is in the economic and political interest of the pacific union) or the institutional protection of the abstract liberal rights then, “the sovereignty license will be taken away and these States who are the representatives of the so-called ‘international community’ will intervene in...various ways within the delinquent State.”⁴⁹

The above discussion reveals that in this process of externally imposed metamorphoses, States have become passive victims of international bureaucratic institutions and human rights imperialism. But Leo Panitch believes that this is not the whole truth. He thinks that the nation State is an active participant in this process of State metamorphosis, and in fact that the nation State itself is managing the imposition onto itself of human rights as an inevitable condition of the global world. He acknowledges that the globalization of cosmopolitan liberalism and free market capitalism do affect the structure of nation States, and particularly those States which are not culturally liberal or economically capitalist. But interestingly, he believes that “what was taking place was certainly a restructuring of States (but not a

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴⁷ Gowan, “The State Globalization and New Imperialism” *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

bypassing of the State)⁵⁰ with the State acting as an active agent in this process of globalization. The State is in fact acting in a subservient way to the global market. The objectivity of this claim is evident because, “those State departments that were more closely associated with the forces of international capital, treasuries, central banks and so forth were increasing their status at the cabinet table.”⁵¹

Panitch also tries to identify an interesting phenomenon called the “internationalization of the State” by which he means that the nation State increasingly takes responsibility in managing the global market, rather than taking responsibility for its own domestic economy. Since capital is concentrating at the global level, there is an antagonistic relationship between global capital (i.e., capital in general) and national capital. He thinks that the nation State has become more committed to maintaining equilibrium in the global economy and to protecting the interest of capital in general. In addition to this, he believes that this process of restructuring the nation State is not just the result of international agencies and the forceful impositions of liberal States, but that a class has emerged within each nation State contributing to it. The interest of this class is global rather than national, and as a result of this very powerful portion of antecedently individuated people, this class is oriented towards globalization. They, in fact, represent the interest of capital in general and therefore their commitment to domestic matters of State has become minimal. In fact, a weak nation State is in the *interest* of this global oriented class, and that is one of the unintended consequences of the global concentration of capital. The members of this class protect themselves by means of the shield of the human rights framework. These are the real agents of globalization, because they think globally and act locally; they have created a framework known as “glocalization.”

The framework of local activity will be considered legitimate if it is constrained by abstract liberal rights. This liberal rights constraint provides the rationale for the legitimization and naturalization of the liberal value structure. It also abandons the possibility of the prioritization of any conception of the good which is not consistent with the prioritization of the abstract rights framework. The acknowledgment of the liberal rights framework as the only legitimate

⁵⁰ Leo Panitch, “The State, Globalization and New Imperialism” *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

criterion of socio-political justice rests upon the assumption that the priority of rights over the good is essentially deontological. Thus, there is a need to analyze the philosophical limitations of this deontologism and to demonstrate that the liberal rights framework itself is ontologically grounded and derived from a conception of the good which is historically specific and culturally determined.⁵² If the priority of rights is ontologically grounded and reflects the moral intuitions of a particular community then the institutionalization of the abstract rights framework is actually an attempt to institutionalize a particular conception of the good and to eliminate those conceptions of the good which are not compatible with it. Thus, a historically specific and culturally determined conception of the good is at the foundation of the rights based framework after all.

The globalization oriented class makes this mechanism of glocalization function. It not only emphasizes the institutionalization of the liberal rights framework, but it also interprets the so-called human rights in a global context while practicing them at the local level. In this way the institutionalization of the liberal rights framework is being instrumentalized by these so-called enlightened people to de-legitimize the local hermeneutical context within which those rights are inserted. The good of the local community, which is independent of the liberal abstract rights framework because of its ontological underpinnings, is thus "transcended." By practicing such rights locally and interpreting them globally, the process of glocalization transforms the axiological mechanism of traditional non-liberal societies and also destroys the communal cohesion which served to restrain individuals from acting, thinking and pursuing their own conceptions of the good as antecedently individuated selves. In this way society becomes atomized, resulting in communal disintegration which then paves the way for the metamorphosis of the State from a non-liberal one into a market friendly liberal one.

⁵² Substantial work has been done regarding the excavation of the ontological foundations of deontological liberalism, particularly by Charles Taylor, McIntyre, Sandel, Walzer and J. Raz etc. To some extent they all emphasize the priority of the good over rights, and contest the priority of rights over the good. Javed Akbar Ansari, Ali Mohammad Rizvi, Z.Arshad and I have written extensively on this issue as well. Deontological liberalism is an equally contestable claim, and it has its own limitations and ontological underpinnings.

The process of globalization, according to Panitch, is in fact the constitutionalizing of neo-liberalism. The liberal conception of justice is being imposed upon nation State structures through international bureaucratic institutions. And the abstract human rights framework is being instrumentalized for the realization of the liberal socio-political and economic orders. The juridifying and codifying elements of liberalism are being imposed upon nation States through the mechanisms of international law and international courts of justice. These impositions are not merely affecting, but reconstituting the priorities, ideals and virtues of nation States. In the long run they will transform the whole socio-cultural fabric of non-liberal societies. All of this is occurring even though the juridifying aspect of abstract rights is incorporated within the legal framework of each State and the preamble of their constitutions. Panitch believes that these liberal legal codes “make it difficult, not impossible, but difficult, to break with the disciplinary financial order, free-trade provisions, and above all the free capital mobility provisions that are the essence of economic globalization.”⁵³ Panitch stresses the need to develop a “theory of imperialism appropriate to our time which avoids all these dangerously misleading connotations.”⁵⁴

Bridging the Gap between Liberals and Non-Liberals

Offering incentives to relatively decent non-liberal societies to become liberal is generally presumed to be the best option liberals have. Rawls considers this strategy not only offensive, but also strategically invalid, since any coercive strategy will be counter productive and eventually lead to conflict. For instance, he claims that organizations of reasonable and decent peoples such as the United Nations, “should not offer incentives for its member peoples to become more liberal, for this would lead to serious conflicts among its own members.”⁵⁵ Funding and loans, according to Rawls, should not be conditioned on the institutionalization of the liberal order. He acknowledges that “[a]ctually, today’s IMF often attaches political conditions to loans, including conditions that do seem to require a

⁵³ Leo Panitch, “The State Globalization and New Imperialism” *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵⁵ John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 84.

move toward more open and liberal democratic institutions."⁵⁶ He thinks that such conditional aid adversely affects the scope and expansion of liberal values and its corresponding institutions because such strategies "arouse conflict between liberals and [non-liberal] decent peoples."⁵⁷

He was also not satisfied with the liberal foreign policy framework which encouraged liberal State actors to offer different incentives and subsidies to non-liberal people to become liberal.⁵⁸ He claims that the contemporary coercive attitude of liberal States to impose their liberal values and corresponding institutions will be counter-productive in the long run. The foreign policy framework of "liberal peoples should recognize that good [of self-determination] and not take on the appearance of being coercive."⁵⁹

It is important to note that Rawls is not satisfied with the above mentioned violent and coercive strategies to expand and spread liberal values and socio-political institutions since they are not consistent with the rationale of the "Law of Peoples." The Law of Peoples, according to Rawls is "a particular political conception of right and justice that applies to the principles and norms of international law and practice."⁶⁰ The history of post-colonial States reveals an antagonistic relationship between society and the State. Most post-colonial societies define or interpret their own statecraft as exploitative, unfaithful or as an "agent" of their imperial masters. It follows that State sponsored liberalism will necessarily be unpopular among the people of post-colonial, non-liberal societies. Interestingly, Rawls has offered a different strategy. The Law of Peoples is concerned with the parameters of just society; however its acknowledgement may directly affect the nomenclature and the foreign policy framework of both liberal and non-liberal State structures. He then employs the term "Society of Peoples" to mean "all those peoples who follow the ideals and principles of the Law of Peoples in their mutual relations."⁶¹

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85, n. 30.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Rawls acknowledges that the Law of Peoples is not to be derived from formal or transcendental abstraction, but that “the content of the Law of Peoples might be developed out of a liberal idea of justice similar to...the idea I called *justice as fairness*.”⁶² However, according to Rawls the criterion of justice presumed in the Law of Peoples is more general than that of justice as fairness.

The defenders of cosmopolitan liberalism claim that the Rawlsian Law of Peoples compromises the universality of liberal values and its corresponding institutions. It is claimed that Rawls, in his attempt to generalize the idea of justice as fairness, compromises many of the fundamental rights of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Most obviously absent from Rawls’s list are the rights contained in Articles 19 through 21 of the Universal Declaration, which guarantee freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of assembly and freedom to participate in the governance of one’s country ‘directly or through freely chosen representatives.’”⁶³

It is for this reason that many people claim that the Rawlsian Law of Peoples is not sufficiently liberal. Rawls’ Law of Peoples demands the institutional protection of a “special class of urgent rights, such as freedom from slavery and serfdom, liberty (but not equal liberty) of conscience, and security of ethnic groups from mass murder and genocide.”⁶⁴ It is obvious that the rights which are demanded by Rawls to be institutionally guaranteed are very limited as compared to the rights protected in the liberal order. Apparently, the institutionalization of these rights does not affect the nomenclature of a non-liberal socio-political order in any substantive sense. This shows that the Law of Peoples is not necessarily conditioned by the same rights that the individual has in a reasonable liberal democratic regime.

The prevailing cosmopolitan view about non-liberal people is different than that of Rawls. It encourages liberal State actors to “recognize that members of a nonliberal society are deprived of what, by its lights, are significant rights, and it has good reason, within appropriate limits, to pursue policies designed to help them acquire

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶³ Chartier Gray, “The Peoples and the Persons, Revisiting Rawls on Global Justice,” *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review*, 27.1 (2004), 1-98, here 60.

⁶⁴ Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

opportunities to exercise these rights."⁶⁵ Unlike Rawls, the promoters of contemporary liberal cosmopolitanism consider it legitimate to affect and undermine the organizing capacity of illiberal associations and Statecraft by using "various sorts of pressures short of legal sanctions"⁶⁶ to moderate illiberal ways of life. The statistics show that the internationalization of liberal values and its corresponding institutions outside the liberal world is one of the important policy agendas of the liberal foreign policy framework. Liberal political authorities consider themselves free to promote or protect liberal values and socio-political institutions in the transnational arena: "Even if the costs of exiting decent nonliberal societies were minimal, so that those who wished to leave were free to do so, liberals might still, similarly, employ propaganda and other means to persuade such peoples to protect the complete array of liberal human rights."⁶⁷

It is clear that Rawls has compromised the coercive imposition of liberal values and its corresponding institutions. Such compromises not only question the expansion of the human rights constrained civil society framework, but also the universalizing capacity of liberal values as such, along with their corresponding institutions. This creates the impression that Rawls has lost his faith in the superiority of liberal values and institutions.

In light of the above, it is important to note that Rawls' commitment to deontology and the priority of rights over the good has not been compromised in any substantive sense. The acceptance of the Law of Peoples for reasonably liberal democratic societies is actually "the adoption of certain familiar principles of equality among peoples."⁶⁸ And acceptance of the Law of Peoples brings no anti-liberal consequences to the paradigm of reasonable liberal democratic societies.

The basic eight principles of justice among free and democratic peoples identified by Rawls, he says, "constitute the basic charter of the Law of Peoples."⁶⁹ The Principles, which determine the basic charter of the Law of Peoples are as follows:

⁶⁵ Chartier Gray, "The Peoples and the Persons," p. 68.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29 of 40.

⁶⁸ Rawls, *Law of Peoples, op.cit.*, pp.35-36.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37. Rawls acknowledges that the list of the principles he has presented is similar to the lists prescribed by J.L Brierly, *The Law of Nations: An Introduction*

1. Peoples are free and independent, and their freedom and independence are to be respected by other peoples.
2. Peoples are to observe treaties and undertakings.
3. Peoples are equal and are parties to the agreements that bind them.
4. Peoples are to observe a duty of non-intervention.
5. Peoples have the right of self-defense but no right to instigate war for reasons other than self-defense.
6. Peoples are to honor human rights.
7. Peoples are to observe certain specified restrictions in the conduct of war.
8. Peoples have a duty to assist other peoples living under unfavorable conditions that prevent their having a just decent political and social regime.⁷⁰

The above mentioned principles which determine the basic charter of the Law of Peoples are embrionically liberal. There is no doubt that Rawls has reinterpreted these principles within the rationale of deontological liberalism. The formalization of these principles does not contradict the fair principles of justice⁷¹ nor does it affect the domestic policies of liberal States or contradict the priority of rights over the good as the preamble of all legal formalization.

On the other hand, the acknowledgement of the Law of Peoples is preferable for non-liberal people, such as Muslims, for many reasons. Firstly, it clearly limits the contemporary coercive liberal foreign policy agenda by providing elbowroom for a non-liberal State apparatus to function within a non-liberal but decent hierarchical socio-cultural order. The second reason comes from the fact that there is no foreign policy agenda among Muslims States to change the liberal character of liberal democratic societies (because right now they are struggling to protect their own religious values within their own societies). In this situation it is preferable for Muslim States to accept the parameters of the Law of Peoples. And thirdly, deonto-

to the *Law of Peace*, 6th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), and Terry Nardin, *Law, Morality, and the Relations of States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), see *Ibid.*, p. 37, n. 42.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁷¹ See Rawls' principles of justice (note 2 above).

logism gives the impression that there are other decent Peoples (i.e., nonliberal ones) which are acknowledged by liberals.

Rawls finds liberal cosmopolitanism to contain an unjustified assumption, namely, that nonliberal societies “are always properly subject to some form of sanction – political, economic or even military – depending on the case.”⁷² This leads, Rawls says, to a liberal foreign policy which would “gradually shape all not yet liberal societies in a liberal direction, until eventually (in the ideal case) all societies are liberal.”⁷³ Rawls *rejects* the assumption within this view that “only liberal democratic societies can be acceptable.”⁷⁴ This policy of exclusion undermines the distinction between decent nonliberal hierarchical societies on the one hand, and mere outlaw States on the other.⁷⁵ The Law of Peoples wants to extend the criterion of acceptance to include decent hierarchical societies,⁷⁶ which, by the way, could contribute in efforts aimed at reforming outlaw States and other states suffering from unfavorable conditions.

Who Really Creates Problems for Liberals?

This Rawlsian analysis reveals that liberals should restrain themselves. In fact, the foreign policy framework of liberal States is not in the interest of liberals. It has become clear that many of the representatives of liberal values act against those very values, reflecting an intolerant, arrogant and impatient attitude towards any argument, state apparatus, or political will which are judged inconsistent with the presumed values of the liberal socio-political theory and institutional order.

The question arises: Why are the liberal intelligentsia and the liberal establishment not coordinating with each other? Established liberal thinkers such as Rawls apologetically defend the priority of liberal values and institutions in a spirit of philosophical tolerance. And so, if we cannot provide any metaphysical, ontological or epistemological justification for the universalization of the liberal socio-political order and its corresponding values, then why should we accept the liberal conception of justice? Is it just because it seems

⁷² Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.82-83.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

like the most reasonable system of justice under the conditions of deontology?

The communitarian critique of the ontological basis of deontological liberalism has shown the incapacity of the human mind to derive an abstract system of rights independent of any specific conception of the good. This fact reveals that liberals desire to institutionalize an abstract rights framework by imposing a particular conception of the good, one which is historically specific and culturally determined. The liberal rights framework reflects the moral intuitions of a particular community and its conception of the good, and they should admit this fact.

Post-modernists have noted the one dimensionality of the modern way of life and questioned the universalizing capacity of modern values and socio-political institutions. Post-modernism has also questioned the organic relation between freedom and rationality which legitimize the liberal order. The emergence of post-structuralism and de-constructionism directly affects the foundation of the modern socio-political order which is essentially foundationalist. The emergence of anti-foundationalism has raised substantive problems with liberal foundationalism. And, in fact, it is philosophically difficult if not impossible to provide a foundationalist defense of the liberal order. The post-modern critique may not be presented as an alternative to modernism and its corresponding socio-political and economic institutions, but it has severely damaged its theoretical foundations provided by the modern thinkers of the 17th - 19th centuries.

The emergence of hermeneutics, particularly philosophical hermeneutics, has brought about an abandonment of the demarcation line between text and interpretation, and legitimized the hermeneutical relevance of legitimate prejudices. It claims that to transcend the hermeneutical circle is ontologically impossible. Thus, according to Gadamer, it is unreasonable to demand that a given community abandon its legitimate prejudices because they are not consistent with the legitimate prejudices of liberalism.

This brief sketch reveals that contemporary intellectual dynamics has shaken the faith of those intellectuals who consider liberalism and its corresponding socio-political institutions universal and uncontested. It also compels them to acknowledge other forms of "decent

Peoples" who, even though not liberal in a substantive sense, are at least reasonable.

The reason for the intolerance of liberal state actors is that they are loosing faith in their own vision. The strength of any civilization is determined by its capacity to survive within an order that attempts to reject its metaphysical, epistemological, moral and axiological assumptions – not by its capacity to impose its values after its inability to defend them has been felt. Perhaps it is for these reasons of weakness that liberal state actors have turned to military interventions and economic pressures through international bureaucratic institutions.

Conclusion

The post *A Theory of Justice* view of Rawls acknowledges the significance of community, since in order to be fair, any conception of justice depends upon the public recognition and justifiability of community. Thus, the prioritization of rights over the good is publicly recognized and reflects the moral intuitions of at least the Western world. However, the deontological basis fails to provide any ultimate epistemological foundation for the universality of the priority of rights over the good. The organic, functional and institutional relation granted between the body of prioritized rights and the realization of those conceptions of the good that fit within the confines of those rights leads to the suppression by the State of those ways of life which conflict with the prioritized body of rights: such ways of life are deemed illegitimate.

The institutional protection of an abstract system of rights considered deontological is in fact an attempt to protect a conception of the good which is derived from the historical experience of a particular community. It not only prioritizes a particular conception of the good (from which it has been derived), but further, it directly affects the nature, ideals, virtues and structure of the State and society. It is claimed that the State is neutral regarding the issue of the good, but eventually it will not be neutral in its effects. The State will necessarily promote some ways of life and, under the formal mechanism of liberal rights, will constrain or eliminate others. The imposition of an abstract body of liberal rights is in fact an attempt to impose a derived conception of the good which reflects the moral intuitions of a particular community. Thus, the globalization of

cosmopolitan liberalism is a message to the non-liberal world to prioritize a liberal rights framework and to turn a blind eye to its organic relation to the particular conception of the good from which it has been derived.

Intertwining the Sacred and the Secular: An Indian Approach to Creating a New Humanity

INDRA NATH CHOUDHURI

Introduction

Sacred and secular: these are terms that through the centuries used to form a pair. The very idea of the sacred presupposes the presence of the Divine or the existence of God. He alone is sacred. India moves a step forward and finds sacredness in every thing in the phenomenal world because God pervades the whole of the universe. This is the clue to India's understanding of the vedantic oneness or in other words the existence of One which pervades everything; hence all is inherently sacred. In Indian epistemology *yoga & bhoga* are used as synonyms for the sacred and the secular i.e. spirituality and worldly happiness. In fact, it is about life and, as such, it discusses the four acquisitions of life: *dharma*, virtue; *artha*, wealth; *Kama*, desire; and *moksha*, liberation. These are delineated in such a way that one is led ultimately to the attainment of Vedantic Oneness – the absolute reality or the *paramarthic satta* merging with the phenomenal reality or the *prakriti*. Fulfillment of desire and amassing wealth – are always regulated by following a path of dharma or virtuous life or a code of conduct. The first three goals take care of the material prosperity of a man and *moksha*, liberation takes care of the higher self within the man. Human beings have both a secular order as well as a higher order and in Indian epistemology they are not incompatible to each other but complementary notions which help in man's journey to the realization of self-knowledge of one's oneness with the Divine or Sacred.

In the West, in general, sacred and secular are looked at as opposite to each other. Their mutual antagonism produces the "oscillation of secularization and sacralization" that marks our times.¹ However, any effort of contrasting the Western and the Indian views are always

¹ N.J. Demerath III, *Crossing the Gods: World Religions and Worldly Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 211,

done with a hidden intention, to prove the superiority of one's own philosophical tradition and is generally spurious. Indian or Western philosophies are simply not the same sorts of enterprise. Each has its own standards of logical and rational assessment. However, comparative philosophy reveals that both traditions supply viable alternative answers to certain questions, just as thinkers belonging to one tradition may very well learn from those belonging to the other how not to make certain mistakes and how to avoid certain conceptual muddles and how to ask certain questions more perspicuously. Comparative philosophy in a certain sense is unavoidable for one who writes about Indian philosophy in English and creates a space for a common discourse in which they can participate – a conversation of humankind not a conversation of the West or of the East by itself.

Secularism is seen as an ideology with varying connotations and fortunes that seem to go with different cultural settings. The historical process of secularization had created separate domains of the sacred and the secular in Western society and also in modern Indian society confining the former to the privacy of human lives. In due course, this historical process was turned into a thesis of historical inevitability that is, a precondition of modernity everywhere. It has now necessarily come under critical review, which does not mean that it has been totally rejected. At least one thing is clear that secularism is in capable of countering religious fundamentalism and fanaticism and at the same time religious neutrality or equidistance is difficult to maintain since secularism fails to recognize the immense importance of religion in the lives of the people of South Asia. In India secularism either means, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, 'good will towards all religions' (*sarvadharmā sadhbhava*), or in a narrower formulation, it is a negative or defensive policy of religious neutrality (*dharma nirpekshata*) or as the Constitution of India declares, *panthanirpeksha* i.e. denominationally neutral in other words it breathes the ideal of freedom of religion. In the swearing in ceremony as the forty-third President of the USA George W. Bush went beyond the usual invocations of God and contained elements of Christian faith and in a pluralist vein mentioned other religions too: "Church and charity, synagogue and mosque, lend our communities their humanity, and they will have an honoured place in our plans and in our laws." This is a position far removed from secular humanism and is virtually the same as the *sarvadharmā samabhava* (equal respect for all religions)

of Indian secularism. Today, the line that formally divides the religious from the secular is increasingly becoming too blurred for anyone to speak sensibly of their mutual exclusiveness.

Looked at in whichever way we may, religion survives in the world at the beginning of the 21st century belying the prophecies made by the death of God theologies even postmodern theology. It is interesting to note that Raschke and Mark C. Taylor, both suggested a direct link between the death of God and post modern deconstructive philosophy. Taylor wrote in his work, 'Erring' that from 1984 "Deconstruction is the hermeneutic of the Death of God." However, one can see an ironical reversal of the future as charted by the champions of secularism, death of God theologians and deconstructive philosophers. Contemporary religious thought and practice has given way to a new "post secular" understanding of the post modern condition in which the return of religion has become a fact of life. God now seems alive and well, and as the New York Times proclaimed in a feature Sunday magazine article: From 1998, "religion is making a come back."² This revival of religion came to be associated with a certain spirit of secularism that in the first part of the 20th century permeated almost all facets of modern and contemporary Western and Indian societies. Religion not only has survived as private faith but also re-emerged as public religion³ and also, tragically, as an ideology of domination.⁴ This revival also belies the assumption of sociologists, philosophers and theologians alike that the more modern we become the less religious we would become. M.N. Srinivas, an internationally known sociologist of India, wrote in 1993 about our troubled times, marked by frenetic consumerism and conflicts of various kinds, through which India was then (and is now also) passing. He observed: It is in this overall context that the need for a new philosophy and social ethics becomes urgent and imperative. That philosophy cannot be secular humanism; it has to be firmly rooted in God as creator and protector and the sustainer of

² Jack Miles, "Religion is Making a Come Back (Belief to Follow)" *New York Times Magazine* (December 7, 1997).

³ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁴ Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," in *Time Warps: The Insistent Politics of Silent and Evasive Parts* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

human societies. The fraternity of all human beings cutting across divisions of race, and gender follows logically from the idea of God as creator. The idea of human free will is (present) in all religions and it provides the basis for individual liberty without which there can be no true democracy.⁵

It is no wonder that Seligman said emphatically in 2000 that the “totalizing propensity of reason to asbolutely the tension between sacred and profane realms...into irreconcilable contradictions has been the bane of discussions of the place of religion in the modern world.”⁶ Robert Audi, in his book, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* said that a “theo-ethical equilibrium” – “a kind of integration between a religious outlook and secularly grounded moral or political” – is now coming to be considered ‘achievable’.⁷ This is a long way from the earlier certitude, whether stated in Marxian or Weberian terms, about the fateful transformation of religious into secular culture. Indeed, it has been suggested by Seligman that future historians “will look back on the period from roughly 1750 to 2050 as a brief three-hundred-year secular parenthesis in a history of humanity that has always been religious.” One is reminded of Tocqueville’s observation that “Unbelief is an accident and faith is the only permanent state of mankind.”⁸

However, the point to stress is that the return of religion has brought in both violence (religious terrorism) and peaceful social endevaours in its stride and given it salience as said by T.N. Madan.⁹ But at the same time let us be frank to state that religion is not the constitutive principle of society anywhere: the economy and the polity are its rivals even in some South Asian countries where Buddhism and Islam are state-protected religions. The author, Robert Hinde, biologist and psychologist characterizing his approach as ‘scientific’, “examines why so many religions continue to persist at time when the

⁵ *Times of India*, 9 July, 1993.

⁶ Adam B. Seligman, *Modernity’s Wager: Authority, the Self and Transcendence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 132.

⁷ Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 212-13.

⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: A. Knopf, 1994), Vol. I, p. 310.

⁹ T.N. Madan, *Images of the World* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 19.

answers they provide to the basic questions of life are unacceptable to many in the modern world," and turns to "basic human propensities" for answers.¹⁰

But a book written in 1959 by Martin Cyril D'Arcy entitled, *The Sense of History*, with sub-heading *Secular and Sacred*, states with all sincerity that the historical situation (history and secularism is accepted as one and the same by the another) itself gives rise to the belief in God as the super-essential reality. Existence is meaningless without some such Unconditioned Being, for existence is strife, is distorted, and cannot cure itself. (Though) God, it should be noted is not proved (yet) Tillich explicitly denies that God's existence needs proof. God is bound to appear whenever we change over from looking at life to being concerned with it."

Ultimate concern is sacred and in that state of 'existential commitment' God as 'the power of being' is revealed, as 'pre-supposed' in all such encountering. In other words, religion far from being opposed to the secular, finds its fulfillment in the secular world. Hence when Caputo, one of the world's chief theorists of postmodern religion, equates modernity with secularization and postmodern with desecularization wherein the death of God is transfigured into "death of the death of God" and in this way revival of sacred/religion becomes possible, we feel assured and at the same time we feel further assured when another scholar, Vattimo says "Real religiosity relies on secularization." Vattimo does not accept the linking of the post modern with a process of desecularization because he thinks secularization is the destiny of the Christian West; we remain bound within that tradition and the post modern return of religion lives as its response.¹¹

In the Indian context 'secularization' is nowadays generally employed to refer to, in the words of Peter Berger, 'the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols'.¹² In contrast with the West which is logo-centric and exclusive, India is symbolic and inclusive

¹⁰ Robert Hinde, *Why Gods Persist: A Scientific Approach to Religion* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 206.

¹¹ Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, referred to by the editor Jeffrey W. Robbins, *After the Death of God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 69-82.

¹² Peter L. Berger, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, N.Y. : Anchor Books, 1967), p. 113.

and believes in multilevel meaningfulness of life. As a result Indian secularism in official terminology means 'good will towards all religion and therefore a secular state like India has remained engaged from the very beginning with the religious life of its citizen in disparate ways. On one side, on public interest, it acquires both Muslim and Hindu religious institutions or estates and their management and, on the other side, in the name of maintaining 'public order, morality and health' spends hugely to manage Hindu Kumbh *melas* where millions of devotees come to participate or subsidizes in a big way the travel of Haz pilgrims to Saudi Arabia by sea or air. Madan says that the practice of the Indian state in relation to the religious life of the people has not been exactly what would be expected from a secular state if the French or the American state were to be regarded as the model, or if Gandhi's conception of the secular state has been adhered to. Gandhi emphatically denied any role whatsoever to the state in the religious affairs of the people. Moreover, he argued, that if a community depends, 'party or wholly on state aid' for 'the existence of its religion', then 'it does not have any religion worth the name!¹³

What we see, therefore, is an ambivalent reflective history of secularism in modern India. But how did the Indian philosophers and cultural historians seek to address the whole issue of the sacred and the secular through the ages?

In Hinduism everything that we, hear, touch, smell or taste is divine because everything comes from God and everything is also God. Since everything is God or sacred the secular and the sacred is one and the same thing thus says the Rigveda, "Purusha or the Supreme consciousness or God indeed is all this, what has been and what will be (10, 90, 1)" This is further explained in the Isopanishad which says, "Every object in this phenomenal world Is supported and pervaded by the Supreme One (1)."

When our spirituality is nurtured and vibrant, we have this experience of identity. We are identified with the Divine as well as with all people and Mother Earth. Spirituality involves a reverent attitude towards all things because it awakens us to a divine presence in all things. The Svetasvatara Upanishad says: "Thou art woman,

¹³ Iyer Raghavan (ed.) *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. I: *Civilization, Politics and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986-87), p. 287,

Thou art man; Thou art youth and Thou art the maiden. Thou art the old man who totters with a staff. Thou art everywhere and in everything (11.3)."

This philosophical issue suggests a certain tension between two realms. At one level the mundane world or the secular is transcended by the sacred whereas the sacred acts like a Creator God and the world as His creation. It also suggests a conceptual connection of oneness between the mundane experience and the transcendental experience. Now this paradoxical situation of distinction and unity, creating a tension in the realization of the sacred in this worldly environment, can be resolved by a school of Vedanta philosophy which admits the truth of what is known as the principle of *bhedabheda*. It may generally be taken to indicate a belief that *bheda* or 'distinction; and *abheda* or 'unity' can co-exist and be in intimate relation with each other. Substance and attribute, universal and particular, whole and parts may seem to be different from, or even opposed to, each other, but really there is no incompatibility between them, for they can be reconciled in a unity which pervades the difference and is its very being. This view is sometimes described also as *parinama-Vada* or 'theory of development' implying that reality, conceived as *bhinna-bhinna* (distinction and unity) is not static but continually changing and that it yet maintains its identity throughout.¹⁴

A transcendent growth process, found in all human beings, involves knowing one self and moving beyond one's duality, and exclusivity and egocentricity to inclusivity, unity and oneness with the Supreme Self.¹⁵ ...The commandment of the Upanishad is: 'Know Thy Self'. It is to analyze yourself by yourself and when one does it one discovers by one's own efforts the divinity. The Divine is to be found macrocosmically in the whole universe as this world is manifestation of the Divine and it also reveals microcosmically in the self (*atman*). The Self is to realize it. The Infinite expressing Himself in the finite is a miraculous revelation and mysterious expression and a thing of wonder and joy. The Self and the Unknown Infinite or Sacred are fused into a single unified field and ultimately one realizes one's

¹⁴ Mysore Hiriyanna, *Indian Philosophical Studies*, 1 (Mysore: Kavyalaya Publishers, 1957), pp. 95-96.

¹⁵ Elfie Hinterkopf, "Defining the Spiritual Experience," *Integrating Spirituality in Counseling: A Manual for Using the Experiential Focusing Method* (Nyack, NY: The Focusing Institute, 1997).

oneness with God, the all inclusive Being thus says the Brahma Bindu Upanisad: "I am the undivided pure and peaceful Brahman" (21, HTU 8.128).

The transcendent spiritual reality is the Supreme Value in Vedanta. But its supremacy does not suggest denial of other values in life. The Brahman of Upanishads is not a lion's den like Spinoza's Absolute which devours all other modes of the world. It is in fact the supporter and sustainer of all modes of worldly existence. The Upanishads regard Brahman as the source of creation and its sustainer also. It is not the dark night in which all modes of the world lose their identity and existence. It is the divine light which illumines them all and reveals and refracts their various hues like colours of the spectrum. The transvaluation of secular and worldly values by integration with supreme spiritual value and the exaltation of these values thereby is the cardinal functional principal of the Upanishad.¹⁶

This theory of advaita (non duality) oneness of Vedanta says Paul Deussen, is the greatest support to morality'. It fixes the standard of right and wrong and explains the instinct imbedded in us in the form of the categorical imperative or the preference of the good over the bad."¹⁷

Theodicy

This statement of Paul Deussen suggests a certain tension on another realm and brings forth the old and worn out issue of theodicy. Hinduism resolves this issue in two way ways: It is generally believed that in the case of Vedantic oneness between the secular and the sacred the prevalence of evil does not seem to exist. In Mahayana Buddhism or Advaita Vedanta the phenomenal world along with its evil is described as a 'transcendental' illusion. Vedanta says that the whole world is an illusion along with its evil and hence the problem of evil is resolved. In Mahayana Buddhism evil, suffering, unhappiness are not taken as final or ultimate. The goal in this system is to reach

¹⁶ Tiwari Ramananda, *Secular, Social and Ethical Values in the Upanishads* (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1985), pp. 356-359.

¹⁷ K.A. Iyer Krishnaswami, "Philosophy of the Advaita," *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. III, Haridas Bhattacharya, ed. (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1969), p. 234.

beyond good and evil, to the unitary ultimate reality.¹⁸ Ultimately God alone is sacred, so there can be no wholeness without God because God alone is whole. God is both creator and creativity – Lord Shiva – the Nataraja is the dancer. If He is not there then neither is the dance of creation nor the creation. But, if creator and creativity or the phenomenal world stay together, if God exists together with pain, misery, unhappiness, our mundane existence or even Satan, then there is a problem. Because it is a dual existence and it will be impossible to rise above this duality. So the Indian philosophy of Vedanta does not say existence is dual. It says that the world as seen by us is dual, but the existence itself is non-dual. If we say it is either positive or negative it will create all the difficulties of duality. There are only two ways of expressing the non-dual. Either we say both positive and negative – *Purna* (whole) and *shunya* (void) simultaneously, or say neither positive nor negative. This means that either there is only the void (*shunya*) or that the Divine is all encompassing whole (*purna*). This will then mean that all is Divine.

It is true that the problem of evil did not dominate the field of Indian philosophy of religion, although the problem existed and moreover as Matilal says the uncritical and unexamined assumption that in Samkara's philosophy the world along with its evils is simply an illusion, leads to misconception and false ideas about Indian philosophy in particular.¹⁹ One of the answers is good and evil both belong to the phenomenal reality behind which there is the Ultimate Reality, and this Ultimate Reality is beyond good and evil. This is the doctrine, Matilal, says that finally paved the way for mysticism.

Samkara further explains it with the help of Brahma Sutra: i) creation is not *ex nihilo* (Bs 2.1.35). If creation is *ex nihilo* and if the creator is omnipotent, as it is generally said in the Judeo-Christian tradition, then no satisfactory reconciliation can take place. The author of Brahma Sutra clearly repudiates the two antecedent conditions. *Ex nihilo* presupposes a beginning, but here it is said creation is *anadi* i.e. no beginning. Samkara explains: *anaditve bijankuranyayenopapatter na kaschid doso bhavati* – 'If beginninglessness is accepted since it follows the process of seed-and-sprout regularity, no fault will arise' (the

¹⁸ Matilal Bimal Krishna 'Karma and the Moral Order' and 'A Note on Samkara's Theodicy', *Philosophy, Culture and Religion, Ethics & Epics*, Jonardon Ganeri, ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 405-432.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 421.

common belief in Judaism, Christianity and Islam contradicts the 'beginninglessness' of the Hindus). Secondly, Brahma Sutra (2.1.34) emphasizes that creation is *sapeksa* i.e. relative, the creator is not independent. He does not have free choice and hence He can't be blamed as done by Nagarjuna (150BC-250AD), (Twelve-Door Treatise) when he said: 'If God is the maker of all things why did He not create all happy or all unhappy? Why did He make some happy and others unhappy?'²⁰ This is the *vaishamya argument*, that is, the lack of equality, the injustice consisting of the lack of equal distribution of happiness and unhappiness, Matilal, p. 423) or as described in the Mahapurana, a Jaina text of 9th Cen. AD: "And God commits great sin in slaying the children whom He Himself created. If you say that He slays only to destroy evil beings, why did He create such beings in the first place?"²¹ This is the *naighrnya argument* (BS2.1.34), that is, the cruelty of the omnipotent creator. David Hume's oft-quoted lines have the same resonance:

Is He (God) willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is impotent. Is He able but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Whence there is evil?²²

The oldest and perhaps the best resolution about theodicy in the Judeo-Christian tradition is to be found in the Book of Job in the Old testament where in reply to the problem posed by the persistence of evil as against a Creator God's omnipotence and benevolence, it was said: (Zophar said): Wilt thou seek to fathom the inscrutable Godhead?²³ Hinting at this statement H.A. Wolfson once said: Does anybody know of a better solution, and is not resignation out of faith better than resignation out of despair?²⁴

²⁰ See H. Cheng, *Nagarjuna's Twelve Treatise*, Reidel Dordrecht (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Pub., 1982), ch. 9.

²¹ *The Mahapurana of Jinasena*, Cited in *Sources of Indian Tradition* (Revised ed. Ainslie T. Embree) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 4.16-31, 38-40, 80-82,

²² David Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, L.A. Selby-Bigge, ed. (Oxford, 1951).

²³ Moses Bottenwieser, *The Book of Job* (New York, 1922), 11.7.

²⁴ H.A. Wolfson, *Religious Philosophy: A group of Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961).

Let me go back to Shamkara again. Samkara adds another dimension to the causality of God: *parjanya-vat* i.e. like rainfall (comm...on 2.1.34). Rainfall is the common cause for the production of rice, barley and so on. Rainfall does not show any favour or disfavour to the various seeds that are sown. God is likewise the common cause of 'creation'. The varieties and inequalities of the creatures are due to God's dependence upon special factors in each case, the particular nature of the creature, which is usually determined by the accumulated *Karma* of the creature itself.²⁵ This Sapeksatva 'dependence' thesis which BS 2.1.34 underlines and which Samkara amplifies as God's dependence upon the *karma* of the creatures seriously delimits or restricts God's omnipotence, and so will not be shared by any of the Biblical religions, Judaism, Christianity or Islam. However, as says Matilal, there seems to be a way out even without our conceding the 'beginninglessness' hypothesis. If there was a beginning and the beginning was a happy one, but free creatures were created, and through the exercise of free will they brought about inequalities upon themselves, then the alleged absurdity vanishes (p.424). It is generally said about *Karma* doctrine that

(i) the *Karma* doctrine, however, was an early substitute for fatalism and recognized human beings as free agents;²⁶

(ii) it is an attempt to answer the question of moral responsibility in man. Man's own 'character' is his own destiny. It is a doctrine of 'Self responsibility';

(iii) it is, thus, opposed to the theory of Fate, and determinism and accepts human beings as free agents and

(iv) according to Vedanta God is dependent upon man's *Karma* for his creative activity and hence it is the human being who is responsible for the existence of sin and evil and it is the human, having free will, who can make the world free of evil and sin, *papa*. Being acutely aware of the sufferings and imperfections of the world, the Indian philosophers believed that all these must be ascribed to the acts of individuals themselves, and not to an all-wise, all-good God.

²⁵Matilal Bimal Krishna "A Note on Samkara's Theodicy," *Philosophy, Culture and Religion and Ethics and Epics*, Jonardon Ganeri, ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 423.

²⁶ The Karma theory in its simplest form means that every act, whether good or bad, produces a certain result or consequence which cannot be escaped by the perpetrator of the act.

In Sum, Samkara's solution is that God creates everything depending necessarily upon the *dharma* and *adharma* (the residual forces of *Karma*) of the living beings. In other words, creation is guided by the principle of *Karma*, while God is the creator of everything only in the same sense that rain is the creator of all vegetation. Matilal concludes that the argument is that we can 'solve' the problem of evil and inequalities of individual happiness and unhappiness in a theistic system only if we assume the *Karma* hypothesis.

Secular and Sacred

The whole issue of the secular and the sacred is viewed in three different ways in the textual tradition of India:

1) Ananda Coomarswamy by basing his discussions on Shatapatha Brahmana(4.1.4.2-6) reveals the existence of a crucial distinction between 'spiritual authority', or Sacerdotium (*Brahman*) and "temporal power" or Regnum" (*kshatra*), but later on a union was effected at the initiative of Varuna, the Regnum, for Varuna 'could not subsist, apart from Mitra the Sacerdotium.' Here the relationship is hierarchical as said, 'I assign to you the precedence; quickened by thee I shall do deeds! The point to stress is that 'The Regnum is not its own principle, but controlled by another the Eternal Law, the Truth (*dharma*, *satyam*)' 'that than which there is nothing higher.'²⁷ It is interesting, in this respect, to know the observation of Georges Dumzil. He says: 'In India, in the very earliest times, *raj* (or *rajan*) and *Brahman* existed in a true symbiosis in which the latter protected the former against the magico-religious risks inherent in the exercise of the royal function, while the former maintained the latter in a place equal to or above his own.'²⁸

2) The second view is that the secular and the sacred are complementary to each other. In the devotional poetry of India mundane meets the spiritual to celebrate life. The devotional poetry is a kind of mean between the sacred and the mundane, the metaphysical and the physical, thereby it refuses world absolute priority and suggests that both have certain values. This poetry gives

²⁷ Ananda Coomarswamy, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1993), pp. 8, 16, 45, 50, et passim.

²⁸ Georges Dumézil, *Mitra Varuna: An Essay on Two Indo-European Representations of Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 22.

you the experience of the limitless infinite in the finite. It is nearness; it is moving in the same region and realizing one's transcendental self within the limitation of one's worldly existence.²⁹ In this medieval Vaishnava poetry God descends on this earth as a human being to share with us our suffering and turmoil, our happiness and prosperity. Here Man and God, secular and sacred are complementary to each other. The final sense is one of coming together. Becoming and being are dialectically united and one becomes that which one loves. In the small circle of love, one experiences the expanse of the divine. Jan Gonda while observing this symbiosis, draws repeated attention to 'the unmistakable existence of a belief (in Vedic texts) in a complementary relation between both components the divine and the secular and the tendency to view and represent ideas, figures or divine powers as complementary and co-operative.'³⁰ Kautilya's Arthashastra (300 BC) further fortifies the complementariness between the sacred and the secular by stating "Material well-being alone is supreme." He further says that spiritual good and sensual pleasures depend upon material well-being. The categories in terms of which the argument is constructed are not *Brahman* and *Kshatra* but *dharma* (spiritual virtue), *artha* (material well-being) and *Kama* (sensual pleasures). However in the post Kautilya literature, "there is a tendency to reinstate the priority of *dharma*."³¹

3) The third view and the most dominating view is the Vedantic view of oneness between *Brahman*, the unchanging reality or the sacred and the changing world of external appearances or the secular. When all distinctions between the internal (In Vedantic philosophy *Brahman* and the Self or *atman* are one and the same) and external vanish, the distinction between the Self and the non-Self vanishes and one experiences Pure Being as Pure consciousness. This was a new religiousness of the Upanishads which could be understood by realizing the intertwining of the sacred with the secular and as a result the creation of a new humanity in which both consciousness and the

²⁹ I.N. Choudhuri, *The Genesis of Imagination* (New Delhi: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 232.

³⁰ J. Gonda, *The Dual Deities, in the Religion of the Veda* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 155-6.

³¹ Wilhelm Freidrich, "The Concept of Dharma in Artha and Kama Literature," *The Concept of Duty in South Asia*, D.O. Flaherty and J.D.M. Derrett, eds. (New Delhi: School of Oriental & African Studies, 1978).

sensuous live together becomes a reality. Any split between these two brings a split in the self. We are both together, we are neither just spirituality nor just consciousness – nor are we just matter. We are a tremendous harmony between matter and consciousness. Mahabharata (BC 400-400 AD), the great epic about kingship, says on the subject: 'He who wishes to achieve *Kama* (desires) and *artha* (wealth) must first concentrate on *dharma* (virtue sacred), for *Kama* and *artha* are never separate from *dharma*' (V.124.37). Hence any separation between materialism or the exteriority and religion or interiority can spell disaster for humanity. This is more a vindication of the secular than religion because religion from the very beginning enjoyed a higher status than the mundane world and hence any symbiosis between the two vindicates the secular and establishes the fact that sacred as a living presence is discernible in all things whether animate or apparently inanimate. The strong observation made by a theologian of culture, Gabriel Vahanian is that any bifurcation between the secular and the sacred in the present time can lead to dangerous consequence. On the contrary, both as a pair augment the benefit of the continuity of a notion of world wide acceptability.³² Vahanian further says that secular actually was only the antonym of "religious," not its Manichaeian opposite, or its negation: they formed a pair, never to be cleaved one from the other. Together they belonged to one and the same world view and belonged with one another. No sooner are they split from one another than each seems to come apart at the seams. "Secular" becomes a shibboleth for a new fangled ideology of liberation from the past.³³

In Hinduism secular is an inbuilt entity of *Dharma* as explained by Nirad C Chaudhuri, an acute commentator on the course and

³² Gabriel Vahanian says: 'Yet on the threshold of a new millennium, both fundamentalism and secularism equally mar the horizon of Western culture and its progressive surrender to a more global approach. In spite of the tradition to which their roots can be traced, each in its own way rests on the fatal cleavage of the religious and the secular, a cleavage ideologically beclouded and benumbed by contentions of a radical but equally dogmatic opposition not so much between faith and science as between their surrogates. Hence each over-looks the fact that religion is not reducible to fundamentalism or that the secular is by no means the exclusive hunting ground of secularism.', Vahanian Gabriel, *Praise of the Secular* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008), p. 2.

³³ Vahanian Gabriel, *Praise of the Secular* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008), pp. 12-13.

significance of contemporary events of India, whose views about Hinduism are endorsed by many modern Hindu intellectuals. He writes: 'In India secularism of even the highest European type is not needed, for Hinduism as a religion is itself secular and it has sanctified worldliness by infusing it with moral and spiritual qualities. To take away the secularism from the Hindus is to make them immoral and culturally debased.'³⁴

The forking of the secular and the sacred has a history in the West which began with the emergence of the Enlightenment. Enlightenment thought extolled reason and science as the best means of improving society and of ending political despotism and the tyranny of 'blind faith and superstition.' There is no reason for anybody to belittle this complex intellectual enterprise which is the basis of the current conceptions of modernity which was adopted by India during the colonial time because of a false perception that Westernization is Modernization. This became a big deterrent in the understanding of our realities and our modernity.

There is no doubt that post-structuralist theory developed an important critique of the coercive aspects of Enlightenment thought but did not critically comment on its presumption that the sacred is superstitions and regressive and that secular is progressive. Lata Mani asserts that the failure to rethink the categories of the sacred and the secular and to reconfigure their relationship has meant that post structuralist theory has remained an antithetical critique unable to propose a new synthesis.³⁵ There is urgency now for such a synthesis particularly because of world wide terror created by fundamentalists in the name of religion. True religion can never teach violence and create terror but without taking the course of the true meaning of religion the post structuralists and post colonial critics followed the discourses of liberal humanism that had earlier been subject to critique. Liberal humanism with its emphasis on the privatization of religions faced the challenge of reconsidering the role of religion in public life for it looks like religions are here to stay, thus putting to rest one of the cherished dreams of the Enlightenment. At this juncture it is essential to bring together sacred and secular epistemology in

³⁴ Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Thy hand, great anarch! India, 1921-1952* (London: Chatto & Windusp, 1987), p. 881.

³⁵ Mani Lata, *Sacred Secular: Contemplative Cultural Critique* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009), pp. 86-89.

comprehending the world around us which according to Prof. Taylor has turned into a world marked by an existential search for identity and meaning rather than by commitment to specific religious visions or communities. Man's identity is precious and when man realizes his identity, it stimulates his desire to grow greater. This growth of greatness for an individual can only become real by establishing wide relationship with a large number of other individuals. The noble prize winner Indian poet Tagore says, it is for the sake of our humanity, for the full growth of our soul, that we must turn our mind towards the ideal of the spiritual unity of man.³⁶ Tagore says man as one is without meaning because there is no unity in One. The One with many is the real one, or entity. The Unity gives man the message of truth. It is in this sense that a unity is said to underlie the seeming diversity of the universe, therefore the issues of immanent and transcendent values and aspirations for the worldly and religious orders are to be viewed within this unitary framework where immanent and transcendent are dialectically united and one becomes that which one loves. It can be argued that the separation of the religious and the secular runs counter to the organic nature of Indian society. Properly understood, the unitive principle can impel us to challenge the mirage of otherness that threatens to undermine our commonality and shared destiny.

Conclusion

In summary form, there are not two worlds, one of matter and another of the sacred. We must not give up the visible world as if it came from the evil one. It is our duty to change it into the Kingdom of Heaven for only then can one realize the oneness of the sacred and the secular. Both the secular and the sacred indicate a 'liberal humanism' and in times to come could serve as legitimate adjectives for a post-religious mankind – but that would be in a still distant future, when values (sacred and secular) would have become spontaneous characteristics of humans, without the need for specifying them.

³⁶ Tagore Rabindranath, "The Way to Unity," Sisir Kumar Das, ed., *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors Ltd, 2007), p. 465,

The Sacred and the Secular as Compatible in the Global World: Three World Religions and Some Constructive Suggestions

SARAL JHINGRAN

Introduction

My argument in this paper will unfold in the following steps. First, that the very idea of a radical division between the sacred and the secular is a product of the modern period, especially the Enlightenment. Second, that neither religion nor the secular world, if left to themselves, would be interested in proclaiming the dichotomy of the sacred and the secular. It is only when the secular mind-set challenges the claims of religion to determine the entire life of the individual or society that the two – religion and the secular world – become conscious of their duality and even conflict. Third, almost as a counter thesis, that the secular world in itself may not be bothered about the sacred, it is only when we start stressing the religious or spiritual dimension of our lives that the apparent problem of the relationship between the sacred and the secular arises. Fourth, I intend to point out that the idea of a radical division between the sacred and the secular fields of life is unique to Christianity alone, primarily Protestant Christianity among all world religions, and has been passed onto the entire Western world. Other world religions, as we shall see, do not subscribe to any such sharp division between the two spheres of life. As far as I understand, even Christianity does not necessarily subscribe to this division. I would therefore discuss in some detail the world views and approaches of three major world religions: Hinduism, Christianity and Islam, on the question of the relationship between the sacred and the secular. Fifth, I would try to put some sets of questions before us and to search for some answers to them: (1) What is the nature of religion? Is it “the ultimate concern of humans,” or just one of several dimensions of human life? Is it a matter of the human’s personal relationship with God or is it something which determines most secular aspects of human life? Is it concerned with

the supernatural or the “wholly other,” or are we integrally related with the object of our worship? (2) What is/should be the attitude of a given religion in view of the plurality of religions, a fact which can no longer be avoided in today’s global world? (3) Does religion have to be reconciled with the secular world, or the other way round? If the secular world has to accept the re-emergence of religion globally, what should be the claims of present day religions on their respective followers? In other words, what should be the role of presently practising religions in today’s highly secularized world?

Finally, I would suggest that religion can become relevant to our times only on the condition that it first distinguish between its essential and peripheral dimensions.

The Modern Distinction between the Sacred and the Secular

There was no suggestion of a radical distinction between the sacred and the profane in medieval Christianity which was fully dominated by the Catholic Church and which, in turn, worked mostly in collaboration with political powers. Jesus did suggest such a distinction when he distinguished the dues of Caesar and those of God, but that is not the thrust of his faith.

Renaissance men were interested in living life to the full, preferably independent of the restrictions of the Church. However, they were not interested in challenging or antagonizing the Church. The main thrust of the pioneers of the Reformation was more towards challenging the hegemony of the Catholic Church and asserting the individual’s direct relationship with Christ; their interest in the secular world was, at least in the initial stages, only secondary. Though the Reformation is credited with a major impetus towards industrialization and all its corollaries, Luther and even Calvin were more interested in asserting certain dogmas of their own regarding original sin, predestination and the exclusive possibility of redemption through Jesus Christ than in encouraging secular enterprises.

However, in the meantime the Western mind had awakened to its intellectual powers and the possibility of knowing and then harnessing nature for its own interests. The post-Reformation period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was a period of intense intellectual activity in the West. This took two related but somewhat independent forms. The first was expressed as a desire to have “true” knowledge, both from direct experience and reasoning, and then

expressed in some great epistemologies. This was manifested also in the surge of scientific knowledge from Galileo to Newton. The second led to the development of technology and industrialization, and all its accessories, including colonization.

The Search for Knowledge

The search for 'true' knowledge started with Bacon, Locke and Hume on the one hand and Descartes on the other, and culminated in the grand denouement of Kant. These philosophers were not directly interested in our problem of the sacred and the secular; they were not much interested in religion either, even though Kant wrote an independent treatise on the nature of what he called natural religion, and discussed in detail various theological proofs of God's existence. In fact, all these philosophers were more interested in human knowledge, the correct means of arriving at it, and its limitations. Kant argued in detail how human knowledge is limited to the world of *phenomena*. The world of *noumena* (the hypothetical entities beyond our world of experience, including the world out there, soul and God), however, is beyond our knowledge and reason. Kant declared the supremacy of reason and its autonomy; and added that human persons have innate worth in virtue of their rational nature.¹ Kant further proclaimed the autonomy of ethics based on his premise of the rational nature of persons,² which autonomy implies independence from all external authority, including the idea of God.

Even if we leave Kant's complex philosophical system here, the thrust of this period was to understand the world in a way that the knowledge thus gained would be true for the entirety of humanity. An offshoot of this intellectual upheaval was a genuine concern for the welfare of all human beings, and it was hoped that science and new ideologies together would be able to ameliorate the conditions of common folk. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Pierre Bayle, Thomas Payne and Thomas Jefferson declared that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" (America's Declaration of Independence, 1776). Though in Jefferson's

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. by Thomas Abbott (Library of Liberal Arts, Bobby Merrill, 1984), pp. 46 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 48 ff.

thinking God still had a place, in most of the others, such as Bayle and Thomas Paine, He was rejected. The twin goals of equality and liberty for all were the greatest contribution of this period of Western history to human thought and praxis. These thinkers and activists could have justified their ideals by appealing to Christianity which preached the message of love among other things, but they did not do so, as they realized that they could justify an idealist morality on the basis of universal reason (Kant) and/or natural law (Rousseau, Payne, Bayle and Jefferson to some extent).

Industrialization, Colonization, Technology

The second channel of intellectual activity was through the growth of technology and industrialization, leading to a new capitalist economy, rapid urbanization, growing pauperization of the masses and finally to large-scale colonization. The thesis of the radical division and even conflict between the sacred and the secular was thus propounded only after the secularization of the West had reached a stage when religion was felt to be redundant in the lives of modern secularized persons.

The most important factor that inspired the secularist thinking was the rapid growth of science, both in its pure theoretical form and in its application to day-to-day life in the form of technology. The spread of scientific knowledge and its spirit of enquiry offered the real challenge to the old religious worldview and approach. For example, while the religious view of geo-centricity had already been challenged, developments in astronomy and the understanding of time and space were equally at variance with the Semitic world view, according to which the world was created a few thousand years ago. Darwin's theory of evolution challenged the dogma of the entire human race as descended from Adam and Eve; and suggested a continuum of all living beings. Scientists further asserted the immutable law of causality, so that something can not be created out of nothing, which view discredited the belief in God creating the world out of nothing. Science's insistence on the rule of law in nature meant that natural phenomena could now be understood without recourse to the supernatural. This, in turn, demolished most religious dogmas, above all the faith in miracles which had played an important role in the Western conception and practice of religion.

Thus both philosophers and scientists tried to understand and 'know' the world and nature without recourse to a Creator God. (Ptolemy is said to have declared that he does not need this hypothesis of God to explain the universe.) However, neither scientists, nor most thinkers of this period were as much interested in challenging the belief in a Creator God, as in the religious beliefs in the supernatural, and in the human habit of trying to take refuge in the latter in times of crisis.

Secularization

The term secularization is defined by Bryan Wilson as the process of "decline in religious activities, beliefs, ways of thinking and institutions."³ This decline in religious activities is the result of universal acceptance of the validity of the scientific approach to secular issues. People now turn to science for explanations of natural phenomena, or for remedial measures for their mundane problems. They no longer take recourse to the supernatural for either their cognitive understanding of the world, or even for emotional succor.⁴ He concludes, "Religion in the West has generally become a department of the social order rather than the pervasive or even determinant influence it once was."⁵

Harvey Cox understands secularization in terms of the general tendency of individuals to turn their attention "away from the worlds beyond and towards this world and this time."⁶ Both Cox and Wilson have argued that religion, in the original sense of the world as a system of beliefs and values which determine a person's life and thought, has lost its meaning to the secularized individual. They also argue that secularization means a belief in the relativity of all values, which leads to a culture of liberalism, plurality and mutual toleration. Such a mind-set can not accept the claims of any religion to be in the exclusive possession of God's final revelation.

Vernon Pratt, a more serious writer on this subject, has observed that "the development of science has given rise to a conceptual

³ Bryan R. Wilson, "Secularization," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed., Mircea Eliade (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1987), Vol. 13, p. 159.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 160. See also Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society* (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 10ff., 54 ff.

⁶ Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 2.

framework, importantly different from that in which 'traditional Christianity' flourished."⁷ Pratt points out the basic incompatibility between the scientific approach and supernaturalism.⁸ It is important to note here that all these writers from Wilson and Cox to Pratt understand religion in terms of the supernatural. Thus the Western writers of the first half of the twentieth century first defined religion in very narrow terms as some kind of supernaturalism, and then declared that science and the process of secularization can not accommodate religion, as the modern Western man can not accept miracles and the power of the supernatural. Vernon Pratt has simply argued that the discrediting of all supernatural phenomena by science has weakened the hold of religion and the idea of God on our minds.⁹ If religion is nothing but supernaturalism, then naturally such a religion can not survive the scientific spirit.

The Approaches of Three Major World Religions to the Issue of the Dichotomy between the Sacred and Secular

Hinduism: A Multi-faceted "Religio-Culture"

Hinduism is not a religion in the common Western sense of the term. The name Hindu was given to the inhabitants of this vast subcontinent by Arab invaders; and merely denoted their habitat, the Sindhu (Indus) valley (now in Pakistan). "Hindus" called themselves and their religion by many names, into which we need not enter here; and accepted the denomination Hindu only in the nineteenth century after widespread use of the term by various Indologists and other Westerners. Hinduism has always welcomed new ideas and practices without discarding old ones, and this has resulted in an emergent religio-culture that combines almost all possible ideas and beliefs ever known to humankind. I will quote Monier Williams, even though he is not a very sympathetic writer:

It can with truth be asserted that no description of Hinduism can be exhaustive which does not touch on almost every religious and philosophical idea that the world has ever known...Starting from the Vedas Hinduism has ended in embracing something from all religions and in presenting phases suited to all minds. It

⁷ Vernon Pratt, *Religion and Secularisation* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

is all-tolerant, all compliant, all-comprehensive, all absorbing...It has one side for the practical, another for the severely moral, another for the devotional and imaginative, another for the sensuous and sensual, another for the philosophical and speculative.¹⁰

Hinduism is different from other world religions in that it does not have a Prophet; nor does it have a definite Book; a well defined creed; or an organized Church. It is not even the product of a single people. Several Hindu gods seem to have non-Aryan origins. The Vedic religion was a frankly polytheistic ritual-centered religion with some monistic tendencies. A new more philosophical religion or rather spiritual philosophy of Vedanta was developed in the *Upanishads*, the latter part of the Vedas, which asserted an Absolute Reality, the source, ground and end of all existence; and thereby introduced a philosophical monistic theism into Hinduism. The emergence of Buddhism and Jainism further transformed the ritualistic religion of the Vedas into a value-oriented, religio-culture in which *ahimsa* or nonviolence and the virtues of integrity, truth etc. became integral to a person's search for her spiritual destiny. In medieval times devotional theism developed with a far greater emphasis on moral and spiritual values, and a firm belief in the unconditional unity and equality of all humans before God, an idea which was rather alien, at least in practice, to Hinduism. Present day Hinduism is more or less a product of all the above traditions.¹¹

Rta and Dharma. However, the above does not mean that there is nothing definite we can call Hinduism. Perhaps, far more than a belief in some Providence, a profound sense of the rule of law in the universe, along with the harmonious functioning of all of the forces of nature or creation pervades Hinduism. In the Vedas this harmonious order of the universe was called *rta* which was given a near ontological status. Later on the same concept was denoted by the term *dharma*. Both *rta* and *dharma* are then equated to *satya* or truth in the ultimate sense. *Rta* or *dharma* also signifies the moral order of the universe that governs and determines the course of events, so as to ensure that truth

¹⁰ Monier Williams, *Hinduism* (Delhi: Rare Books, 1971), pp. 12-13.

¹¹ See Saral Jhingran, *Aspects of Hindu Morality* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, second print, 1999) pp. 2 ff.

will prevail in the end, and untruth or evil would be finally defeated. In a famous passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad*, *dharma* is hailed as the highest truth or power so that “even a weak man hopes to defeat a strong man through *dharma*.”¹²

Dharma is at once directed to one’s own self, and to all other human beings, as well as the entire creation. The concept of *dharma* was conjoined with the theory of law of *karma* and transmigration which means that each person reaps what s/he sows, if not in this life, then in another life. Significantly, the locus of the law of *karma* is the individual. However, though the law of *karma* is apparently individualistic, the thrust of the entire thesis is socio-centric. For one, the duties of a person are determined not by the individual’s choice but by the *varna* or caste in which s/he is born, and is subject to all the privileges or limitations of the hereditary caste. The latter are both religiously and socially determined. Second, a person’s *karma* or *dharma* is mostly directed towards others, in the forms of serving one’s parents, providing for one’s family, helping other human beings through feeding guests and chance travelers, and also feeding animals. His/her duty also includes the performance of Vedic or later Dharmaśāstric rituals. Both kinds of duties – religious and socio-moral – have religious sanction; in fact both are denoted by one word: *dharma*.

The Concept of Dharma. The concept of *dharma* is the most basic and comprehensive, and at the same time most loosely used, concept of Hindu thought. It was used for ritualistic duties, for socio-moral duties, and later on for religion. Relevant here is the Hindu doctrine of three *ṛṇās* or debts to: forefathers (*pitr*), teachers, and human beings and the entire creation. An ideal system of life was supposed to be divided into four stages. The third stage, that of the householder, was regarded as the most important, and indeed, the highest stage of life. This is so because the householder is married, has children, and creates wealth with which s/he helps others (such as students, recluses, and others), and performs ritualistic duties whereby s/he is able to help other living beings.¹³ Thus, the householder alone is able to pay off the debts without which no other religious enterprise is

¹² Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad I.4. 14: *The Upanisads*, trans. by Swami Nikhilanda (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1963).

¹³ Manu Smṛiti III. 77-78; IV. 89-90: *The Laws of Manu*, trans. and ed. by G. Bühler, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 25 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993).

permitted. Obviously a life lived in society fulfilling one's duties towards all, while enjoying the pleasures of life, is an ideal life, clearly asserting world and life affirmation to the hilt.

Dharma as The Prime Value in all Religious-Spiritual Traditions. More significantly, dharma remained the prime value in all religious-spiritual traditions. The Vedic-Dharmaśāstric tradition at first recognized only three goals of life (*purus-ārthas*): *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (prosperity), and *kamā* (fulfillment of desires). Only later was the fourth goal of *moksa* (liberation) added. The goal of liberation did not nullify the first three goals, rather the four goals were seen as a continuum.

Significantly, Indian languages do not have a term which is synonymous to the Western conception of religion. There are various terms which signify denomination or sect (*sampradāya*), and way (*mārga*) to one's spiritual goal, thus suggesting that Hindus do not believe in only one revelation or religion as the ultimately right one. While *moksa* or the ultimate spiritual goal was to be pursued only towards the end of one's life, *dharma* remained the first and last principle of one's life. A person was expected to be guided by the principle of *dharma* or righteousness in all her pursuits, from the beginning to the end.¹⁴

Though the Dharmaśāstras give a strict hierarchy of authorities to be followed in one's conduct, in the end it is one's own conscience that is supposed to be the final guide to our conduct. Manu, a conservative Law-giver belonging approximately to the second century A.D., counsels:

When the performance of an act gladdens his heart (conscience), let him perform it with diligence; but let him avoid the opposite.¹⁵

¹⁴ "Defer not virtue (dharma), and you would find in her the day you die an undying friend" and "By all means possible, in all ways open practice virtue (dharma)." *Bhagavad Gītā* III. 19; also see *Ibid.*, II.47; III.8 ff.: *The Bhagavadgita*, trans. and ed. by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (Calcutta: Blackie and Sons, India, 1970). Cf. "Strive with ceaseless effort to work your way along the path of righteousness (dharma) in all aspects of conduct," Tiruvalluvar, *The Kural* [a Tamil treatise with no denominational affiliation], trans. by P.S. Sundaram (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 22.

¹⁵ *Manu Smṛiti* IV. 155, 161.

Manu further provides a profound motive for moral conduct: the Absolute dwells in every heart and knows not only what a person is doing but also her inner motives and thoughts, therefore there is neither any escape from the results of our actions, nor from our conscience, enlivened as it is by the Supreme presence.¹⁶

The Hindu Spirit of World and Life Affirmation. The Hindu Spirit of World and Life Affirmation has not been understood by those writers, mostly writing in the first half of the twentieth century, such as Albert Schweitzer, who have asserted that Hinduism is a world and life negating religion, and as such can not have even a proper place for morality. Hinduism has hailed life at every stage of its history. The Vedas embody a spirit of extreme world and life affirmation. In fact, there is an effervescent spirit of joy in life that characterizes the Vedic hymns. Equally significant, Vedic hymns are addressed to the deities representing natural forces, or even directly to the natural forces. A large number of these hymns also end up asking for boons from these nature-gods, such as rain, plenty of grain and cattle. There is never any suggestion of pessimism or negation of life in the world in the Vedas.

The philosopher-saints of Vedanta, even though they upheld the goal of *moksa* or liberation which seems a transcendent goal, did not belittle this world and life. Most of the protagonists of Vedanta were householders, such as king Janak and Yājñavalkya, who lived a life in the world. It was only one philosopher, Śāṅkara, who asserted the desirability of *samnyāsa* (renunciation of the world); but he too does not condemn life in the world. Śāṅkara's monistic philosophy is misunderstood as *māyavāda*, that is, a world view which declares the world as illusory, thus nullifying the value of morality. In fact, Śāṅkara has advocated a realistic epistemology, implying a real world out there.¹⁷ The critics of Hinduism first misunderstood Śāṅkara's grand philosophical vision of the unity of all reality, and then presumed that Śāṅkara's philosophy represented the essence of Hinduism which is an entirely false presumption.

Hinduism does have a place for the value of world-renunciation, and Hindus do respect those who have renounced the world.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, VIII. 84-85, 91.

¹⁷ See Śāṅkara *Bhāṣya* (commentary) on *Brahma Sūtra* I. 4. 23; II. 2. 28; III. 2 21, trans. by Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965).

However, celibacy is not as much valued in Hinduism as in Catholic Christianity. Those who have renounced the world are mostly expected to have first lived a life of a householder and fulfilled all their duties before renouncing the world.¹⁸

In Hinduism There is no Conflict between the Secular and the Sacred. The Hindus never saw a conflict between the secular and the sacred in so far as one could perform all ethical-religious duties while living in the world and society. The implication of this world and life affirmation for the question concerning the relation between the sacred and the secular is clear: there is no conflict whatsoever between the two spheres of life in the Hindu world view and Weltanschauung. The two are further combined by the bridge provided by the conception of *dharma* which is at once a way to the religious goal and the essence of morality. According to the *Bhagavad Gītā*, when the world was created it was ordained that every one would do his/her work. If a person does not perform his/her share of work, or “does not in this world help in turning the wheel of *samsāra* (the functioning of nature and society) s/he is evil in nature and lives in vain.”¹⁹ Work done as a duty, without expectation of reward, is like a sacrifice.

The idea here is that one need not renounce the world, or even neglect one’s daily duties in order to search for God. The central message of the *Gītā* is that every one should engage in one’s allotted duty with a spirit of total self surrender to God; and such a way of life is both ethically correct and religiously fulfilling. However, the answer of the *Gītā* and other religious texts of Hinduism as to the criterion to decide one’s duty in specific circumstances is unsatisfactory. It is mostly that one should do the duty that is allotted to him/her by the religio-social order, that is, according to one’s hereditary *varna* or caste. The only saving grace is that Hindu religious texts equally emphasize universal duties or virtues (both denoted by the term *dharma*) which are incumbent upon every human being per se.²⁰

¹⁸ See *Manu Smṛti*, VI. 35-37; *Mahābhārata*, *Śānti Parva*, 30:6; 33: 54; 261: 15 etc. (*Mahābhārata*, Hindi translation in 18 volumes, Chief Editor, Damodar Satvlekar (Paradi, India: Swadhyaya Mandal, 1974 – 77).

¹⁹ *Bhagavad Gītā* III.16.

²⁰ *Yoga Sūtra II*, 35-38 gives five cardinal virtues which are truthfulness (*satya*), not hurting anybody (*ahimsa*), non-stealing (*asteya*), not craving for more

Christianity: Is Distinction between the Sacred and the Secular Basic to It?

Tension between the Judaic World-view and Jesus' own Experience.

Christianity is best understood as an expression of the tension between the Judaic world view and accompanying apocalyptic beliefs concerning the imminent end of the world on the one hand, and Jesus' own awareness of a very intimate relationship between the Divine Father and himself on the other. The person of Christ has his roots in the Hebrew religion and culture. Jesus believed himself to be the long awaited Messiah or the Son of God.²¹ This one belief determined all that Jesus said and did.

Apart from this dogmatic context, taken literally by most Christians, Jesus' self-sacrifice denotes a faith in the solidarity of humankind, and Jesus' intense love for all human beings. Jesus accepted and then transformed the entire Jewish belief in the catastrophic ushering in of the Kingdom of God into an act of atonement for the sins of all humanity. His almost deliberate sacrificing of himself expresses his intense love for humankind, howsoever mistaken its presuppositions might have been.²²

Similarly, two concepts of God: (1) God as the just and wrathful Creator and (2) God as the Father – *abba* – who loves humans as His children, jostle in his thinking, the latter being more prominent. His eternal message is that of love: love of God and love of fellow human beings.²³ But why should I love my neighbor as myself? Jesus answers that you should love your fellow beings as they are all the children of the same Father; and that Father loves all His children alike, and

(*aparigraha*), and celibacy (*brahmacharya*). In contrast to these rather negative virtues, the same text suggests four other positive virtues in I. 30: friendliness towards all (*maitrī*), compassion for all (*karunā*), happiness at the good fortune of others (*muditā*) and indifference towards ill-treatment by others (*upeksā*). See *Raja Yoga*, trans. by Swami Vivekananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1992). Similarly, other religious texts give universal virtues which everyone is expected to practice. See *Manu Smṛti* VI. 92; X. 63. The *Bhagavad Gītā* XII. 6 ff. defines a true devotee of God as one who is compassionate and friendly towards all.

²¹ See *Matthew* 19: 28-29; 22: 42-43; *Luke* 13: 23-25; *John* 11:25; 12: 23; 15: 23 ff.; 16: 5ff.

²² "To the extent that you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me..." *Matthew* 25: 40; See also *Matthew* 25: 35ff; 25: 41 ff.

²³ "You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole strength and with your whole mind; and your neighbor as yourself." *Luke* 10: 27.

expects all His children to do the same. Therefore love for the Father, the Lord, is best expressed as the love of one's neighbors. He added:

I say to you "love your enemies [also] and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become children of your Father in Heaven who causes His sun to rise on the wicked and the good and rains on the just and the unjust alike...You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."²⁴

While the first commandment of religion may be love, there is almost an equal emphasis in the Gospels and St. Paul regarding certain other dogmas: (1) the apocalyptic expectations of the imminent end of the world, (2) the hope of ushering in the Kingdom of God with Jesus' second coming, (3) the innate sinfulness of men and (4) the only possibility of redemption from sin through Christ. While Christians through the centuries believed in almost all these dogmas, even though the expectation of the end of the world and second coming of Christ were not fulfilled, modern philosophers have accepted that they were not immutable truths, but rather expressions of the reality that Jesus was steeped in the Jewish world-view and had accepted all its dogmas.²⁵

Suggestion of the Distinction between the Sacred and the Secular in the Gospels. Jesus' world view and attitudes were greatly influenced by the Judaic world-view which was largely pessimistic and centered round the imminent catastrophic end of the world. Naturally, this world did not hold any attraction to the faithful. This view and approach are reflected in Jesus' frequent sayings that whosoever wanted to follow him must first leave everything behind; he even added that only the poor would be allowed into the Kingdom of God and not the rich.²⁶ All of these sayings, as also his famous advice to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's,²⁷ suggest a certain devaluation of secular

²⁴ *Matthew* 5: 45-48.

²⁵ See John Macquarrie, *20th Century Religious Thought: The Frontiers of Philosophy, 1900-1970* (London: SCM Press, 1971), p. 146, where he cites Albert Schweitzer on this point in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Montgomery: Dover Publications), p. 397.

²⁶ *Matthew* 19: 21-24.

²⁷ *Matthew* 22: 21.

concerns, and a sharp distinction between secular and spiritual concerns.

However, it is a mute point whether any religion or faith can ever leave the entire secular life out of its sphere of its influence. How can the jurisdiction of Jesus' Lord, the Father, exclude that of Caesar? Is the latter independent of God's justice and laws? It is an undeniable fact of history that the Roman Catholic Church claimed the right to determine the entire lives of the faithful, and much more. The Protestant revolt was against the excesses of the Roman Church, and though Luther argued for the autonomy of secular power, he never envisaged that secular life would be *entirely* independent of religious faith, nor did he suggest the later thesis of secularity of Christianity.

The Modern Protestant Understanding of Religion and Christianity in terms of the Supernatural/Advocating the Distinction between the Sacred and the Secular. Several Protestant theologians, such as Karl Barth, Rudolf Otto and Emil Brunner, popularized an understanding of religion in general and Christianity in particular as faith in the supernatural, and of God as "wholly other" and totally transcendent.²⁸ Some other Protestant thinkers, such as Albert Schweitzer and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, accepted this understanding of religion in terms of the supernatural and argued that the creature and creation are qualitatively different from the wholly other Creator. This, in turn, implied a distinction between the sacred and the secular.

Having first explained religion in terms of the supernatural, they found that such a religion cannot be accommodated in the modern secular world. If religion is supernaturalism, and if such a religion leads secularized persons away from religion, and if Christianity was to be restored to its former glory, they argued, then Christianity is not a religion. They further declared that there cannot be any knowledge of God outside Christian revelation. They then set upon asserting that Christianity is "beyond religion" and therefore that Christianity is "secular." Emil Brunner and Bonhoeffer, following Barth, asserted that while religion is a human effort to reach up to God, in Christianity it

²⁸ See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. by John W. Harvey, (Oxford University Press, 1950 and London: Penguin Books, 1959), pp.23-24, 28ff., 40ff., 136ff.

is God who reveals himself to humankind, and therefore Christianity is "beyond religion."²⁹

The Thesis of the Secularity of Christianity. Contemporary theologians, arguing for the "secularity" of Christianity reject the secular/sacred dichotomy also. According to them the "secular" Christianity includes the entire life of humans. In the words of H. Schiller, "There is no sphere of being that is not also the Church's sphere. The Church is fundamentally directed to the universe."³⁰ Long ago Leo Tolstoy developed this idea of the Kingdom of God being within us; but it was not appreciated at that time. Later theologians, such as Colin Williams, contend that the way to God is through this world, or rather through fulfilling one's obligations to one's fellow beings. They argue that the Incarnation of Christ has sanctified the world, and that Christ is still working in the world in order to "fulfill God's plans" for humankind. Christians are rhetorically called upon to work in the world along with Christ to fulfill God's "mission" or "plan" in history.³¹

Presented in this form the thesis of the secularity of Christianity becomes a doctrine which seems to revert back to the medieval hegemony of the Roman Church on the entire lives and minds of Christians. There seems to be something strange for non-Christians in the conception of God or Christ having a "mission" for this world for the fulfillment of which our help is required. Inasmuch as the world is almost the same, full of sin and suffering, as it was at the time of Jesus, Christ does not seem to have been very successful in his "plan" for the world. Moreover, the conceptual framework consisting of various creedal dogmas goes against the entire spirit and approach of science and a secular Weltanschauung. And if Christianity is already beyond the dichotomy of the sacred and the secular, there does not seem to be any point in declaring it "secular" again. Therefore, if religion has to be integrated into life in the world, then something else is needed, something other than the claim of a particular religion to be

²⁹ See Colin Williams, *Faith in a Secular Age* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), pp. 47 ff.; Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. by Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), pp. 318 ff.

³⁰ Cited in Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Church and Mankind," in *The Sacred and the Secular* Michel J. Taylor, ed., (New Jersey: Prentice Hall of India, 1968), p. 39.

³¹ See Colin Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 64 etc.

the vehicle of the unique revelation of God, or to be “beyond religion,” or to be “secular.”

I would here like to quote from Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher, who has insisted on man’s direct experience of God, and derives from the experience of God’s extreme proximity or presence all around the view that God can be found within the world, or while working in the world:

For to step into pure relation is not to disregard everything but to see every thing in the *Thou*, not to renounce the world but to establish it on its true basis...He who sees the world in Him stands in His presence. Here world, there God is the language of It; God in the world is another language of It; but to eliminate or leave behind nothing at all, to include the whole world in the Thou, to give the world its due and its truth, to include nothing beside God but everything in Him- this is full and complete relation.³²

This view of religion as based on inner experience, and the conception of God as the Absolute, the source, ground and end of the entire creation and human souls is very similar to the Vedanta, the basic philosophy of Hinduism. It can also provide a basis for a life of all-inclusive love and activity in the world.

The Argument for the Need to Demythologize Christianity. Significantly, a large number of Christian theologians have now turned away from the earlier supernatural conception of religion. At first Rudolf Bultmann and R.B. Braithwaite (first half of the twentieth century) argued for the need to demythologize Christianity, as it is no longer possible for modern man to believe in Biblical myths. Other thinkers, such as W.T. Stace, Samuel H. Miller, Paul Tillich, John S. Dunne and Robert Bellah, have argued for a new understanding of religion so as to make it a basis of a more meaningful ethical commitment in the world. While Bellah has almost secularized

³² Cited in *Contemporary Religious Thinkers: From Idealist Metaphysicians to Existential Theologians*, ed. by John Macquarrie (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1968), p. 230, Martin Buber, “The Eternal Thou,” in *I and Thou*, trans. by R. Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons).

religion,³³ the other authors have tried to keep its spiritual and faith dimension intact. For example, Stace has argued that there need not be any conflict between science and religious faith. He has further asserted that the mystical experience of the saints leads them to a morality of compassion and love, and that therefore their experience and way of life must be treated as paradigmatic.³⁴ Other thinkers, such as Paul Tillich, have similarly argued that there is no necessary conflict between secular values and religious ones. However, if the two have to be reconciled, or if religion can be a true motivating power for a life of morality and virtue in every day life, then it must be reinterpreted to make it more relevant for the present mind-set.

In the West, after two world wars, there seems to be a serious attempt to resurrect religion, to reconcile it somehow with the highly secularized world view and ways of the Western society, and to make it more relevant for day-to-day life. Christianity is being reinterpreted and reformulated with this purpose in view. The supernatural, apocalyptic, eschatological dogmas of the Christian creed are consciously played down. Other creedal dogmas, such as original sin, atonement by Jesus, redemption through Christ, and predestination, are sought to be reinterpreted. Contemporary Christians hold out the hope of salvation for the entirety of humankind; and the Kingdom of God is now asserted to be in this world itself, not in the other world.

Religion is being interpreted in terms of an ethical way of life, and it is being asserted that "to be religious is to be socially involved and to be publicly committed." Religion is a search not for one's individual salvation, or even a desire to communicate with a transcendent or supernatural God, but of working in the world and doing "the Will of God." However, the idea of carrying out God's will often leads to mutual conflicts and even wars, as all the warring parties claim that they are obeying the will of God. If the faithful were instead to give up the arrogance of knowing the will of God and then do the right or just thing, putting into the mix as little of the idea of the importance of their petty egos as possible, both they and the world in general would be a more peaceful and happier place.

³³ See Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays in a Post-Traditionalist World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 168 ff.

³⁴ W.T. Stace, *Religion and the Modern Mind* (Keystone Books, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1960), pp. 294 ff., 314 ff.

Islam: An Emphatically "World and Life Affirming" Religion

Islam is a "Religion" Par Excellence. It has a Prophet, conceived as *Nabi* or the final messenger of God; and a Book which is the final revelation of God and which no one can question, or try to reinterpret, and it has a *shari'a* or unwritten socio-moral code of conduct which is equally unquestionable and can never be transgressed. Islam is also a strictly monotheistic creed with its assertion of one Allah, without an "other."³⁵

Islam is a World and Life-Affirming Creed. This world and all living beings are created by Allah, and they proclaim the glory of Allah. Allah has created the sun, moon, stars, the seas and the trees with fruit and every thing in the universe. He has further created the laws that govern their functioning, "so that none of them exceed the measure."³⁶

The Emphasis on Taqalid. However, what differentiates Islam from other religions is its greater insistence on the necessity of human conduct being in strict accordance to the scripture and *shari'a*. Islamic creed as such is very sensible and simple. It proclaims the glory of one God, and of course, Muhammad being His final Messenger. Other than declaring Muhammad's being the recipient of Divine revelation, the *Quran* upholds no dogmas, no miracles. Unfortunately, the Prophet and his Companions were not satisfied with as much. Muhammad was also an Arab tribal chief, and also some kind of social reformer. The Arabian Peninsula was divided into several tribes with very different ways and cultures. Muhammad not only wanted to unite them under one political leadership but also sought to "reform" their ways by prescribing a uniform code of conduct as given in the *Quran*.

As time elapsed after the death of the Prophet, and as Islam spread to far off lands with very different cultures and ways of life than those of the Arab society, it was found that the *Quran* hardly provided a detailed code of conduct for all eventualities of life. All it does is to give some ethical principles regarding inter-personal relations, as understood by the Prophet Muhammad in the context of the then Arab society. But with the spread of Islam to far off lands whose people accepted Islam nominally, but continued to live in their old ways; and with the tendency of Muslim kings and feudal lords to take

³⁵ *Qu'ran* CXII:1-4, see *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, trans. by Marmudke Pickthall (Delhi: World Islamic Publications, 1979).

³⁶ *Ibid.* XLIII:3ff., LV::3 ff.

to the way of extreme luxury and even debauchery, it was felt that more detailed guidelines were required in order to bring all the new converts into the fold of Islam in a real sense. Somehow it was thought that one cannot tell whether a people have a sincere faith in the Islamic creed or not, but one can enforce a uniform way of life, so that the conquered remained in the Islamic fold and displayed a uniform Islamic identity.³⁷

Hadiths and Shari'a. It was now argued that if no guidance is found in the *Quran* for a particular problem in day-to-day life, then Muslims should search for it in the sayings of the Prophet, and in his approvals and disapprovals of the actions of others. Thus began a race to record those incidents purportedly related to the Prophet's life, about one and a half to two centuries after the death of the Prophet. Thousands of *Hadiths* were produced which were supposedly the records of those incidents witnessed by the Companions of the Prophet and narrated by them to some other, who narrated the incident and the response of the Prophet to some other, who narrated it to some one else who then penned the entire episode. The person who narrated the *Hadith* might well have been removed from the Prophet's time by as much as two centuries. Each *Hadith* contained a very large number of such incidents; and there were thousands of such *Hadiths*. When *Hadiths* began to proliferate, Islamic scholars started questioning their veracity, as those innumerable *Hadiths* often expressed contradictory points of view. Al Shafai'i developed certain principles to determine the authenticity of a given *Hadith* in the eighth century, and finalized six collections of *Hadiths* which are generally accepted by all Muslim scholars.³⁸

Hadiths do not contain specific laws, but only suggestions of norms of conduct as derived from the approval and disapproval of the Prophet Muhammad regarding certain acts or ways of other people, and they constitute the *sunna* (traditions), the ultimate guide for the entire life of most Muslims.

Shari'a, in turn, is derived from these suggestive instances as given in various *Hadiths*. It is not written down anywhere, yet is the most

³⁷ See Leila Ahmad, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 81 ff.

³⁸ See *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed., Mircea Eliade, Vol. 7, pp. 150-151 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company).

important religious authority for Muslims, which has come to cover each and every aspect of a Muslim's life from religious and political affairs to norms of social behavior, greeting, manners in social and personal life, as also food, dress or personal appearance.³⁹ All through the emphasis has been on practice, and the need to blindly imitate the examples of the Prophet and his Companions (*taqalid*). After the *kalamah*, or the assertion of faith in the one and only God, Allah, and in his Messenger, Muhammad, *shari'a* is the most important thing in a Muslim's life. Since it is not written anywhere, the *ulama* (Islamic experts) decide which *hadith* is relevant in a given case as providing the right norm to decide the proper course of conduct for the individual or the community; and their judgment is accepted as final by most Muslims.

Unfortunately after about the tenth century the gates of reasoning (*ijtihad*) were declared as closed, that is, no Muslim was henceforward allowed to reason or interpret the *hadiths*, far less the *Quran*. The unwritten *shari'a* was now accepted as "divine."⁴⁰ In as much as the *hadiths* were collected by ordinary human beings and also many generations after the Prophet, the *shari'a* can hardly be declared as "divine."

The Communal Sharing of Religion. In Islam, there is great stress on the communal sharing of religion, which practice it shares with Christianity to some extent, but which is very different from the individual-centric ethos of Hinduism. Gradually, being a Muslim meant being a member of Muslim community, and the latter depended on outward adherence to the norms of *shari'a*. Sharing religion with one's co-religionists involves prayer (*sala't*) together with them; and this prayer involves a large number of elaborately defined ritualistic acts, starting from the ritual of washing in the common pond (*wuzu*) before engaging in communal prayer. These rituals were not prescribed in the *Quran*, but gradually became very important, as compliance with these ritualistic practices as well as other such norms ensured that people belonging to different regions, races and cultures, who were brought into the fold of Islam during the

³⁹ M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (Delhi: Munshiram and Manoharlal Publishers, 1965), p. 57.

⁴⁰ See *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, ed. by C.E. Bosworth, E. Denzel, W.P. Heinrich and G. Lacomte (Leiden: E.I. Brill, 1978) Vol. IV, p.152; and M.Mujeeb, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

expansion of the Arab empire, had one identity.⁴¹ Significantly, the common sharing of the rituals of community prayer asserts the equality of all human beings before God. At the same time, it implies a lesser emphasis on inner faith, or even purity of heart and motive.

The above means: first, that *Islam does not recognize any distinction between the sacred and the secular*; and second, with its stress on the blind following of the *Quran* and unwritten *shari'a*, followers of Islam find it difficult to adapt themselves to the norms and values of today's secularized world.

Some Questions and Observations

The Distinction between the Sacred and the Secular is not a Given Fact

When we talk of the relationship between the sacred and the secular we have already presumed that a radical distinction between the two exists which has either to be endorsed or to be bridged in some way. As we have seen earlier in our brief discussion of Christianity, even though there are hints of the distinction between the sacred and the secular in the original form of Christianity, this division was never seriously acknowledged either in medieval Christianity, where the Roman Church prevailed over every aspect and institution of the secular society and polity, or later in the Lutheran Reformation. Rather, it is a product of two developments in the Western society, first, the rapid secularization of Western thought and ways, along with the unprecedented growth and prestige of science; second, the advocating of religion as some kind of supernaturalism by a large number of Protestant theologians. The latter had the effect of making the secularized mind wary of religion. A secularized person who believes that natural phenomena can both be explained and dealt with by the help of science cannot easily accept religious dogmas such as the genesis of the universe a few thousand years ago, or the possibility of a catastrophic end of the world, etc. Therefore, it was thought best that "knowledge" and "faith" must be put in separate compartments of the human mind and life; thus dividing the secular and sacred dimensions of human life permanently.

However, this permanent artificial bifurcation of the secular and the sacred or spiritual spheres of human life leaves both spheres poorer and incomplete. Colin Williams rightly observes:

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

The only result of continuing the two-realms thinking now, is that the religious realm to which the church is restricted becomes a more and more confined segment isolated on the edge of life, while the secular becomes more and more separated from the judgment of God – an autonomous realm: “the world without God and God without the world.”⁴²

What is Religion?

This brings us to our central question: What is religion? It would be interesting to note here that somewhere along the line of the secularization of the Western mind, the word God has been replaced by the term religion.⁴³ Are God and religion synonymous terms?

They are not: first, because a large number of world religions, from Confucianism and Shinto to Buddhism and Jainism, do not subscribe to a belief in a Creator God. They are also not synonymous because religion is much more than a faith in God. It has a definite creed, an equally definite set of rituals, and in most cases a system of norms and laws. Why have we felt the need to replace the concept of God with the term “religion”? It was probably because the Western mind found it convenient to deal with tangibles, rather than with abstractions. While the concept of God is both abstract and profound, and difficult indeed to handle; that of religion seems to be quite easy to handle, as it has become an almost sociological phenomena. If so, there remains no need to differentiate between the spheres of the sacred and the secular, as religion has already been converted into something secular, or a part of secular social-national life.

Perhaps the people of the Europe have been more self-conscious and critical about this substitution. They also use the term religion, but they have found that the sphere of the sacred, which deals with beliefs and practices which cannot be explained or harmonized with their modern secular mind-set and conceptual framework, is best left or forgotten as a relic of the past. Perhaps the manner in which the people of America have gone about reintroducing religion has diluted religion to an extent that it has become a very pale shadow of actual theistic religion. On the other hand, there is a definite resurrection of

⁴² *Op. cit.* p. 64.

⁴³ See John Hicks, *Philosophy of Religion* (New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India, 2001), pp. 90-91.

a more fundamentalist kind of religion in the developing countries, particularly among the Muslims. There are various socio-political causes for this revival into which we need not enter here. However, while observing the secondary place of religion in modern life we have to remember that it is probably true only for the western world.

According to Paul Tillich, faith is "the ultimate concern of man." He explains: "The ultimate concern is unconditional total: no part of ourselves or of the world is excluded from it, there is no 'place' to flee from it."⁴⁴ If we were to read medieval saints belonging to all the three religions under study, we would see how God (and not religion) was the ultimate concern of all men and women who had chosen the path of love of God, which, for them, was true religion. But neither God, nor religion can perhaps be an ultimate concern in this sense for the modern person for various obvious reasons, though exceptions are still found, such as some saints of nineteenth century India. The claim of religion, or better God, on the person who has accepted this claim cannot be denied either.⁴⁵

Religion: Not mere Supernaturalism nor a Mere Search for Personal Salvation. Religion is not mere supernaturalism, nor is it a mere search for personal salvation, as it has been understood mostly in Indian religions, though a desire for some kind of spiritual fulfillment is an integral part of religion. Perhaps we can understand religion as a desire on the part of some higher or spiritual dimension of the human self, called the soul, to communicate with whatever that person or that religious tradition considers "divine." The term divine again seems to import the distinction between the sacred and the profane. However, unless we create a bridge between the Creator and the creature, there cannot be any religion, as we cannot relate to a wholly other God.

The Truth Claims of Various Religions

The plurality of world religions which confront each other in

⁴⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1951), pp. 11-12.

⁴⁵ "I do see the Supreme Being as the veritable Reality with my own eyes! Why then should I reason? I do see that it is the Absolute who has become all hangs around us; it is He who appears as the finite soul and the phenomenal world! One must have an awakening of the spirit within to see this reality." Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna: An Exhaustive Collection, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Twelfth Impression), p.316.

today's global world, often come into violent conflict. This is a problem which needs to be sensitively dealt with. Almost all religions of the world, particularly two of the Semitic religions: Christianity and Islam claim to be in possession of God's final revelation meant for all humankind. Arnold Toynbee has argued emphatically how there are six existing world religions and two more philosophies, each claiming to be in possession of the highest truth. He argues that their separate claims for finality cancel each other. All he means is that the time is past when any religion claimed, with what he calls megalomania, to be the only true faith, or its people to be the chosen people of God.⁴⁶ Such claims when they are made in the contemporary world cause conflict and wreak havoc in the world, and it is now high time that such claims are discarded. John S. Dunne has advocated a search for truth in other religions; and opines that "the willingness to receive from others leads to a kind of comprehensiveness, a completeness that is compatible with greatness and holiness." He understands it as a life of giving and receiving what is best in you and others.⁴⁷

Religious Pluralism in India. Religious pluralism has been a fact of history in India for the last two and a half millennia. While Buddhism and Jainism were religions of Indian origins, from the third century of the Christian era first Christians and then Muslims came to India, as well as Jews and Zoroastrians. Though all of them kept their separate identities, at the same time they adopted most of the Indian ways, norms and values, and lived more or less harmoniously for almost two millennia. (Contemporary conflicts are more an aberration of the Indian Weltanschauung than norm.)

Religious faith needs commitment, and from this it is argued that commitment is not possible without having a firm belief in the final truth of one's own faith. If a person accepts the equal truth and worth of others' faiths, this is supposed to imply that s/he does not have a firm faith in the absolute truth of the revelation of her own religion. The West has understood the idea of religious tolerance in its true sense very late, and also too hesitatingly. Islam still finds it difficult to accept this idea.

⁴⁶ An Historian's Approach to Religion, based on Gifford Lectures 1952-53 (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 134 ff.

⁴⁷ John S. Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth: Experiments in Truth and Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1974), pp.130 ff., especially 181.

The Indian point of view is very different. According to it different faiths try to understand the Supreme from their limited and culturally conditioned points of view, which cannot be perfect or wholly true. Thus, in order to resolve conflicts between different religions and cultures, we have to understand two things: first, different religions are trying to understand and express the self-same reality. Long ago, the Vedas declared that there is one Truth (*Sat*) only, even though the sages (i.e., religions) speak of it differently.⁴⁸ As Hinduism sees it, the one reality cannot be comprehended completely by petty creedal formulas, so that different religions are but fleeting glimpses of the same Truth from different 'religio-cultural' angles. In modern times Ramkrishna Paramhansa explained the same by the analogy of a tank of water, out of which all human beings drink, but they call this water by different names, as *pani*, *jal*, water etc; however, the water remains the same.⁴⁹

The second thing that we must realize is that none of the religions, each of which claims to be in final possession of the ultimate Truth, can be really so, that is, could not actually know the absolute truth in its fullness. This is how Indians advocate the doctrine of equal respect for all religions (*sarva dharma sambhava*). Mahatma Gandhi gave this familiar tenet of Hinduism a clear expression:

Ahimsa teaches us to entertain the same respect for the religious faith of others as we accord to our own, thus admitting the imperfections of the latter. This admission would be readily made by a seeker of Truth, who follows the law of love. If we had attained the full version of Truth we would no longer be mere seekers, but would have become one with God, for Truth is God....And if we are imperfect ourselves, religion as conceived by us must also be imperfect. We have not realized religion in its perfection even as we have not realized God.⁵⁰

And,

The one religion is beyond all speech. Imperfect men put

⁴⁸ *Rg Veda* X: 196.

⁴⁹ *Op.cit.*, p. 147.

⁵⁰ *Gandhi Reader for 1988*, compiled and edited by M.V. Desai, (New Delhi: Nameda Foundation, 1988), p. 34.

it into such language as they can command, and their words are interpreted by other men equally imperfect. Whose interpretation is to be held to be true?⁵¹

We, as Gandhi says, cannot be sure of the final truth of any given religion. Nor can we be sure of the being of God, indeed a majority of world religions do not believe in a Creator God at all. There has to be a reciprocating tolerance of each other's views. While a secular person must respectfully tolerate the religious approach, the latter must have the same attitude towards the atheistic world-view. Gandhi again gives beautiful expression to this necessity of accepting totally alien views with respect:

Toleration is not a coinciding of views. There should be toleration of one another's views, though they may be poles asunder...⁵²

Do We Need Religion for a Meaningful Moral Life?

There are obviously two answers to this question. All world religions assert that there cannot be any moral way of life without religious faith, though the manner in which this assertion is argued differs from religion to religion. Hinduism seems to regard religion and morality as integral. As we have seen, one word, *dharma*, signifies both righteousness and religion. The *Bhagavad Gītā* and other religious texts give a typical theistic answer to the question of the right course of action. For Christianity, morality and love for our fellow beings are derived from God's Fatherhood and from Christ's dying to atone for the sins of all humankind.

The rather crude question, namely, whether right is what God commands, or God commands what is right (in which latter case right is independent of God's command) does not come up in the case of these two religions. But it becomes very important for Islam. Right and wrong, and every norm of action, personal, social and political, are determined, according to Islam, by the sole fact that it has been so commanded or prohibited in the Holy *Quran*, or *shari'a* (later Islamic laws). In the wake of terrorist acts by certain misguided Muslim youth, Muslim clerics and intellectuals have come out strongly against

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.35.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

such acts. But their argument is not that killing innocents is morally wrong, but that Islam does not allow or support such killings. Several Indian Muslim leaders, who are otherwise liberal and secular, have often advocated the inclusion of religious education in secular government schools on the plea that otherwise no ground would be left to teach moral values to our children.⁵³

On the other side, ever since Kant, modern thought holds strictly to the autonomy of ethics. Kant asserted the essentially rational nature of a person and her inalienable dignity and inviolability as an end in her self. Her claims as such become the duties of perfect obligation for all others to respect them as such.⁵⁴ We undertake right conduct, or practice virtues not because our religion commands us to do so, but because they *are* right.

Moral imperatives are based on some fundamental moral principles, but the latter may need some justification. Such a justification can be based on some secular ideology, as those mentioned above. But perhaps it is best founded on some religious, spiritual vision. A spiritual vision or conception of the human self not merely as rational, but also as a spiritual entity, gives strong motivation for a moral way of life. The philosophies of Martin Buber or Vedanta, provide a firm foundation for a life of peace, harmony and love. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan correctly argues that,

Any ethical theory must be grounded in metaphysics, in a philosophic concept of the relation between the conduct and the ultimate reality. As we think the ultimate reality to be, so we behave.⁵⁵

According to Tillich, there can well be a morality developed in a secular framework which can give universally valid moral imperatives. However, the motivation to follow those imperatives

⁵³ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a respected freedom fighter and a faithful disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, strongly advocated the inclusion of religious education in secular schools, while Gandhi opposed it. See Mukteshree Ghosh, *The Concept of Secular Education in India* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1991), pp. 124, 157.

⁵⁴ Kant, *op.cit.*, pp. 45-51; cf. "Doctrine of Virtue," Part II of *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), pp. 40-41, 47, 49, 84 ff., 117, 132.

⁵⁵ *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 80.

cannot come from the commands of morality, but only from love, from love for God and love for men. Love, thus, may well be the essence of morality, and inasmuch as the subject transcends her ego in love, there is an affinity with the religious feeling,

The religious dimension, source and motivation are implicit in all morality, acknowledged or not. Morality does not depend upon a concrete religion, it is religious in its very essence.⁵⁶

Some kind of religious vision and faith often provide the foundation for a life of morality and dedication to the service of others. Then the distinction between religion and a moral way of life here on earth disappears. According to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*,

The yogi who, established in oneness, worships Me in all beings, lives in Me howsoever he may be active.⁵⁷

And

He, O Arjuna, who sees with equality every thing in the image of his own self, whether in pleasure or in pain, he is considered a perfect yogi.⁵⁸

Hindu religious texts are full of passages proclaiming the Absolute's presence in every living being, and then deriving the highest morality of love from that presence. God or the Absolute is said to be telling his devotees that knowing Him to be residing in the hearts of all living beings, they should be compassionate and respectful towards all.⁵⁹

In spite of the creedal differences, the above sayings remind us of Jesus telling his followers that insofar as they had not served someone

⁵⁶ Paul Tillich, *Morality and Beyond* (Collins: The Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy, 1969), pp.30ff; 56ff.

⁵⁷ *Bhagavad Gītā* VI: 30.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* VI. 32.

⁵⁹ *Bhagavat Purana*, Vol. I, Book 3, Chapter 29; Vol. II, Book 11, Chapter 29, *Srimad Bhagavatam of Krishna Dwaipayana*, trans. by J.M. Sanyal, 2 Vols. (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1973), Vol. 1, p. 647; Vol. 2, pp. 475-476. The *Mahābhārata* gives the golden rule in several places, telling us to treat others in a way which would be equally desirable to ourselves, and adds, how can a man who wants to live himself ever want to kill another living being? See *Ibid.*, Santi Parva,117: 18 ff.; 251: 19-21.etc

in need, they had not served him; and insofar as they had helped some needy person, they had shown their love for him.

Mahatma Gandhi derived a morality of love and service from his faith and experience of the divine presence in all human beings. To quote him:

They [the poor and the downtrodden] are my first care and last, because I recognize no God except the God to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. And I worship the God which is truth through the service of these millions.⁶⁰

The Need to Complement the Religious Vision with Modern Moral Values

Here the observations of Reinhold Niebuhr are worth considering. He says that religion often becomes an asocial quest for one's personal salvation; and observes:

For the Church, both Catholic and Protestant, the law of love was interpreted religiously, rather than socially. It guaranteed equality before God, and therefore in the religious community; but this did not imply that the Church would strive to realize an ideal of social justice in society.⁶¹

Niebuhr rightly asserts that, "equal justice is the most rational ultimate objective for society."⁶² While the Enlightenment hailed the values of rationality, autonomy and equality, and nineteenth century liberalism emphasized liberty above all, in the twentieth century we have realized the even greater value of equal justice for all. Niebuhr points out that religion does not often involve itself in issues of social injustice, as proved by the implicit acceptance of slavery by Christianity. However, he adds that "Every genuine passion for social justice will always contain a religious element within it. Religion will always leaven the idea of justice with the ideal of love."⁶³

⁶⁰ Quoted in Ignatius Jesudasan, S.J., *Gandhian Theology of Liberation* (Anand, India: Jesuit Theological Forum Studies, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987), p. 176.

⁶¹ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1960), p.77.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.234.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.80.

John Rawls, of course, is the pioneer of the ideological movement that asserts that all talk of equality, rationality etc. becomes hypocritical unless we are able to establish a social order that ensures "fair equality of opportunity," or simply equal justice for all.

Rawls argues that we must start with the idea of "citizens as free and equal persons...in virtue of their two moral powers (a capacity for a sense of justice and a conception of good) and the powers of reason..."⁶⁴ Rawls further insists that a well ordered society would be both a plural society with wide ranging world views and interests and one in which citizens share and work together to realize a common good.⁶⁵

According to Jürgen Habermas, a moral way of life involves "inviolability of the individual by postulating equal respect for the dignity of each individual." It also involves "the web of inter-subjective relations of mutual recognition."⁶⁶ This mutual recognition of persons may be compared to Kant's conception of the kingdom of ends in which each person has equal dignity and inviolability, and respects the same in others.⁶⁷ It is also similar to the conception of reciprocity and reversibility as the very essence of a moral way of life, stressed earlier by P.F. Strawson. He calls the rules of morality some form of "socially sanctioned demands" which are reciprocally incumbent upon every person or group.⁶⁸ Rawls says the same thing when he insists that social dealings must be on the basis of reciprocity so that they result in the rational advantage of all persons involved in the dealings.⁶⁹

Now, as indirectly suggested by Niebuhr, perhaps religion alone cannot help us realize the social goal of equality and justice. Hinduism has had the grandest vision of the unity of the entire universe, and the potential divinity of the human soul, or its essential affinity with the

⁶⁴ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p.19.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

⁶⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholasen, introduction by Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), p. 197 ff.

⁶⁷ See reference no. 54 supra.

⁶⁸ See P.F. Strawson, "Social Morality and Individual Ideal," as given in *Readings in Contemporary Ethical Theory*, ed. by Kenneth Pahl & Marvin Schiller (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), pp. 351-353.

⁶⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 16 ff.

Supreme Reality. And yet, Hindu religious texts sanction the worse possible discrimination against the lowermost caste of sudras. Similarly, Christianity, while offering the message of the Divine Father's love for all His children, never condemned the practice of slavery.

The above seems to suggest that in modern times, when our minds are infused with the ideals of equality and justice, as well as with an urge to make good in this life, religion or the search for God can be entertained as a personal goal for a few only. But for most of us religion would have to be complemented with other moral values. This makes religion just one of the several dimensions of life and not the ultimate concern of man, or some authority that can determine the entire life of a person or society. Though not a devout believer myself, I feel that this conception of religion as only one of several dimensions of human life is not able to do justice to its meaning and spirit, which somehow demands some form of faith and commitment which are more profound than those of other dimensions of life. However, in the present secularized, global world, we do not seem to have any other choice. Either we discard religion altogether, or we accept it as one of the several dimensions of human life. It should be left to the individual what place she gives to religion or God in her hierarchy of values.

The Need to Distinguish Between the Essential and Peripheral Aspects of Religion

If religion is to find a place in our modern global society in a way that is more than mere Sunday Church attendance, then it has to be reinterpreted in a way that does not contradict the modern secular point of view; and at the same time, does not lose its unique emphasis on the spiritual dimension of our minds and lives. This can probably best be achieved by asserting a certain distinction between the essential and the peripheral matters of a religion. Radhakrishnan contends:

We should not look upon our religious heritage as an indivisible whole. We should make a distinction between the spirit of religion and the ceremonies, rituals, marriage customs, food rules and social organizations which are its

forms. Accidental accretions are not as valid as spiritual truths.⁷⁰

Toynbee is the most prominent advocate of a distinction between the essentials of a religion and its peripheral aspects which are invariably determined by the culture and times in which that particular religion arose and developed. He argues that,

In the heritage of each of the higher religions we are aware of two kinds of ingredients. There are essential counsels and truths, and there are non-essential practices and propositions.⁷¹

While the essential truths are valid for all times and places, the religions also contain what he calls "accidental accretions" which a religion accumulates due to various circumstances, especially because of its institutionalization. He believes that "in our society in our times, the task of winnowing the chaff away from the grain in mankind's religious heritage is being forced upon us by a conjunction of social and spiritual circumstances."⁷²

The dominant view, however, among both the theologians of Semitic religions and the philosophers of religion in the West is that religions are indivisible wholes. Ninian Smart, an insightful philosopher of religion, has noted various dimensions of religion and contended that these dimensions are united as an integral whole in the overall conceptual framework of a given religion, thus resulting in a plurality of religions.⁷³ It is true enough, as Margaret Chatterjee says, religions do not come in disembodied forms, that is, they are developed in a particular cultural context.⁷⁴ The idea here is that the supposed essentials of any religion cannot perhaps be separated out independently of its conceptual framework.

⁷⁰ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Religion and Culture* (Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1987), p. 62.

⁷¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 264.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 264 and ff.

⁷³ See Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1984), pp.

⁷⁴ Margaret Chatterjee, *The Religious Spectrum: Studies in an Indian Context* (New Delhi: Allied, 1984), pp. 182, 191. (I do not agree with her thesis, as it does not fully consider the determinative and also limiting role of the culture and times of the origins of a religion which goes against its claim for universal following.)

However, it is also true that a major part of each religion, being determined by a given culture and time, cannot be so easily accepted by modern persons. Human values change with the change in times; and the increase in the level of knowledge also brings in attitudinal changes in a modern society. With this comes the disapproval of earlier social practices, such as slavery, the secondary position of women and the neglect of the common people. And with this also comes the emphasis on the unqualified equality of all human beings, the liberty of all from coercive authority, whether of the Church or of the secular order, and above all equal and fair justice for all – these are the values which have become an integral part of our present mental set-up. If we were to accept world religions as they have been handed down to us from two and a half millennia onwards, that perhaps would nullify all the progress made by the human mind, both in knowledge and in humanitarian values.

Now, if the creedal dogmas of Christianity are still expected to be believed by modern persons, or if the injustices inherent in the caste system, or many of the norms and laws of Islamic *shari'a* are still sought to be justified in the name of religion, then modern persons would feel an aversion for such a religion. Therefore, it is best that some distinction is made between the essential spiritual tenets of religions which would be meaningful for all times, and the details or peripheral matters which are definitely conditioned by the cultural and historical circumstances and are felt to go against modern sensibilities.

The Place of Religion in Today's World

What is the place of religion in today's socio-psychological scenario? Either it can survive as an atavistic institution having little relevance for human life. Or, it can accommodate itself to the culture and almost anti-religious values of modern, mostly Western, societies. Or, it can try to reclaim to itself the secular life of the individuals and the societal institutions. Alternatively, it can enter into some kind of dialogue with modern ideologies and value systems, and argue how their coming together would help in making human life more meaningful and even satisfactory, and bring more peace and harmony to the contemporary world, torn as it is by strife and violence.

The secular mind is not ready to accept any claims of religion which go either against the scientific view-point, or refer to matters

which are perceived as a domain of science or secular authority. However, saner voices have cautioned against the arrogance of science as the final authority to judge the truth and worth of every experience and dimension of human personality. Richard Rorty has argued that Galileo took up an unnecessary attitude of “knowing it all” in his famous arguments with the Bishop Bellarmine, while both could have been right in their respective spheres.⁷⁵ Habermas contends that even though the secular point of view must govern modern society, “secular citizens must open their minds to the possible truth contents of those [religious] presentations, and even enter into dialogues [with them].”⁷⁶ The secular point of view must refrain “from the rationalist temptation that it can itself decide which part of a religious doctrine is rational and which part is not.”⁷⁷

Conclusion

To conclude, first, we need religion as it alone can make us aware of the depth dimension of our lives, and possibly provide motivation for the practice of those moral values which our reason has arrived at independently, but which are still neglected in our day-to-day life. That is to say, it can make us more humane, and spiritually richer persons. Second, we would have to accept with Gandhi that every religion or revelation is mediated by a human mind, and as such no religion can be perfect. The claims for finality and being in possession of ultimate truth by various religions cancel each other. Therefore, sincere mutual religious toleration is demanded by all of us.

Third, more than toleration, there is a need for dialogue and a willingness to understand and appreciate the other’s point of view, not only between different religious traditions, but also between religious and secular points of view. If religions are expected to accept the knowledge of science and secular values, the latter must also give up its arrogance of being the ultimate judge of the truth or worth of every belief and experience. Fourth, religion should allow a certain reinterpretation of its texts and norms, or even certain autonomy of

⁷⁵ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 328-331.

⁷⁶ Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” Holberg Prize Lecture, 29 November, 2005, p. 8. See http://www.holberg.uib.no/downloads/diverse/hp/hp_2005/2005_hp_jurgenhabermas_religioninthepublicsphere.pdf.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

various secular aspects of life, determined as they are by the culture of bygone days. Fifth, some distinction between the essential creed and values and the peripheral matters of religion may well be advisable. The secular mind can accept the spiritual truths and values even if science cannot explain them. But the detailed dogmas, laws and practices, which come in direct conflict with modern sensibilities and values should be either given a secondary place, or given up altogether.

Finally, the above does not mean that religion should be freed of most of its content except for a few creedal beliefs, or nominal secularized rituals. Such a diluted religion, as is sometimes experimented with in the United States, for example, would not be able to play its true role, that is, give our lives a deeper and more spiritual meaning and direction. A more self-conscious and less demanding religion and an equally more self-conscious and honest secular point of view can very well be compatible in today's world, and can make our lives more peaceful, harmonious and perhaps happier also.

Part VI
Chinese Traditions

The Sacred and the Secular: Complementary in the Global Age from a Confucian Perspective

YAN XIN

Introduction

The clash of the sacred and the secular, ongoing throughout the world today, was a problem in China's past; but it is not such a pressing problem in today's China. I think there are some reasons.

While there is no dominant religion in China, there are many religions, such as Buddhism, Daoism, which includes Daoist philosophy and Daoist religion, Christianity, Islam, and Confucianism (It is hard to group Confucianism into a religion or a philosophy, because it consists of religious, philosophical, ethical, and political factors. However, in the past, we did not use those standards.

Maybe a better way of thinking is united or holistic. For instance, when Dong Guozi 东郭子 asked Zhuangzi 庄子 where the Dao is, Zhuangzi replied that Dao is everywhere, such as in the ant, weeds, a potsherd, excrement and urine. He thinks that "Nothing escapes from Tao (Dao). Such is perfect Tao, and so is great speech. The three, Complete, Entire, and All, differ in name but are the same in actuality. They all designate (chih, mark) the One."¹ Cheng Hao 程颢 (1032-1085 and Cheng Yi 程颐 (1033-1107)² believed that the Principle of Heaven is "self-evident and self-sufficient, extending everywhere and governing all things....It is possessed by all people and all things....Man and all things form one body because all of them share this principle."³ Zen has the same doctrine. So we need not find a position to defend for the sacred or the secular. But indeed, the sacred

¹ Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 203.

² Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, brothers, founders of neo-Confucianism in North Song Dynasty. See A.C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers: The Metaphysics of the Brothers Cheng* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1992), for their philosophical thought.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 519.

and the secular exist in the world. When Buddhism encountered Confucianism and Daoism, there were some conflicts in the sense of ethics and values. The same is true of the dispute between Christians and Confucians on the sense of ceremony (rite) in history. A Muslim scholar Liuzhi tried to apply Confucian language to speak about Islam in Tang Dynasty. But each of them compromised or put the disputes aside and lived together. There were no religious wars in Chinese history. The disputes only exist in the level of theory or beliefs. So Confucianism has a long tradition to deal with the relationship between Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Indeed, different religions can live together harmoniously in China. In this summer vacation, 2009, some Buddhists, Daoists, Muslims, and Christians went to Beijing Normal University for a high-level training course. It is quite interesting to see them walk together in the campus in their own uniforms.

Marx's view on religion as "the opiate of the people," is still very influential. Nonetheless, the number of religious believers is growing.

Just as we concentrate on modernization, globalization, the welfare of people, we become eager to learn Western philosophy, political thought and practice, but we ignore the problem of the sacred and secular in the West and around the globe. This, according to my understanding, is because the sacred and the secular do not constitute big problems in China.

But it is a problem in the world. In the global age, the problem of religious conflicts, complicated religious and political relations begin to draw a lot of attention. More and more Chinese start to encounter Christianity in a curious attitude, and some scholars believe that we should introduce Christianity into China when the West talks about the secular age (Taylor) and post-secular age (Habermas). Some Christian festivals such as Christmas Day and Thanksgiving Day have become a fashion in China, especially, in cities. Some traditionalists even begin to worry about it. When the religious believers worry about the decline of beliefs and practices, secular reason seems to be universally valid. So it is necessary to understand the relationship between the sacred and the secular in a global age from the Chinese philosophical perspective.

Definition of Sacred and Secular

In the West, the sacred and the secular are easy to define because of its long history of faith and reason, religion and philosophy. The sacred usually means Christianity. The secular usually refers to reason, state, and economy. So there are lots of themes of religion and state, faith and reason, religion and science. According to Taylor, the secular age is judged on the basis of the separation of Church and State, the decline of religious belief and practice, and the diverse options of faiths.⁴ But in the Confucian context, it is hard to define the sacred and the secular because of the holistic way of thinking and tradition.

In Confucianism, the sacred can be defined in different ways. A sage or great man, such as Confucius or Buddha, can be defined as a sacred man or holy man, could be served in a temple and offered sacrifices and prayers. On September 28, 2009, more than 1000 distinguished guests, including Confucius' descendents, governmental officials, and scholars from China and abroad, students, and some other people alike, went to Qufu, the birth place of Confucius in Shandong Province, to celebrate 2560th anniversary of his birth. And there are other places such as Taipei, which also celebrate his birthday with a great ceremony and worship.⁵ It is held annually in a high-level manner in China. Huang Di (Yellow Emperor), who is regarded as the ancestor of Chinese people also enjoys commemoration and celebration. Buddhas in Buddhist temples are regarded as sacred and God in Christianity as sacred. In the Confucian mind, the gods, sages and great men are sacred in some sense.

Earlier in China, many big families had their own ancestral halls, which are regarded as sacred places. The whole family would talk to their past ancestors about themselves during important events and festivals, such as Qingming Festival and the Spring Festival. Now in the countryside, in the traditional Chinese Spring Festival, the whole family will gather together to celebrate this most important Festival. One part of the Festival is to go to their ancestors' grave, serve them as alive with good things in the mind of this world, kneel down and worship them. It is quite solemn. It is believed their soul is living and can communicate with us, although their body has returned to the

⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007), pp. 1-4.

⁵ According to Xinhua News Agency (September 28, 2009).

earth. It seems the same in other countries. Besides, many families will pray gods of heaven, earth, and other super-natural gods for health, peace, prosperity and other good wishes. It is our folk religion to worship tian (Heaven or God) and ancestors. Confucians have a lot of this kind of thinking to worship tian and ancestors. The Christian and Islamic believers do not join the traditional Chinese in this important moment even in the countryside due to their monotheistic religion.

Most Chinese believe in *tian* (usually translated as Heaven), which is similar to God in the West. Tian can produce everything, regulate and rule everything. It is the ultimate and highest being in the Chinese mind. Tian is highly valued in a Confucian mind, and in an ordinary mind. It always plays a role, particularly when we face some difficulties or successes which are hard to explain. Tian is obviously sacred in the sense of transcendence. The relations between tian and human, tian and state, tian and principles, etc. are priority topics for Confucian philosophers. It is similar to the relationship between the sacred and the secular in the West. But Confucians believe that it is united.

So when we define the sacred in Chinese context, it can refer to gods, divine beings, or even great heroes, ancestors, and tian. In this essay, I will concentrate on the sacred and the secular in a Confucian sense which is different from the western interpretation of the sacred. Nonetheless, they have much in common.

From a Confucian perspective, the secular usually means science, technology, economy, worldly enjoyment, and profit gain. This is different from Taylor's three characters of the secular: the secularized public space, the decline of religious beliefs and practices and the diversity of beliefs. Confucians focus on the order and goodness of this world and keep reverence to the other world, but believe that they have the responsibility to carry out the Will of the Heaven. When Confucians explain the origin of the world, human nature, principles, law of history, they apply tian (Heaven, ultimate being, etc.) which "In the Chinese tradition, would correspond to the idea of the structures ordained by heaven."⁶ Besides, Chinese philosophers connect heaven and heart (mind) so that heaven, human being, heart (mind), nature and order are all linked together in the Confucian mind.

⁶ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Jurgen Habermas, *Dialectics of Secularization on Reason and Religion*, translated by Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), p. 72.

Bearing the meaning of the sacred and the secular in the Confucian context in mind is helpful to understand this relationship in a global era from the Confucian perspective.

Description of a Secular Age

Personally, I agree with Taylor that we live in a secular age. The difference is that my understanding of the secular is the decline of people's pursuit of gods, heroes, greatness or ultimate meanings. Max Weber's theory of disenchantment also can describe the current situation. But when Charles Taylor judges that it is a secular age, he bases this on the situation of the Western world.

It is not so accurate to apply the terms of sacred and secular in Taylor's definition to Chinese conditions. But we can still sense the change from a more sacred time to a more secular time and will analyze the problem within Taylor's framework. However, I still maintain that there is better way to describe the change in China's context.

In Taylor's mind, the first character of the secularization is the separation between religion and politics. Political institutions and practices are not based on God, faith or ultimate reality in a secular age. In ancient China, people believed in Heaven. Before the fall of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), it was believed that the emperor was chosen by Heaven (tian), the emperor was the Son of Heaven, and the transfer of the ruling power was due to the change of the will of Heaven. Before 1911, the secular and the sacred were closely connected in the legendary age of Three Sages, Yao, Shun and Yu,⁷ around 5000 years ago, the ruling power is due to the candidate's goodness, capability, general will and the will of Heaven. For example, Yao chose Shun, who was wise, kind, capable and popular, as the best candidate successor, but he still needed to recommend Shun to the Heaven, and needed the sanction of Heaven. In this sense, Heaven can be understood as the supernatural decision-maker, and also the general agreement and support of people. This is in the name of Heaven, the ultimate reality. (Si Maqian 司马迁, *Shiji*, Volume 1) After this golden age in the traditional Confucian mind, the first state leader of every new dynasty is always the most powerful man, chosen

⁷ Yao is a legendary emperor of the 3rd millennium B.C. Shun was his successor. And Yu is the founder of the Xia dynasty, 2183-2175 B.C.

by force instead of virtue (de). Han Feizi⁸ 韩非子, said, "In the early ancient age, people compete by virtue, in the middle ancient age, people compete by wisdom, and nowadays, people compete by force."⁹ But emperors or some thinkers always claim that it is the will of Heaven, and they are the Son of Heaven. Some emperors fear the punishment of Heaven, although they gain power through war, conspiracy or heritage from their ancestors. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 B.C.), a great Confucian thinker in Han Dynasty, believes that man and Heaven activate each other. In his mind, the subjects should be restricted in order to please the emperor, and the emperor should be restricted in order to please Heaven. (*Chun qiu fanlu-yu bei*). Heaven, which is just, wise, and powerful, plays a decisive role in power. That is why when a new emperor assumed the throne, he would pray for the protection and favor of Heaven in a grand ceremony. The Temple of Heaven¹⁰ 天坛 is such a place for the emperor to worship Heaven and God; the emperor would attend the ceremony in a particular chosen day. Besides, there are also Temple of Earth 地坛, Temple of Sun 日坛, Temple of Moon 月坛, and some other sacred places for the emperors. After the 1911 Revolution, the emperor abdicated and the feudal system of royal family ended its tradition of several thousands of years in China, and the modern state was formed. It is the time of the separation between state and religion in some sense. Those sacred places in the past have been transferred into place of interest for tourism.

Another feature of secular age is the market economy. Now the market economy is widely accepted in China, and economic growth is one of the main standards of social development. But in the traditional Confucian mind, righteousness instead of benefit is the prior concern. When the King Hui at Liang 梁惠王 asked Mencius 孟子 what profit he could bring, Mencius replied: "Why must Your Majesty use the

⁸ Han Feizi (?-233 B.C), a leading philosopher of the Legalist School.

⁹ Han Feizi, Volume 19, p. 445.

¹⁰ Tiantan is located in Beijing, built in 1420 during the Ming dynasty. It served as a place of ceremony to 1911 for emperors to worship Heaven and God and pray for harvest, rain, etc. It is the biggest place in the world to pray for Heaven and God and represent traditional Chinese reverence to Heaven and God for the past 5000 years.

term profit? What I have to offer are nothing but humanity and righteousness. If Your Majesty ask what is profitable to your country, if the great officers ask what is profitable to their families, and if the inferior officers and the common people ask what is profitable to themselves, then both the superiors and the subordinates will try to snatch the profit from one another and the county will crumble."¹¹ Mencius stated his thinking clearly that the King should not concentrate on profit even for the country, because humanity and righteousness should be his priority. The later great Confucians inherited his thought. For example, Dong Zhongshu had an influential saying, "The moral gentleman should do the right thing instead of making profit, and should know the way of things instead of concerning personal payment."¹² (Han Shu, Dong Zhongshu zhua) This idea represents the mainstream mind of Confucians. But now it is different as the Economy becomes the main theme and economic construction becomes the prior task. Even in the level of culture, there is a popular saying, "A cultural platform for economic performance." Economic growth such as investment and construction are the main concern behind many cultural activities. It can be said that the market economy penetrates many areas. Chinese scholars begin to worry about instrumental reason. A good turning point is that harmonious society and scientific development are emphasized. Besides, some traditional scholars reinterpret classical Confucian thought according to the current situation. They begin to emphasize that traditional Confucian masters also value secular life when they promote righteousness. This is a strategy for the revival of the traditional heritage in such an age.

The image of sages is taken into rational consideration, which also reflects the secular side of Chinese society. It is generally believed that Confucius is a sage, a representative of Chinese culture, a great teacher, and a philosopher. But some dislike and do not respect Confucius because they think that he represents the old culture, he is a defender of the feudal society or dictatorship, and can not lead China toward a rich, modern and powerful state from a historical and

¹¹ Wing-tsit Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 60-61.

¹² Ban Gu, *Dong Zhongshu zhuan* (Biography of Dong Zhongshu), *Han Shu* (Book of Han).

economic perspective. In fact, Confucius' image has often changed in Chinese history. In the Spring-Autumn and Warring States periods (770 B.C.-221 B.C.) Confucianism was one of the leading schools among the 'One Hundred School of Thoughts.' The school of Mohism and Daoism were also very influential. These three schools have different doctrines. Simply speaking, Mohism emphasizes universal love, no war, utilitarianism, condemnation of elaborate funerals, frugality, the will of the Heaven, anti-fatalism, and agreement with the superior. Mozi 墨子 had learned from the School of Confucianism but he condemned some of its doctrines and founded his own school. Daoism is also quite different from Confucianism, as it values Dao (the Way), the One, the non-being, nature, tranquility, natural way of life, the change, and humble attitude, and indifference to politics. Daoism is usually regarded as the opposite of Confucianism in the West, though, in fact, they are more complementary than conflicting. In the Qin Dynasty (9-23A.D.) the Emperor promoted the School of Legalist, and opposed Confucianism. But in the Han Dynasty (B.C.206-220 A.D.) Confucianism became the state doctrine. "He (Dong Zhongshu) was chiefly instrumental in making Confucianism the state doctrine in 136 B.C. This supremacy excluded other schools, and lasted until 1905."¹³ Confucius' status increased all the time. In some intellectuals' mind in the Han dynasty, Confucius had a king's virtue and ability although, actually, he was not a king. In the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) the emperor Yuan Wuzong 元武宗 (1208-1311) entitled Confucius the greatest achievement, ultimate sage, and the king of culture 大成至圣文宣王, which is the highest title given by emperors in history. Confucian classics were the standard for learning and the textbooks for choosing officials through examinations. Confucius and his disciples were served in a Temple of Confucius for emperors, officials, teachers and students to worship. Confucius was a sage, a holy man, and his temple was a sacred place.

But in the modern age, Confucius can not help China to resist foreign invasion or colonialism and lead China to an industrial and modern state. Some elites, educated in the West, condemned Confucius, and tried to replace his thought with modern Western thought. From then on, Confucius was under attack for over 100 years,

¹³ Chan, p. 271.

although there are some still scholars supporting and developing Confucianism. There are usually two obvious positions, some support Confucius, such as Kang Youwei (1858-1927) 康有为, who wanted to make Confucianism the Chinese national religion, though he failed. And some others who attacked Confucius, such as Lu Xun (1881-1936) 鲁迅, Wu Yu 吴虞 (1872-1949; however, Confucianism is still alive. More scholars try to explain Confucius in an objective way, which is popular in today's Chinese academy. In contemporary China, the followers of Confucius think he is great, but not perfect. He is one of the sages in the world. All of his temples become places of interest to visit. The recent book, *Homeless Dog, I Read the Anelects* (丧家我读论语 *sang jia qou: wo du lun yu*), written by Li Ling 李零, a professor of Peking University has a provocative title and claims that Confucius is not a sage, but, simply, a man. It is true in some sense, because Confucius wanted to convince those emperors to implement his political ideas, but no emperor really wants to base his ideas on morals. The Confucian political ideal is that the sage should rule the country or the ruler should have the sage's character or listen to the sage's advice. In this, he is similar to Plato, who had the dream of the philosopher-king, who, sometimes, was in danger, and even risked his life or was trapped in a bad situation facing some rulers. In this sense, he is similar to a homeless dog and Confucius himself also thought so. The author tries to remove the political, moral and religious factors and depict Confucius' ideas in an objective realist manner. The book is a little provocative, and draws some attention and discussion. It provides evidence of the secular viewpoint and the tension between the sacred and the secular in the Chinese academy.

A best-selling book, *Confucius from the Heart: Ancient Wisdom for Today's World* (yu dan lun yu xin de 于丹《论语》心得), a series of speeches presented on the China Central Television (CCTV-10) by Yu Dan 于丹, a young woman, professor at Beijing Normal University. Her book is very popular and more than 10 million copies have already been sold; an English version was published by Macmillan in London, in 2009. It is a publishing miracle. Usually, professors' books sell less than 10,000 copies. The author understands Confucius in her own way, and expresses it from her heart, according to today's situation. Some scholars criticize it as "chicken soup for the soul"

rather than serious academic research, others regard her as today's femanist Confucius. Nonetheless, it represents people's need for Confucianism, and the revival of traditional culture. Generally speaking, Confucianism is for learning and research in the departments of philosophy, history, and literature in universities. Confucius's *Analects* usually is not regarded as a sacred book in academic circles.¹⁴ This, perhaps, is a signal of the growing secularity in Chinese academia.

The popular culture also can reflect the secular side. Hollywood movies, soap operas, sports, tweets, chat rooms and blogs become important ways to shape people's mind, especially for young people. Readers of the classics, the sacred books, and the Confucian, Daoist, and other philosophical classics, are in the minority compared with followers of popular culture.

Besides, it is a time of diverse cultures and faiths, western religions and popular culture, the revival of traditional philosophies and religions, and the Marxist philosophy all play a role in contemporary China on the official level, Marxist philosophy is the guideline, but on the social level, it is hard to tell what the people around you believe. Some scholars think that it is a time of virtue or decline or empty faith. As traditional Confucianism does not play a decisive role in people's moral and spiritual life. Some people believe in God. Many young people believe in themselves: "just do it," Nike's influential advertising campaign, is very influential. Statements like: "Nothing is impossible," "I choose, I like" encourage people's confidence, and tolerance. But this is not our traditional character. It is from the western world, and appears in the process of market economy. The Chinese tradition values collectivism, holism, virtue, and responsibility, but because of the internal corruption and conflicts, and foreign invasion, China fell behind the western world in modern times. Chinese thinkers began to criticize, doubt and deny the value of traditional culture, and, thus, introduced western culture into China. Thinkers such as Hushi¹⁵ advocated "Complete Westernization" in

¹⁴ Li Xiangjun, *A reconstruction of contemporary Confucianism as a form of knowledge*, *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, Volume 1, Number 4 (Beijing: Higher Education Press, co-published with Springer-Verlag GmbH, 2006), pp. 561-571.

¹⁵ Hu Shi (1891-1962), born in Shanghai, and raised in Anhui Province, studied at Cornell University and completed his Ph.D under John Dewey at Columbia University. He served as ambassador to the United States, the President of Peking

the 1919 New Culture Movement, although his aim was really to mix together the good sides of both. Over the last 100 years, this approach has had a profound influence on traditional culture so that Confucianism and other traditions withdrew from the Chinese mind and daily life. Western culture such as Marxism, Renaissance thought, the Enlightenment movement, and Existentialism were introduced into China and today we are introducing western doctrines into China. We translate, introduce and study almost all the great thinkers in the Western world. Any influential philosophy, religion, and novelty can be found in China, because it is an era of globalization and we are still in the process of learning from the West.

Analysis of the Emerging Secular Age

When we believe that we live in a secular age, we also want to figure out such a transition happens. Taylor gives us a long narrative of the past 500 years which tries to understand from Chinese philosophical perspective.

When the Western thinkers explore this problem, some try to defend religions, some thinkers welcome the secular time and some want to balance the two extremes. Habermas thinks that the secular reason and the Christian religions should learn from each other. In my opinion, the naïve faith and the exclusive humanism all have their own shortcomings. Religion and reason should cooperate for the good of human beings: one can balance the other.

In Chinese philosophy, the change and interaction is eternal. There is a classical masterpiece, *zhou yi* (*Book of Changes*), and other thinking resources, such as *Dao de jing*, tells us that change is the enduring way. In *zhou yi*, (*Book of Changes*), "The system of Change is tantamount to Heaven and Earth, and therefore can always handle and adjust the way of Heaven and Earth."¹⁶ In the system of Change, there are two forces, yin and yang. Simply speaking, yin, which is negative, passive, weak, hidden, and destructive, means the negative force (strength) and rule; yang, which is positive, active, obvious,

University, and the prestigious Academia Sinica Research Institute in Taipei. He introduced John Dewey and Pragmatism into China and led the New Culture Movement.

¹⁶ Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 267.

strong, and constructive, the positive force (strength) and rule. "The successive movement of yin and yang constitute the Way (Tao)."¹⁷ Professor Hien-Chung Lee has already analyzed the problem of the sacred and the secular from the perspective of the interaction of yin and yang in Zhou yi (*Book of Changes*). Li thinks that "The sacred, porous self, and state of enchantment like 'yin,' it is a kind of hidden strength, but demands the total transformation which the faith calls to. The secular, buffered self, and disenchantment of 'yang,' is a kind of obvious strength, which meets the requirements of ordinary ongoing human life. As a result of their mutual interaction, there exists a tension of balancing their mutual increase and decrease."¹⁸

Besides the continuing interaction of the sacred and the secular in the thinking of change, Laozi 老子 said: "After things reach their prime, they begin to grow old, which means being contrary to Tao. Whatever is contrary to Tao will soon perish"¹⁹ This suggests us that when Taylor describes this as a secular age, and draws a lot of attention, at the same time, it is also the time of the revival of religion or traditional classics in many countries. For instance, the revival of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, Christianity, Islam and other traditions although we are trying to build a modern society, and willing to join in the upcoming global age. When we go back to history, we will find that Confucianism reached its prime in the Han dynasty, but that dominant position was replaced gradually by Buddhism and Daoism. Buddhism was very popular in the Tang dynasty, and reached its prime. After that, it was gradually assimilated and replaced by Neo-Confucianism which became the most popular doctrine in the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, and it reached its prime again, but it was gradually replaced by new ideas from the West after the 1919 New Culture Movement.

Some scholars, such as Joseph Richmond Levenson, in his book, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate*,²⁰ thought that Confucianism was a museum piece. But that is not true, as in today's China Confucianism

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 266. Today, Tao is regularly replaced by Dao, which has the same meaning with different spelling.

¹⁸ Hsien-Chung Lee, *The Sacred and the Secular: Complementary or Conflicting in the Global Age? A Perspective of Chinese Philosophy*, see this volume.

¹⁹ Wing-tsit Chan, p. 166.

²⁰ See Joseph Richmond Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958).

is beginning to grow. In the West, we can also find out some evidence for Laozi's saying. For example, when religion reached its high point in the Middle-ages, the Enlightenment Movement emerged, and religion came under criticism, suspicion and denial. The change is quite influential even today. Exclusive humanism has its own cause. However, science and reason are not perfect either, as can be proven by World War One and Two.

When Professor Mclean delivered a speech in China, he said: "At the end of the Second World War Fascism had been eliminated, but everything was destroyed; there was chaos throughout Western Europe. When the people went to elect their leadership for rebuilding their lives from the very foundations they chose neither the liberal leadership that was offered nor its opposite. Rather, consistently, they chose the Christian Democratic Parties inspired by the Catholic religious vision: Adenauer in Germany, DeGasperi in Italy, DeGaul in France and Spaak in Belgium. This initial choice of a party that was explicitly religious in its inspiration and principles reflected their recognition of the need to rebuild their society on the foundations of the deep values of western culture which, in turn, are grounded in its religious traditions."²¹

Laozi also believes that "when a thing reaches one extreme, it reverts from it," "reversing is the movement of Tao" (Ch.40) and "To go further and further means to revert again"(Ch.25).²² So when we think about the decline of belief and practice, the rapid progress of science, technology, human reason, and the independence of state and government, as Taylor says, we live in a secular age. Nonetheless, there is a possibility of the revival of religion, in a new form and with new doctrines, but the essence will be unchangeable. This can be proved by Chinese intellectual history and the history of Christianity: it is the way of history. Perhaps, there are some exceptions in other civilizations. I must admit, I value the two groups' efforts to defend for their own positions as good and necessary for the rebirth of a new form of religion or philosophy.

²¹ George F. Mclean, *Faith, Reason and Philosophy* (The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2000), p.152.

²² Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p.97.

Solution

The sacred and the secular can not be separated from a Chinese philosophical perspective. But they are different. The sacred is about our spiritual (religious) world and the secular is about the material (earthly) world. Each should obey its own way, and avoid interfere with the other in the negative sense. Religions should exist and function in a limited space under the rule of government or rule of law. Yet it is hard to separate them completely and a complementary relationship would be worthwhile.

Confucius said: "A person not in a particular government position does not discuss its policies."²³ Wing-tsit Chan comments that "This means not only that a name must correspond to its actuality, but also that rank, duties, and functions must be clearly defined and fully translated into action. Only then can a name be considered to be correct or rectified." This idea is very influential in China. Religion has a long history alongside politics or secular life. Usually, religion plays a role of spiritual purity, moral teaching, and human being's ultimate concern. The government supports this kind of religion. Religious organization is an important part of a country. Politics cares about social order and stability. But when religious leaders try to play a political role, it threatens to the government and secular life. In China, uprisings often feature religious involvement. For instance, wu dou mi jiao 五斗米教 around 126-144, (a sect of Daoist religion in the Han Dynasty) tried to overturn the ruling government, but failed. In Taiping Tianguo (Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace) there was a rebellion against the Qing Dynasty, Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1814-1864) led the uprising. He regarded himself as the "Heavenly King" and self-proclaimed brother of Jesus Christ, but he also failed. Nearly every uprising is related with some religious or idealistic doctrines. Similarly, religion or doctrine being manipulated by politics is harmful to religion or doctrine as also can be shown by the history of Confucianism. This means that though religion has a strong connection with politics, too close or partisan a relationship is not good, either for the development of religion or for the peaceful development of politics. Further, some scholars agree that politics and religion should be completely separated. Each of them functions in

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

their own field, and tries to avoid conflict. However, this view cannot ignore that they can and should cooperate in a complementary way.

"Harmony with difference" is an important Confucius' thought. Confucius said: "The superior man is conciliatory but does not identify himself with others; the inferior man identifies with others but is not conciliatory."²⁴ Usually, this is interpreted as Confucius' idea of "Harmony with difference" or "Harmony without sameness." Perhaps, it can explain why there is no religious war in Chinese history and different religions (Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity) can live together peacefully. The interesting thing is that they will learn from each other, absorb from each other's doctrines, and gradually raise up a new form with its own characteristics. For instance, the fundamental Confucianism in the pre-Qin time absorbed Daoism and Buddhism, and created a new form of Confucianism, neo-Confucianism. Buddhism absorbed Daoism and Confucianism, and created Zen, a sect of Buddhism with Chinese character. Now, as Confucians start to conduct dialogues with Christians, perhaps, some new form of doctrine will be generated in the future. Even when they criticize other's doctrines, they just do it in a theoretical way instead of regarding others as evil and even killing them.

When Confucians criticize Buddhism, they usually start it from economical and ethical perspective. For instance, Han Yu 韩愈 (768-824)²⁵ is perhaps the most radical Confucian thinker around the religious problem in Chinese intellectual history. From an economic and ethical viewpoint, he said that the books of Buddhism should be burned, and Buddhists should abandon the temple for their home to serve their parents and to do farming to pay taxes, and temple land should be transferred to farming. (Yuan dao) But his idea did not win the support of the emperor who was fascinated with Buddhism. Instead, Han Yu was deposed by the emperor due to his radical remarks. He himself also absorbed some ideas from Buddhism, about human nature and mind. Cheng Hao 程颢 and Cheng Yi 程颐, two

²⁴ Wing-tsit Chan, p. 41.

²⁵ Han Yu, a great poet, a master of Chinese prose, a leader of ancient classics movement, and a minister of justice in the Era of Emperor Xianzong 唐宪宗 in Tang Dynasty.

philosophers in Song Dynasty, thought that monks should not leave home, and go to the temple but instead, should stay with their parents and practice their duty as a son, a husband, a father, a brother, and a member of the society. Furthermore, they opposed the view of life and death in Buddhism, which believes that this life is full of misery, so we should escape it, get rid of the terrible circle of life, and enter the Place of Great Bliss (Sanskrit, Pure Land of the Buddha Amitabha) instead of hell after death. But life and death are natural in the Confucian mind. We had better live a good and moral life in this world, because "If we do not yet know about life, how can we know about death." "If we are not yet able to serve man, how can we serve spiritual beings?"²⁶ At the same, they respected Buddha as a sage, learned from Buddhism, and read Buddhism for years. Eventually, they created a new form of Confucianism, called neo-Confucianism, which revived Confucianism at that time.

Today, Chinese scholars are confronted by globalization and are eager to introduce new ideas from abroad in various disciplines. The 1919 New Culture Movement is still influential. Some prefer foreign ideas over traditional Chinese ideas. In this climate, Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism are often marginalized. It is a special age in Chinese cultural history. While the West worries about the decline of religion or belief due to secular developments, we also worry about the decline of Chinese traditional philosophy or belief, but not just due to secular developments. For the Chinese, there is also the profound influence of the New Culture Movement and the Westernization Movement. The ideal state would be for the common good, the good society, that incorporates the best of tradition and modernity in this short essay, it is impossible to solve the problem. But some Chinese philosophical ideas and practices may help to understand the current situation in new ways.

²⁶ Wing-tsit Chan, p. 36.

Confucian Harmony between *Tian* and Human: The Relationship of Sacred and Secular

JIA LIMIN

The greatest contribution of Chinese traditional history and philosophy lies in the study of the relationship between 'Tian' (nature, sky, heaven's fate, heavenly mandate, name of nature) and the 'human' (person, being, life). The Chinese people like to talk about 'Tian' and the 'human' together. The scholar, Ch'ien Mu said, 'the theory of 'Harmony between 'Tian' and the 'human' is one of the greatest contributions of Chinese culture to mankind....The Chinese people think that 'Tian' is demonstrated through the 'human.' The 'Tian' and 'human' cannot be divided. Without 'Tian,' you can not understand 'human,' and vice versa. Therefore, the ancient Chinese believed that the greatest value of 'human' and 'Tian' lies in their harmony with each other. If the human is left out, the existence of 'Tian' cannot be known. Therefore, all human evolution is obedient to 'Tian.' If the rule of "Tian" is disobeyed, then there is no humanity at all...the 'Harmony between the human and Tian' is one of the oldest and greatest contributions of Chinese traditional culture."¹

The above quote is from the final paper of Ch'ien Mu (1895-1990 AD) a famous master of Chinese Culture. Thus, from this viewpoint, this paper will analyse the contemporary problem of the relationship between the "Sacred and Secular" and hope to provide a way to solve the problem. The paper is divided into three parts: First, the relationship of the "Sacred and Secular" is unfolded under the background of globalization; Second, the introduction of "Harmony between Tian and human" of Confucianism is introduced; Third, the enlightenment, provided through the idea of "Harmony between Tian and the human" by Confucianism, is considered in regard to the contemporary debates surrounding the "Sacred and Secular."

¹Ch'ien Mu, *Contribution of Chinese culture for human future*. (<http://gb.china-reviewnews.com/doc/1008/4/0/3/100840376.html?coluid=6&kindid=30&docid=100840376&mdate=1226171833>).

1. The Problem of “Sacred and Secular” as Unfolded within Globalization

1.1 Before and after the Renaissance, in early modern industrial society, the “sacred and secular,” was not a major problem since in the traditional religious society, “God” was the explanation for all things. “God” is the highest “decision-maker;” all of the “Secular” is only a “footnote” of “God.” However, in modern industrial society, science and technology worked like a “scalpel” under which nothing remains mysterious; any problem can receive a reasonable explanation and nothing can escape trial in the court of reason. “God” is limited to the field of “faith;” the secular life is the most important challenge for people. In contrast, in the Renaissance and the early modern industrial society, the relationship between “Sacred” and “Secular” became “clear” and did not make people feel “confused.”

1.2 However, with the “maturation” of the modern world, deep problems began to emerge and the relationship between the “Sacred” and “Secular” began to be considered as a major problem. The worker who lived at the base of the modern world as “the original power of social development,” was peeled off from the domain of modern civilization and became the symbol of the “ugly” and “dirty.” Moreover, though “emotion” is the most important and deepest thing in people’s communication, it became fractured in modern society as people just lived in their own world, “emotionless” towards others. In yearning and looking forward, humans wanted to change life for the better through modern industrial society, but this dream was broken by large modern machinery which swallowed-up human life. At the same time, given the enormous destruction brought by large modern industry, people began to criticize the omnipotent science and technology as merely “producers” of modern machinery. Why did science and technology do such tremendous damage to nature when humans wanted to use them to transform the world? Why did humans use science and technology to create lethal weapons and begin to fight against each other? With these hard facts, “rationality” took off its “Sacred” coat and people began to question the idea that science and rationality can really explain all things. Can humans, by virtue of the power of rationality and science, make laws for nature? Can people live well without belief, without a spiritual dependence beyond rationality?

As a spiritual being, the human spiritual world includes emotion, rationality, will, idea, etc. Generally, people think that "Spirit" is only abstract, but in essence, it is full and includes much content. As Heidegger said: "'Spirit is neither empty acuity, nor the noncommittal play of wit, nor the understanding's boundless pursuit of analysis, nor even world reason; rather spirit is originally attuned to the essence of Being. Spirit is the empowering of the powers of beings as such which always and in each case come more into being.'"² "Spirit" needs a "home" as a place of rest and living. That place allows humans to relax and enjoy life, just as a tired body relaxes at "home," and gains new energy and power. The tired spirit gets support and encouragement from "home" and rebounds there. The hurt soul recovers gradually in the "home" setting. However, in modern world, as Heidegger tells us:

...man lost the concrete connection with a transcendent realm of being; he was set free to deal with this world in all its brute objectivity. But he was bound to feel homeless in such a world, which no longer answered the needs of his spirit. A home is the accepted framework which habitually contains our life. To lose one's psychic container is to be cast adrift, to become a wanderer upon the face of the earth. Henceforth, in seeking his own human completeness man would have to do for himself what he once had done for him, unconsciously, by the Church, through the medium of its sacramental life. Naturally enough, man's feeling of homelessness did not make itself felt for some time; the Renaissance man was still enthralled by a new and powerful vision of mastery over the whole earth.³

1.3 With such a warning, the hard shell of "rationality" was gradually broken; people began to re-understand "God" as spiritual dependence. "God" was no longer the Middle Ages' "God" who locked people in the narrow confines of religious politics, but was

² Martin Heidegger, New translation by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 52-53.

³ William Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy* (New York: Anchor Books Edition Press, 1962), p. 25.

baptised by rationality. Thus, the background in which people considered the relationship between the “Sacred” and the “Secular” experienced great changes. In today’s world, different nations, regions and countries associate with each other and form a “unity” through the exchange of information, economy and culture. “Globalization” has been recognized as an historical trend and attracts great attention in different cultures, nations and countries.

What is the globalization? While the term ‘globalization’ is relatively new – the word ‘globalization’ was coined only in 1944 – the phenomenon of globalization itself is not. To ‘globalize’ – meaning ‘to make global or worldwide in scope or application entails action and interaction, across borders and across continents, and the spread of cultural, economic, and political ideas (particularly by way of trade, industry, technology, the arts, letters, music and religion) throughout the world.⁴

At this turn of millennia the life of humanity is becoming increasingly global and for a number of important reasons. Physically, we have developed the capacity to transform the environment of the entire earth – though often for the worse, rather than the better. Indeed, we now have even the nuclear capability to destroy broad species, including humankind as a whole. Economically, with the end of the Cold War the world is no longer divided between two world systems, but now constitutes one economy so that collapse at any point has a ripple effect throughout. Politically, the needs of a particular nation through alliances and international systems can have determinative impact upon the lives of people everywhere. Culturally, through the communication media the same pervasive power is at work.⁵

⁴ William Sweet, "Globalization, Philosophy and the Model of Ecumenism," in George F. Mclean, ed., *Philosophical Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization Volume II* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001), p. 427.

⁵ George F. Mclean, "Introduction," in George F. Mclean, ed., *Philosophical Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization Volume I* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001), p. 1.

Following this trend, if any culture does not consider the existence of other cultures within the limits of their own culture to explain and make the principles of the world, they are bound to face a “dead-end.” Therefore, “dialogue” has become the most important and basic mode of survival in the process of globalization. The process of “dialogue” emphasizes the “diversity” of the culture communication, rather than “identity.” That is to say, against the same background and facing the same problems, different nations have different voices and views. It is important to note that the world consists of different nations and cultures, while at the same time the different countries are living in one world.

Under such circumstances, it seems that there is no clear explanation about the relationship of the “Sacred and Secular.” The problem is that we cannot handle the problem simply from the binary opposition approach to thinking: we must consider each other’s case and deal with the problem from the horizon of the “one and the many.” Neither religious defenders nor scientific defenders can explain the relationship of “Sacred and Secular” simply from their own viewpoint. They cannot stand on the “Sacred” to explain the “Secular” or put the “Sacred” into the “Secular.”

The context of globalization enables us to talk about the relationship between “Sacred” and “Secular” in broader ways. This paper, in exploring the relationship between “Sacred” and “Secular” in light of the idea of the “harmony between Tian and human” of Confucianism, seeks to provide a reasonable way to handle the difficult and delicate problem of this relationship.

2. The idea of “Harmony between Tian and Human”

2.1 The idea of “harmony between Tian and human” is original to Chinese traditional culture. As a cultural heritage, it has entered deeply into the Chinese people’s view of life and world. It has profoundly affected Chinese social culture.

2.1.1 At first, as a philosophical idea, “Harmony between Tian and human” was reflected in the book of *I Ching*, but as a philosophically developed topic, it was found in the Han Dynasty’s famous Confucian, Tung Chung-shu (179-104 BC): “All of things subject to ‘name’ and the ‘name’ subject to Tian, everything goes into an unity

according to the 'Harmony between Tian and human'.⁶ The man who treated the topic most openly is a famous scholar of Song Dynasty named Zhang Zai (1020-1077 AD), who said: "Confucians can understand 'Tian' on their wisdom, at the same time they received the wisdom under the inspiration of 'Tian.' So, 'Tian' and 'human' are in harmony."⁷ In Chinese traditional culture, the "harmony between Tian and human" mean that the universe (nature), society and life are an integral whole. It includes the harmony of nature itself, between man and nature, among people themselves, and between physical and spiritual life. The Master of Chinese culture, Ch'ien Mu pointed out: "Harmony between Tian and the human" is one nature in the spirit of the Chinese people. This means harmony, not only between nature and culture, but also between fact and idea, what it meant to be and what it ought to be. Especially, it means harmony between the beyond and the inherent, respect and responsibility.

Therefore, we can say, "Harmony between Tian and human" is the soul of traditional Chinese culture. It is contained in the ideology of Confucianism, Taoism, etc. It expresses the Chinese culture's inner spirit and it is the core of Chinese traditional human spirit.

2.1.2 "Harmony between Tian and human" is an obvious feature of Confucianism from the Qin Dynasty to the Song Dynasty, and right up to modern society. The Master of modern new Confucianism, Tang Junyi (1909-1978 AD) pointed out: "The spirit of Confucius and Mencius is the spirit of culture and ethics. It inherits 'Tian' and experiences 'Benevolence.' It shows the spirit of 'Harmony between Tian and the human.' It is the core of Chinese culture. From this idea, I can say that the *logos* of 'human' is establish on the *logos* of 'Tian' and the morality of Tian and exhibited in the "Benevolence" in human living, human world, human culture. "⁸ Scholars of Confucianism proved the theory "Harmony between Tian and the human" from different angles. Zhang Zai believed that "Tian" and "human" were both made of "air." "Tian" and "human" were "Harmony" in the "air," so all things were harmony in the "air." Chen Yi (1033-1107 AD)

⁶ Tung Chung-shu, *Ch'un-ch'iu Fan-lu, shen cha ming hao* (http://guji.artx.cn/Article/7844_7854.html).

⁷ Zhang Zai, *Zheng Meng Qian Cheng* (<http://www.confucius2000.com/confucian/zhengmeng.htm>).

⁸ Tang Junyi, *The Spiritual Value of Chinese Culture* (Taipei: Middle Bookstore Press, 1987), p. 478.

and Chen Hao (1032-1085 AD) believed that “Tian” and “human” were the basic logic of the universe; the law of human was also the law of Tian. We can know one from the other, for they are united and have the same morality. Lu Jiuyuan (1139-1192AD) and Wang Yangming (1472-1529AD) believed that “Tian” was the value source of “human,” while “human” was the core of “Tian,” because “Tian” gave the original logic to the “human.” Hsun-tzu (325-235 BC) believed that “Tian” and “Earth” were material sources for human life, so the human being must protect “Tian.” Although the point of the argument is different, the central meaning is the same, that is, human beings live in harmony with “Tian” and from “Tian” obtain the meaning of life and values.

2.2 According to the historical heritage and development of Confucianism, the idea of “Harmony between Tian and human” of Confucianism was expressed in:

2.2.1 “Tian” and “Human” Have the Same Morality

The idea that “Tian” and “human” have the same morality came from *Chou I*. *Chou I* believed that life was the virtue of “Tian” and benevolence was the virtue of the sage. The sage can understand life and harmonize with Tian through benevolence. *Chou I* said: “Because human nature is similar to the principle of Tian, so the human cannot oppose Tian. If we can understand this point and obtain knowledge about the principle of Tian, we can resolve the problem of living in the world and there would be no wrong and no mistake.”⁹ This means that the Sage is knowledgeable and self-disciplined. He obeys his fate and has virtue, and he can harmonize with “Tian.” He can live freely under the rules of “Tian.”

There is another sentence which expresses the idea that “Tian” and “human” have the same morality. That is: “The sage is in harmony with the virtue of Tian and Earth, light of the sun and moon, order of four seasons, good and bad luck of demons.”¹⁰ This means that the sage can communicate with “Tian” and has the same morality; it shows again the “Harmony between Tian and the human.”

⁹ *Chou I, Upper Part of Xi Ci* (http://www.guoxue.com/jinbu/13jing/zhouyi/zy_003.htm).

¹⁰ *Chou I, Ch'ien Hexagram Wen Yan* (http://www.guoxue.com/jinbu/13jing/zhouyi/zy_001.htm).

The idea that “Tian” and “human” have the same morality affected Chinese culture deeply and concretely: 1. the human is in harmony with nature; 2. humanity is in harmony with the *logos* of Tian; 3. humans can communicate with Tian.

2.2.2 The Interaction between Tian and Human

During the Han Dynasty, the theory of “Harmony between Tian and human” was developed by Confucians. The famous Confucian in the Han Dynasty named Tung Chung-shu founded the theory of “the interaction between Tian and human” on the basis of the theory of YinYang WuXing.

First, he proved that Tian and the human were similar. He said: “The human body has three hundred and sixty six small bones same as the number of days in one year. He has twelve big bones same as the number of months in one year. He has heart, liver, stomach, kidney, spleen same as the number of WuXing (gold, wood, water, fire, earth). He has limbs same as four seasons. The opening and closing of eyes is similar to day and night.”¹¹ Human bones, body, limbs, and the opening and closing of eyes are all the copies of “Tian.” Tung Chung-shu cited the idea that same species can interact with each other from Yinyang Wuxing experts of the Zhanguo Dynasty (475-221 BC). He said: “Within the universe there exist the ethers of the Yin and Yang. Men are constantly immersed in them, and the ethers of Yin and Yang of human moving follow the ethers of Yin and Yang of Tian, with the same *logos*.”¹² So, Tung Chung-shu believed that “Tian” and “human” were similar; they had an interactive relationship. Society and politics were influenced by the logic of “Tian.” “Tian” expressed its judgment about the human society through auspicious signs and disasters.

2.2.3 The Unity of “Tian” and “Human”

The philosopher Zhangzai of Northsong Dynasty (960-1127 AD) put forward the philosophy phrase of “the unity of Tian and human” for the first time. He said: “Confucian can understand ‘Tian’ by their wisdom, at the same time they get wisdom under the indication of

¹¹ Tung Chung-shu, *Ch'un-ch'iu Fan-lu ren fu tian shu* (http://guji.artx.cn/Article/7844_7857.html).

¹² Tung Chung-shu, *Ch'un-ch'iu Fan-lu tong lei xiang dong* (http://guji.artx.cn/Article/7844_7857.html).

'Tian'. So, 'Tian' and 'human' go into harmony."¹³ The main idea of the unity of "Tian" and "human" suggested by Zhangzai is that "Tian" and "human" are objective and united, while change is the nature of "Tian" and "human." He emphasized the natural connection between the sage and "Tian" which is endowed with morality: "Tian" is the source of human nature and morality. Zhangzai emphasized the idea of unity and thought that the sage and the *logos* of "Tian" are able to communicate. The sage can experience the *logos* of "Tian." We should understand "Tian" and "human" together.

This kind of unity was realized by the interaction between Tian's indications and the human's wisdom. It is the unity of the benevolence and moral of Tian, subject and object, value and ontology.

2.2.4 "Tian" and "Human" Are Subject to the Same "Principle"

The philosopher Chu Hsi (1130-1200 AD) of Southsong Dynasty (1127-1279 AD) is an outstanding scholar of "Learning of Principle." He founded a completed theory of "Learning of Principle." He succeeded in the traditional thought of *Chou I*, LaoZi (6th century BC), ZhangZai, Chen Yi and Chen Hao and combined the *logos* of "Tian" and "human" nature. He thought the principle of "Tian" was the ontology of universe and the philosophical foundation of the harmony of "Tian" and "human." He held that: "the Principle existed before "Tian" and "Earth," which came out of the Principle. The existence of "Tian," "Earth," "Human" are premised on the existence of Principle."¹⁴ By nature, "There is one Principle in the universe;" that Principle is the source of everything. It generates air and uses air to generate everything. The human, as a member of the universe, came from the Principle. But because human beings are all deceived by material needs and forget justice, we must grasp the truth by awakening it in our hearts by investigation.

2.3 The Practice of Confucianism on "Harmony between Tian and Human"

Confucianism emphasized thinking and self-cultivation; he paid great attention to practice in reality. That is to say, if people want to

¹³ Zhang Zai, *Zheng Meng Qian Cheng* (<http://www.confucius2000.com/confucian/zhengmeng.htm>).

¹⁴ Chu His, *Analects of Chu Hsi Volume I* (<http://www.guoxue.com/gxzi/zhuziyulei/zzyl001.htm>).

understand “Tian,” accept “Tian” and understand the “Harmony between Tian and human,” they must practice this understanding by cultivating themselves inside and outside, and thereby achieve the status of “Harmony between Tian and human.” The main ways of the Confucian practice the idea of “Harmony between Tian and human” are:

2.3.1 “Ge Wu Zhi Zhi” (The investigation of things and the extension of knowledge)

The concept of “The investigation of things and the extension of knowledge” is an important concept in ancient Confucianism. It is firstly said in *The Great Learning*:

The ancients who wished to illustrate the illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom must first order well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they must first regulate their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they must first rectify their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they must first seek to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they must first extend to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.¹⁵

In Confucian history, the scholar who gave the authoritative explanation of “the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge” is Chu Hsi. He said: “‘Ge’ means investigation; ‘Wu’ means things. ‘Zhi Zhi’ means getting to the Principle of things which we can get through hard investigation.” “Because all the things in the world obey the Principle and human being have wisdom, they can understand the Principle and communicate with the universe. If a human being cannot get the Principle, it is due to the lack of the hard work of investigation...If we keep on working hard, someday we can get the Principle suddenly. At that time, we can understand the

¹⁵ Li Ki, *The Great Learning* (<http://www.guoxue.com/jinbu/13jing/liji/lijj042.htm>).

universe in detail (from outside to inside), and our heart will be in harmony with Tian. This is 'GeWu ZhiZhi'."¹⁶

Here, Chu Hsi emphasized that the "Principle" cannot be separated from "Ge Wu" that is, starting from "Ge Wu" we come to the "Principle" last. If we can get more information of universe through investigation, we will understand the Principle more deeply. He thought going from 'Ge Wu' to 'Zhi Zhi' to be a gradual process. We should spend time to absorb knowledge, investigate some thing, and then get some knowledge from it. More and more we can get the Principle from far to near, from surface to inner, from rough to detail. As the Principle means not only knowledge but also understanding about "Harmony between Tian and human," Chu Hsi wanted to tell us that the "human" can gradually harmonize with "Tian" through "the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge."

2.3.2. "Shen Du (watch over oneself when one is alone)

"Watch over oneself when one is alone" is an important way to practice the idea of "harmony between Tian and human being." It emphasizes self-discipline. This was first said in *The Doctrine of the Mean*: "The path may not be left for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be the path. On this account, the superior man does not wait till he sees things, to be cautious, nor till he hears things, to be apprehensive. There is nothing more visible than what is secret, and nothing more manifest than what is minute. Therefore the superior man is watchful over himself, when he is alone."¹⁷ From the text we can see that "Watch over oneself when one is alone" means that when a person is alone, he can discipline himself. He thinks and practices cautiously to avoid disobeying ethics, so that morality is always guides him. The standard is whether a person can be watchful over oneself when one is alone, and the extent to which he can practice watchfulness.. We can use this standard to measure whether a person adheres to self-cultivation and the extent of their achievement in this self-cultivation.

"Watch over oneself when one is alone" is an important function in self-cultivation. First, it can improve a person's consciousness of

¹⁶ Chu Hsi, *Annotations of Four Books: Annotations the Great Learning* (<http://www.shuku.net/novels/classic/qpuhbfzmpsl/04.html>).

¹⁷ Li Ki, *The Doctrine of the Mean* (<http://www.guoxue.com/jinbu/13jing/liji/liji031.htm>).

self-cultivation. *The Doctrine of the Mean* states: "The superior man does not wait till he sees things, to be cautious, nor till he hears things, to be apprehensive."¹⁸ This means that during the process of moral self-discipline, people should treat themselves strictly and not disobey morality. Only in this way can people bring self-consciousness to the proper level. Chu Hsi's interpretation of this idea is clearer. He pointed out: "for someone to live alone means that he stays in his own world where no one knows. Obviously, no one knows when something happened there except himself. So, the gentleman watches over himself when he is alone, very seriously."¹⁹ This means that to "Watch over oneself when one is alone" requires that people treat those things carefully which are known only to themselves.

Second, it can improve a person's virtue of self-cultivation. "Watch over oneself when one is alone" must be based on the premise of sincerity. In *The Great Learning* it is said: "What is meant by 'making the thoughts sincere', is not allowing self-deception, as when we hate a bad smell, and as when we love what is beautiful. This is called self-enjoyment. Therefore, the superior man must be watchful over himself when he is alone."²⁰

From *The Great Learning*, we can understand that "Watch over oneself when one is alone" cannot be without sincerity. Chu Hsi understood it deeply when he said: "the gentleman watches over himself when he is alone, not only at outside action such as speaking, eating, writing but also in inside action such as thinking and feeling. He watches over himself from outside to inside, from rough to detail."²¹

Thirdly, it helps persons who want self-cultivation to know where to start. There are many ways to self-cultivation; however, the most important way is to "Watch over oneself when one is alone." The philosopher Zongzhou Liu (1578-1642 AD) of Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD) said: "The way of self-cultivation inherited from Confucius

¹⁸ Li Ki, *The Doctrine of the Mean* (<http://www.guoxue.com/jinbu/13jing/liji/liji031.htm>).

¹⁹ Chu Hsi, *Annotations of Four Books: Annotations the Doctrine of the Mean* (<http://www.confucius2000.com/zhyzhji.htm>).

²⁰ Li Ki, *The Great Learning* (<http://www.guoxue.com/jinbu/13jing/liji/liji042.htm>).

²¹ Chu His, *Analects of Chu Hsi Volume I* (<http://www.guoxue.com/gxzi/zhuzi/yulei/zzy1016.htm>).

and Mencius is “to be watchful over oneself when one is alone.”²² That is to say “Watch over oneself when one is alone” is the best way to self-cultivation.

“Watch over oneself when one is alone” is an important way of self-cultivation for Confucianism. It has a great effect on the practice of “harmony between Tian and human.” If a person conforms himself or herself according to the way of “watch over self when one is alone” and self-discipline, he can attain a high moral status and understand the meaning of “harmony between Tian and human.

2.3.3 “Xing Ren” (Be benevolent without selfishness)

Another way to practice “Harmony between Tian and human” of Confucianism is to “Be benevolent without selfishness.” Confucius (551-479 BC) thought benevolence was the highest virtue. In order to practice benevolence, people should devote themselves to things of value at all cost. Essentially, a person should value life most. But when he faces the conflict between doing benevolence and losing life, Confucius advocated that benevolence should be maintained at all cost. So we can know the value of benevolence.

If a person wants to perform benevolence, he should follow some correct methods. In particular: First, is “to subdue one’s self and return to propriety.” This is the core of being benevolent. Confucius advocates that a person should restrain his selfish desire and make his action correspond to the criterion. That is: “Look not at what is contrary to propriety; listen not to what is contrary to propriety; speak not what is contrary to propriety; make no movement which is contrary to propriety”²³ All behaviours must be in accordance with propriety, so that we can get to the status of benevolence.

Second, is “action with respect and loyalty.” Confucius answer Fanchi’s question about “benevolence”: “While at home hold yourself in a respectful attitude; when serving in an official capacity be reverent; when dealing with others do your best. These are qualities that cannot be put aside, even if you go and live among the

²² Zhongzhou Liu, *Ren Pu Lei Ji* (<http://www.xhms.com/Article/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=1595>).

²³ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: Yanyuan* (<http://afpc.asso.fr/wengu/wg/wengu.php?lang=en&l=Lunyu&no=294>).

barbarians.”²⁴ Even when someone has spare time, he/she should treat life with a serious attitude, do things earnestly and communicate honestly with people.

Third, “sacrifice oneself for others.” Confucius said: “For Gentlemen of purpose and men of benevolence while it is inconceivable that they should seek to stay alive at the expense of benevolence, it may happen that they have to accept death in order to have benevolence accomplished,”²⁵ because they have great moral integrity. They would rather sacrifice their lives to protect benevolence than live stealthily and harm benevolence.

Fourth, “bosom is wide.” Confucius said: “The man of wisdom is never of two minds; the man of benevolence never worries; the man of courage is never afraid.”²⁶ The benevolent person understands fate, is unselfish and often reflects on himself. So he has a heart full of wisdom, is brave, and with no worries.

3. Enlightenment through the Confucian Idea of “Harmony between Tian and Human” and the Problem of the “Sacred and Secular”

After analysing the “Harmony between Tian and human” of Confucianism, we turn back to the problem of “Sacred and Secular.” If we relate “Sacred” with “Tian” and “Secular” with “human,” we can get a reasonable way to handle the problem of “Sacred and Secular” on the basis of the idea of “Harmony between Tian and human” of Confucianism.

3.1 “Tian” – “Sacred” – Perfect

In the western world, when people mention “Sacred,” “God” will appear in people’s mind immediately. Someone believes that “God” is “one,” while others believe that “God” is “many”; some believe that “God” is beyond the physical world; others believe that “God” is nature, or world, and so on. The latter is similar to the Chinese people’s understanding of “Tian.” There are different understandings

²⁴ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: Zilu* (<http://afpc.asso.fr/wengu/wg/wengu.php?lang=en&l=Lunyu>).

²⁵ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: Weiling gong* (<http://afpc.asso.fr/wengu/wg/wengu.php?lang=en&l=Lunyu>).

²⁶ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius: Zihan* (<http://afpc.asso.fr/wengu/wg/wengu.php?lang=en&l=Lunyu&no=238>).

about "Tian" during the development of the Confucian idea of "Harmony between Tian and Human." Feng Youlan (1895-1990 AD) summed up the meanings of "Tian" in five aspects: "The first is the 'material Tian,' and refers to the sky which relates to earth. The second is 'Master Tian' or 'the will of Tian,' which refers to the personality and the will of 'God' in religious terms. The third is 'Tian of Destiny,' this refers to what was called 'luck' in the old society. The fourth is 'Natural Tian,' which refers to what philosophers call nature. The fifth, is the 'Moral Tian' or 'Ethics Tian,' and refers to the moral law of the universe as structured by idealist philosophers."²⁷ The five meanings summarized and described the understanding of "Tian" in the history of Confucianism and serve to remind us that 'Tian' does not have one meaning or explanation but will be understood only by putting several meanings and explanations together.

Although, there many words used to translate "Tian," for example "nature," "sky," "Heaven," there is no one word or explanation that can cover all the meanings of "Tian." In other words, "Tian" is important not only because it includes many meanings, but also because the Confucian understanding of "Tian" is full of moral implications. "Tian" is the first principle of morals and ethics; and perfection is the nature of 'Tian.' It is the people's spiritual guide and moral principle.

So, no matter what kind of meaning is used to understand "Tian," it is always similar to "Sacred." They are both symbols of "perfection" in the spiritual world of human beings and have irresistible moral power.

3.2 "Human" – "Secular" – Imperfect

"Secular" represents the reality of the life of the human being. As the human being yearns for freedom and perfection, she or he continues to transcend the self and overcome shortcomings to obtain "full freedom." But as an advanced animal, the human has a blood relationship with nature. The human being tries his best to transcend himself, but will always be limited by his animal nature; he/she lives at the border of perfect and imperfect, unlimited and limited, yearning and reality. That is the fate of human being. The world which people live in is the Secular world where the shortcomings of human nature

²⁷ Fung Yu-Lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy Volume I* (Shanghai People's Publishing House Press, 1982), pp.89

are totally exposed. Words like greedy, lazy, selfish, narrow-minded and so on are “word weapons” used to criticize each other. People have to constitute a variety of laws and establish administrations on different levels to ensure that human society operates normally which shows that “Secular” contains inherent imperfection.

Confucian culture pays attention to the problem of “how the human can become human.” Whether starting from the good nature or evil nature of the human, Confucians emphasize that the human is imperfect and has many shortcomings. Confucianism focuses its attention on the issue of how human beings can overcome their shortcomings and have a reasonable existence in the world. Hence, the attitude of Confucianism on treating the “human” is similar to that of western people toward the “Secular.” “Human” and “Secular” are imperfect. They should overcome their shortcomings and pursue perfection and freedom under the direction of “Tian” and the “Sacred.”

3.3 “Harmony between Tian and Human” – “Sacred and Secular” – Balance between Perfection and Imperfection

The idea of “Harmony between Tian and the human” of Confucianism establishes the moral rule of human society on the basis of “Tian.” Confucians pursue the target of harmony with “Tian” through the moral practice in living reality. Although there are different explanations about “Tian” and “human” in Confucianism, the aim is to realize “Harmony between Tian and the human.” That is to say, the relationship between “Tian” and “human” is not one of simple opposition but of a diversified harmony. The human being draws direction and spiritual guidance from “Tian” and conquers his shortcomings or imperfections on the basis of understanding about “Tian.”

Although humans live in the “Secular” world, they cannot leave the “Sacred” world. Humans build up the idea of the “Sacred” in the spiritual world and take this as a guidepost. The “Sacred” is the navigation mark, the home, the point of spiritual dependence of the “Secular” world; at the same time “Sacred” reveals itself in the “Secular” world. There is then a harmony between “Tian and Human,” and between the “Sacred and the Secular” in the world.

The Sacred and the Secular: Complementary or Conflicting in the Global Era? A Chinese View

LEE HSIEN-CHUNG

The causes of the rise of secularism in the East and West are different. The broad secularization in the West began with the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution. The broad secularization in Eastern society, however, began with Western colonialism and the colonial regimes that brought it, as well as the influx of western technology and culture which came with them.

The sacred and the secular are two sides of the same coin; they are two angles of investigation regarding the same process of change. There is conflict in the complementary relation between sacred and secular, and there is also the complementary in the conflicting relation between sacred and secular. This can be explained using the ideas of *Yin* and *Yang* from the *Yi-Jing* (Book of Changes) in the metaphysics of Chinese philosophy. In addition, one also can give explanations using relative characteristics in theories of human nature, and change in the reference systems of cognition in epistemology of Chinese philosophy.

What attitudes can we take towards global secularity? In many schools of Chinese philosophy, we can take an ethical attitude toward global secularity, for example, from Mohism. This school, on the one hand, affirms and reveres the will of Heaven, diligently practicing universal love, while, on the other hand, advocating “anti-fatalism,” rejecting the fatalist standpoint, developing science and rational thought, and using ethical values to lead scientific development.

Reflection on Sanctification and Secularization in Chinese Philosophical Thinking

Chinese Metaphysics: Yin and Yang

The viewpoint of one of the Chinese classics “*Yi Jing — The Book of Changes*” and its commentary, “*Yi Zhuan — Commentaries on The Book of Changes*,” holds that all living beings have two intrinsic complementary principles, a passive and a positive force respectively called *yin*

and *yang*. The mutual interaction of these two forces impels things to change. All the numerous things within the whole universe possess this passive and the positive strength or principle of yin and yang. They influence each other and become the manifestation of the “way of things.” It is the Way through which things move, change, and develop. The so-called “Changes” mean production and reproduction, and the meaning of the concept of production is life-giving.

The original meaning of “yang” refers to the sun shining upon one side of a mountain; “yin” refers to another side upon which the sun has not shone. The “yang” side is advantageous to a plant's growth, while “yin” at the same time is advantageous to food preservation. In later development, “yang” had the significance of “the obvious strength” and “positive rule,” while “yin” had the significance of “the hidden strength” and “passive rule.” Later still, “yin” and “yang” were extended to give an explanation of all phenomenon of change.

From this viewpoint, the sacred and the secular can be regarded as two tendencies yin and yang that influence each other in cultural development. The sacred, porous self, and state of enchantment like “yin,”¹ is a kind of hidden strength, the demands of the total transformation to which the faith calls us. The secular, buffered self, and disenchantment of “yang,”² is a kind of obvious strength, which meets the requirements of ordinary ongoing human life. As a result of their mutual interaction, there exists a tension of balancing their mutual increase and decrease.

As an explanatory framework, yin and yang may be explained at many different levels. Even the secular has yin and yang – for example in the cases of those scientific and medical principles which were

¹ The sacred world has many features: 1. The natural world...testified to divine purpose and action. 2. God was also implicated in the very existence of society. 3. People lived in an “enchanted” world.

The enchanted world...is the world of spirits, demons, and moral forces which our ancestors lived in. According to Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Random House. 2007), pp. 1, 26.

² Buffered self was a new sense of the self, it is not open and porous and vulnerable to a world of spirits and power...it was also necessary to have confidence in our own power of moral ordering.

The process of disenchantment is the disappearance of the enchanted world, and the substitution of what we live today: a world in which the only locus of thoughts, feelings, and spiritual elan is what we call minds; the only minds in the cosmos are those of humans. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 29-30.

developed from witchcraft, the hermetic art in Chinese ancient times. Actually, the disenchantment was inside the enchantment, the enchantment was inside the disenchantment. In those parts thought to be obviously yang, there lies the hidden action of yin. The relations of yin and yang are one, and not two. The *Yi Zhuan* said: "The successive movement of the yin and yang operations is what is called "Dao.""

Secularism is a type of notion; secularizing is a process. Secularity according to Charles Taylor, is denying any reference to God, ultimate reality, religion or "enchantment"; these are removed from the public sphere. This, however, cannot be taken for granted, but is just one option among many.³ Secularity is a way of satisfying human needs, survival, and developing a way of life but without the sacred. From the process point of view, secularizing is the reduction of supernatural elements and mysticism in society, and a process of decline of and reduction in the various influences and restrictions imposed on society and culture by the authorities of religion and tradition. But developed to an extreme, it will reverse itself and develop in the opposite direction. The phenomenon of "re-enchantment" arises, and the process of human cultures continues.

The Theory of Human Nature in Chinese Philosophy: The Basic Nature and the Physical Nature

The theory of human nature occupies an important place in Chinese philosophy. There are many different views on this subject and many implications. The theory that human nature is good is espoused by Mencius; that human nature is evil by Xunzi; that human nature is neither good nor evil by Gaozi; that human nature is beyond good and evil by Zhuangzi; and that human nature is both good and evil by Yang Xiong.⁴ Each kind of theory of human nature cares about whether human nature is good or bad – if human nature is good, how is goodness developed; if it is bad, how is this "badness" corrected? In addition, the theory of human nature in Chinese philosophy also cared about what is the root of human nature? "*The Doctrine of the Mean*" states: "What Heaven imparts to man is called human nature. To follow our nature is called Dao. Cultivating the Dao is called

³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴ These theories of human nature were produced in the B.C. 1-4 century.

education." It is an obvious assertion that the root of human nature comes from Heaven.

The outcome of the development of these theories is the emergence of a dualism in human nature in the Song (宋) and Ming (明) dynasties. There are two elements in human nature: (1) basic nature (given decreed by Heaven) and (2) physical nature (disposition from earth). To put it briefly, in every human being there exists two opposite tendencies, *yin* and *yang*. In the reality of life, human nature receives all kinds of desires, but cannot simply refer them to the moral disposition and moral norm given from Heaven. As *Mencius* says: "Those who follow the superior qualities in their nature become superior men. Those who follow the inferior qualities in their nature become inferior men."⁵ The superior qualities are those of the mind whose function is to think deeply. And the inferior qualities are our senses of sight and hearing etc.

In cultural development, the sanctifying and secularizing dimensions are related to these two parts in human nature. On the one hand, a human being pursues excellence, the high ideal of becoming a Saint or Sage. On the other hand, man by nature is affected by material desires.

Human nature and self are different types of notions. Human nature is an invariable existence, the different types of "self" have the same human nature, as, Taylor's "porous self and buffered self" both have basic nature and physical nature. However, they have different functions, which depend on changes in subjectivity and objectivity. The porous self is open to transcendental horizons, but is seemingly lead by basic nature. The buffered self however is disenchanted, and, being very conscious of the self as an individual and aware of the possibility of disengagement,⁶ is seemingly lead by physical nature.

Certainly, such an analogy may not be entirely appropriate, because the buffered self is also one who seeks rational thinking to solve the problems in his real life. The essential difference between the porous self and the buffered self is whether or not they are open to a transcendental dimension, and to what degree.

⁵ Chan Wing-Tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 59. *Mencius, Gaozi shang*.

⁶ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Random House, 2007), p. 27.

These two kinds of self can both open to the transcendental dimension in different ways. One might hope to unfold into an "absolute realm," even though the buffered self is not limited to traditional belief. That self, nonetheless, might replace the transcendental by peoples' freedom, rationality, the public good, etc., that becomes his or her ultimate faith. This, then, is the function of basic human nature. To observe Taiwan's society today, there are many emerging religions; these social phenomena demonstrate that even if religion has a tendency to decline in favour of the secular, there is still the possibility of reversal because of the needs of human nature.

Chinese Epistemology: Two Kinds of Cognitive Patterns

There are two states in the structure of cognitive power as held by Chinese epistemology. One of them is the theory of the Mohist School which advocates that the pattern of cognition is the duality of subject and object, "*Mo Jing*" pointed out that there are three ways people obtain knowledge: through one's own experience; through transmission from other people, and through inference from what is heard and experienced. Inference requires methods which are many in kind. The most basic one is: "analogy." Its means: "to explain something wby reference to other similar things." As one philosopher of the School of Names, Hui Shi says: "Use the thing that is already known to explain what is unknown. This is the way of obtaining new knowledge." What is said here is that the process of knowing is from the known to the unknown. What is already known serves as a reference point to understand and to gain new knowledge.

Before the process of secularization occurs, people regard the reference system of the unknown as God. This explains why in the field of human science, knowledge of the unknown is gained through God's enlightenment. With the rapid advancement of natural sciences, many things can be easily explained and confirmed through sciences.⁷ Hence, science takes the place of religion, of God. Science becomes a new reference system from which to start the process of knowing. This gradually leads people to deviate from the authority of the sacred. In this way, the deviation hastens the footsteps of secularization. Does the change of the reference system before understanding cause secularization to change in turn?

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Another structure of cognition in Chinese philosophy is that in which there is no subject and no object; for example, there is just the "whole one" or the Dao:

Zhuangzi and Hui Shi were strolling on the bridge above the Hao River.

'Out swim the minnows, so free and easy!' said Zhuangzi. 'That is why fish are happy.'

'You are not a fish. Whence do you know that fish are happy?'

'You are not me. Whence do you know that I don't know the fish are happy?'

'We'll grant that not being you I don't know about you.'

You'll grant that you are not a fish, and that completes the case that you don't know the fish are happy.'

'Let's go back to where we started. When you said, "Whence do you know that the fish are happy?" You asked me the question already knowing that I knew. I knew it from up above the Hao.'⁸

How and why can Zhuangzi know a fish is happy? Because he affirmed that the principle in myriad things is interlinked, and penetrates to a common principle (Dao), therefore he may know fish's feeling; Hui Shi's question was proposed on the cognitional pattern by which the subject and object have absolute difference. Zhuangzi's reply adopts the method of analogy and refutes Hui Shi's viewpoint. He therefore also uses the cognitional pattern of subject-object, but as a retort.

A different cognitional pattern will cause different cognitional results. Zhuangzi's pattern does not separate subject and object, knower from the known object; rather it unites them. This feeling awareness is different from the analytical cognitional process. Among them the knower must adjust his inner state of mind, causing himself to coincide with "Dao," "Dao" is the source of everything, the myriad things nature all come from the "Dao." This is being aware. Therefore, with this kind of cognitional pattern, true knowledge is obtained, but does not lie in close analysis, or in the return to an original state of cognition. Rather, so-called "true knowledge" lies in searching for the true and pure human boundary.⁹

⁸ Chan Wing-Tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 209-210. *Zhuangzi, The Floods of Autumn*.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191. *Zhuangzi, The Great and Most Honored Master*.

From this point of view, both the sacred and the secular emerge from the Dao, “Dao” the original meaning of which was “the road” or “the way” in Chinese; means that the sacred and the secular both have their “Way.” “Dao” may be divided into “the way of Heaven,” “the way of earth” and “the way of human beings.” The sacred symbolizes the way of Heaven, the secular symbolizes the way of earth. However, humans must imitate the way of Heaven and Earth, and must diligently maintain their balance and harmony. Laozi said: “Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Dao. The law of the Dao is its being what it is,” and further, “The movement of the Dao, on the contrary, proceeds; and weakness marks the course, of Dao's mighty deeds.”¹⁰ Today, religion is in decline, the secular has already developed to an extreme; thus, human society will change direction towards the sacred – towards the way of Heaven. This is the understanding from the Dao.

Including both Sacred and Secular – The Mohist School

Anti-Fatalism and Three Standards

The thought of the Mohist school is a suitable reference in this secularized age, on the one hand, they respect Heaven; on the other, they develop science and technology to improve people's lives. Many ideas about mathematics, geometry, physics, and mechanics, and theories about knowledge, language, logic, ethics, causality, space, time, and economics are recorded in the classics of the Mohist school.¹¹ They thought “what the man of humanity (*ren*) devotes himself to is surely the promotion of benefits for the world and the removal of harm from the world. This is what he devotes himself to.”¹² The Mohist school affirmed “the will of Heaven,” but it also opposed fatalism.

The Confucian doctrine of Zi Xia in the *Yan Yuan* chapter of the *Analects*, “Death and life have their determined appointment” stated that life and death were predetermined; though men could not

¹⁰ Shi-Jun, *Selected Readings from Famous Chinese Philosophers with Annotations and English Translation* (Taipei: Shu Lin Press, 1992), pp. 36, 40. *Dao de jing*, pp. 25, 40.

¹¹ Fang Xiao bo, *Mathematics and physics in Mo Jing* (Beijing, Social Sciences in China Publishing house, 1983), p. 7 and A.C. Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), p.17.

¹² Chan Wing-Tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 213 Mozi, *Universal Love II*.

determine them in advance, they were nonetheless already settled. The Mohists opposed this fatalistic stance: "Fullness of life, cannot always be certain," dismissing the view that "death and life have their determined appointment."¹³

Furthermore, the *Gong Meng* chapter of the *Mozi* claimed: "Gong Mengzi said: 'Poverty or wealth, old age or untimely death, all are determined by Heaven and they cannot be altered....The superior man must learn 'To question fatalism and teach people to learn...'" Thus it can be seen that Mozi believed that wealth and longevity can be achieved by one's own study and hard work. In particular, one's life expectancy can also be affected by one's self-cultivation, and hence can be extended.

Mozi asserts that fatalism is not *ren* (humanity), because by teaching that our lot in life is predestined and human effort is useless, it interferes with the pursuit of economic wealth, a large population, and social order. Fatalism fails to meet a series of justificatory criteria and so must be rejected.

Mohism uses the method of three standards as its framework; though it is only one standard of thought exclusively used by the Mohists, and does not have the strictness of valid inference, the method of the three standards has value in the course of Chinese philosophy. It marks the beginning of method as an object of research. In the *Anti-Fatalism* chapter of the *Mozi*, the method of three standards is introduced explicitly:

Standard I, basis: 1) It should be based on the deeds of the ancient sage-kings. 2) Examine the will of Heaven and spirits.

Standard II, origin: 1) It is to be verified by the senses of hearing and sight of the common people. 2) Go to the books of the early kings.

Standard III, application: Adopt it for government and observe its benefits to the country and the people.

The first standard advocates sacred authority, while the second points to the authority of human society, on the one hand, in the sacred, on the other, a positive diagnosis by people's experience. The third standard emphasizes real life usability and validity. *Anti-Fatalism I* and *III* use the third standard to show that adoption of *Anti-Fatalism* in government brings benefits to the country and the people.

¹³ Text has been emended according to Sun Yi Rang's *Mozi Jiangou* (Taipei: Hua Zheng Shu Ju, 1987), p. 305. *Mozi, Exposition of Canon I*.

Looking at these three standards, the criteria appear to change from the sacred to the secular, but for the Mohist school, these three kinds of standards are all equally important.

More importantly, they believed that opposition of fatalism is precisely Heaven's will. However, what is "the will of Heaven"? According to *Will of Heaven I*, Heaven is all-knowing, omnipresent, willful, able to award and punish, to love all people in the world, and hopes that human behavior conforms to justice and that all men diligently practice universal love.

Since the thought of the Mohist School has both the secular and the sacred, this causes us to consider whether Heaven is also concerned with the secular. But if a society only develops the secular, it will abandon its roots, and with no roots, no further growth is possible. From the Mohist school viewpoint, he who violates Heaven's will, will be punished; if we deny "the will of Heaven," then human civilization will lose its direction of development and meaning of existence. Therefore, contrasted with the Mohist school, pursuing the development of secularization to improve people's lives and using our rationality is correct, but we cannot abandon the sacred and transcendental dimension. And we must have a broader field of vision, a universal vision and look at the whole world; we must not only see the present, but must see the past and conceive the future.

The Mohist School's Universal Love

Why then should people love universally? This relates to Mozi's theory of value. "Value" is an important basis of moral judgement and reasoning. From Mozi's perspective, how does one compose a "valuable" activity? The conditions which compose "value" are not completely objective, but neither are they completely subjective; rather, they are a kind of evaluative process of an objective state existing within subjective thought. The source of the values which lie behind this evaluative process is the "will of Heaven"; but what are the characteristics of "Heaven"? How does one follow Heaven? *On the Necessity of Standards* states, "Heaven is all-inclusive and impartial in its activities, abundant and unceasing in its blessings, and lasting and untiring in its guidance." Heaven's love is like the sun and the rain, it gives universally to all people: this is the universality of its being "all-inclusive and impartial in its activities." In addition, heaven being "abundant and unceasing in its blessings" is unselfish and possesses

a kind of objectivity. And thirdly, from the fact that heaven is “lasting and untiring in its guidance,” we can see that heaven also possesses clarity and endurance. Mozi’s “Heaven” requires that people should reciprocally love and benefit each other; *Will of Heaven* and *On the Necessity of Standards* both say “Heaven desires righteousness and abominates unrighteousness”; in other words, heaven requires people to take righteousness as their value principle.

How then should this “universal love” which comes from heaven’s will be implemented? *Self-cultivation* states: “When the people near-by are not befriended there is no use of endeavouring to attract those at a distance. When one’s relatives are not submissive, there is no use in endeavouring to establish contacts with the outside world.” Thus in carrying out universal love there is a distinction between the near and the far, and between one’s relatives and those one is unrelated to. Does this not contradict universal love and its egalitarian quality? Tan Jia Jian writes, “Treating the father of another as one’s own father does not actually mean denying all differences between the two.”¹⁴ Wang Zan Yuan writes, “Universal love is egalitarian from the perspective of following Heaven; this is the level of the heart and mind. From the perspective of Mohist’s universal love is a love of humanity as a whole transcending time and space, an egalitarian love, which seeks genuine benefit and the common good, its method is loving others as one loves oneself, a mutually beneficial love achieved through reciprocity between people and individual pro-activeness. The characteristics of universal love can be separated into those on the idealist level and those on the practical level. On the idealist level there is universality and equality, for which the will of heaven serves as theoretical basis; on the practical level there is pro-activeness, reciprocity, and differences between the objects to which it applies.

The ideal level and the practical level must be coordinated with each other, just as yin and yang. If secularizing does not take a whole and transcendental view, only pursuing effectiveness and profit, it will lose both its value and goal. Likewise, having only an ideal and no practical means leaves us with just a mirage. In brief, the Mohist School calls for the diligent practice of universal love. It reminds the people that a whole-world vision is important, because sometimes

¹⁴ Tan Jia Jian, *Mozi Yanjiu* (Guiyang: Guizhou Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1995), p. 40.

partial good will make the whole worse-off, and short-term effectiveness will sometimes cause long-term damage.

Sacred and Secular from "Intention and Consequence"

"Intention" may surmount the immediately available field of vision; it is a pathfinder of life's structure. This is because the goal at which "intention" aims is inevitably a boundary which has not yet been achieved. The cause behind the intention itself is related to basic nature, and is not necessarily reasonable, but actually has strength. Therefore, we must knowingly and appropriately utilize the hidden strength which lies in secularization.

"Consequence" is sometimes visible and sometimes hidden, some may not be obvious in the short-term, but might be over a long time; consequences might be obvious, or might be hidden. Therefore, in the secularization process, improvement in human lives, rational gains, advancement of public order, and the promotion of justice, are not diametrically opposed to the sacred. Some aspects of secularization, like uncontrolled human desires, shortsightedness for immediate advantage, indifference in interpersonal relationships, and so on, are not functions of the basic human nature. Merely because the sacred has been constrained for a brief period of time, or sacredness is hidden in a potential state, we cannot claim that the sacred does not exist in human society, or think that secularization is the only or correct direction. From the perspective of Chinese metaphysics – the Yin and Yang, it is impossible to only save Yang but leave Yin. From the Chinese perspective, it is a wrong choice to suppress basic human nature for too long a time.

Conclusion

In Chinese metaphysics, the relation between sacred and secular is the relation between Yin and Yang, mutually influencing – passive strength and active strength. From the point of view of the Chinese theory of human nature, human nature comes from Heaven and Earth – basic nature and physical nature, Yin and Yang form a field of mutual influence. The basic nature in the porous self is yang; the physical nature in the porous self is yin. The basic nature in the buffered self is yin, and physical nature in the buffered self is yang.

From the point of view of Chinese epistemology, there are two kinds of different cognitive structures, one of which is the duality of

subject and object, the other where there are is no duality of subject and object; there is just the "whole one." We may observe, from these two patterns, the relationship between the sacred and the secular. From the structure of the duality of subject and object, the sacred and the secular are totally different and antagonistic, but from the structure of the "Whole one," the sacred and the secular are mutually complementary to each other.

From the structure of this duality we may grasp a change of reference systems, from God to Science. This explains the transformation of human society from the sacred to the secular. From the cognitional structure of the "Whole," we may, by way of "Dao," feel and know things, including both the sacred and the secular, together. "Dao" may be divided into "the way of Heaven," "the way of earth," and "the way of human beings." The sacred symbolizes the way of Heaven, secularity symbolizes the way of earth. However, humans must imitate the way of both Heaven *and* Earth, and need to maintain their balance and harmony diligently in human life.

With secularization, individualism, utilitarianism, and pragmatism have taken over human society's values, causing tensions in interpersonal relationships and international relations, a lack of concern for one another, one's country and seeking only one's own benefit. These same trends have produced a lack of a sense of the global village or a world – wide perspective, resulting in war after war, economic inequality and destruction of the environment. Countries pursue only their own economic interests. How might we respond to this onslaught of global secularization?

In our response, we have looked to the Mohist school of thought in Chinese philosophy that respects Heaven but does not adopt fatalism. The key is a different kind of praxis of universal love; a sense of "viewing self and other equally" and "treating other as self. This approach also sees every individual as "person," and treats all persons as equals. The intentions and the consequences complement one another when practicing universal love, and provide a vision which promotes a global ethics. Because the global dimension of ethics is the area in which humanity is most interlinked and important, it is also the area most urgently required for a better world, in this secularized time.

Like relations between yin and yang, there are positives, and also negatives in the sacred at the same time. The positive side is the union

and transcendence of human nature. It is the harmonious unification of reason, will, and emotion, and transcends time, space, and individuality; it offers an existential state of ultimate truth, ultimate goodness, and ultimate beauty. As a result, the sacred brings with it a kind of absolute authority. But on the negative side, there is also the disasters which superstition, deception and ignorance brings to uncritical peoples.

The secular also has positive and negative sides. Its positive side is, obviously, rational thinking and reflection, and improvement in peoples' lives; but on the negative side, it inflates the desires of humanity, and encourages self-righteousness and self-centeredness, which lead to disaster.

There is conflict in the complementary relation between the sacred and the secular, and there is also complementarity in the conflicting relations between sacred and secular. The manner that we should adopt is one of conscious and elective development of secularization, which emphasizes the sanctity in secularism, and establishes normative and elective standards in the development of secularization.

In the cognitional structure of the "Whole," we understood that the basic principle of Yin and Yang interaction, basic nature and physical nature complement one another, as well as the relations of intentions and consequences. The relation between universal love and particular practice with inspiration from Chinese philosophical thinking allows us to realize that the sacred and secularization develop dialectically. We need to carefully examine the meaning of the sacred in the modern world. It is an urgent matter to use the positive strength of the sacred to guide and inspire the development of secularization.

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Part VII
Islamic Tradition

The Sacred and Secular: Islamic Perspectives

BURHAN SSEBAYIGGA

Secularism is generally the assertion that certain practices or institutions should exist separately from religion or religious belief. Alternatively, it is a principle of promoting secular ideas and values in either public or private settings over religious ways of thought.

The term “secularism” was first used by the British writer George Jacob Holyoake in 1846. Although the term was new, the general notions of free thought on which it was based had existed throughout history. In particular, early secular ideas involving the separation of philosophy and religion can be traced back to Ibn Rushd (Averroes)¹ and the Averroist School of philosophy.²

Holyoake invented the term “secularism” to describe his views of promoting a social order separate from religion, without actively dismissing or criticizing religious belief. An agnostic himself, Holyoake argued that “secularism is not an argument against Christianity; it is one independent of it. It does not question the pretensions of Christianity, it advances others. Secularism does not say there is no light or guidance elsewhere, but maintains that there is light and guidance in secular truth, whose conditions and sanctions exist independently and are always acting. Secular knowledge is manifestly that kind of knowledge which is founded in this life, which relates to the conduct of this life is conducive for the welfare of this life, and is capable of being tested by the experience of this life.”³

Barry Kosmin of the institute for the study of secularism in society and culture breaks modern secularism into two types: hard and soft secularism. According to Kosmin, “the hard secularist considers religious propositions to be epistemologically illegitimate, warranted by neither religion nor experience. However, in the view of soft

¹ Abde wahab El Messeri” Episode 21: Ibn Rushd, Everything you wanted to know about Islam but was afraid to ask, *Philosophia Islamica*.

² Fauzi M. Najjar, (spring, 1996). “The Debate on Islam and Secularism in Egypt” in *Arab Studies Quarterly (ASQ)* vol. 18 Issue 2.

³ “Secularism,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, New advent.org.

secularism, “the attainment of absolute truth was impossible and therefore skepticism and tolerance should be the principle and overriding values in the discussion of science and religion.”⁴

Most major religions accept the primacy of the rules of secular, democratic society but may still seek to influence political decisions or achieve specific privileges or influence through church-state agreement such as a concordat. Many Christians support a secular state and may acknowledge that the idea has support in biblical teachings particularly Jesus’ statement “Then give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”⁵

Islam and Secularism

Many people feel that Islam is incompatible with secularism. Some even maintain that as long as one is a Muslim one cannot be a secularist. Saudi Arabia for example considers secularism abominable and secular states as enemies to Islam. Maududi, the founder of *Jamat-e-Islam*, while migrating to Pakistan, in 1948 said that secularism is un-Islamic and all those who participated in secular politics in India had rebelled against Islam.⁶

For the last two centuries, Muslims have found themselves caught up between authenticity (attachment to their values and culture) and modernity. They view most western ideas, ideologies and institutions as a threat to Islamic law, values and culture. Among these foreign imports, secularism seems to represent the greatest danger. As separation of religion and state, secularism was first championed by Christian writers like Ya’qub arruf, Faris Nimir Nicola Haddad, Salama Musa and others. Except for Salama Musa and Lewis Awad, these Christian immigrants were Syrians, who had found refuge from Ottoman rule in British – occupied Egypt. The first Muslim religious scholar to advocate secularism was Shaykh Ali Abd al-Raziq (1888 – 1966) in his book *Al-Islam wa Usūl al Hukm*, published in 1925. In that

⁴ Barry A. Kosmin, “Hard and soft secularists and soft secularism: an Intellectual research challenge” Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Conference October 19 – 21, 2006 Portland, Oregon Session on the study of secularism and irreligion Institute of the study of Secularism in Society and Culture, Trinity College 300 Summit Street Hartford, Connecticut 06106.

⁵ Luke, chapter 20 verse 25.

⁶ Asghar Ali (Secular perspective, June 1 – 15, 1999), Center for Study of Society and Secularism www.csssila.com.

famous and controversial work, Abd al-Raziq asserted that Islam was a religion and not a state, a message not a government, a spiritual edifice not a political institution. A proposition that led to his defrocking by the Azharite committee of Ulema.

The recent Islamic resurgence with its call for “return to Islam” or “Islam is the solution” has rekindled the debate between secularists and Islamists giving it an urgency and intensity previously unknown. Capitalizing on the failure of the various political and economic systems to solve social problems, Islamists have encapsulated the Muslim world’s problem into a struggle between religious and secular forces.

To the Islamists in general, secularism is equivalent to *Jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic period of ignorance) a slogan resurrected by the Pakistani scholar, Abu al-A’la al-Mawdudi and propagated by Sayyid Qutb in his book *Ma’alim fi al-Tariq*. Secularists have been accused by Islamists of being Muslim apostates and agents of Western powers and culture. In turn, they accuse the Islamists of being reactionaries and obscurantists. The arguments and methods used by both sides are so opposed to each other, as to delineate “two cultures.”⁷

The Arabic term for secularism is *almaniyya*. According to the Arabic language Academy in Cairo, the term is derived from *alam* (world), and not from *ilm* (science), as some think, thus giving the wrong impression that science is opposed to religion. Some writers suggest the Arabic term *alamaniyya* in order to avoid the confusion. Others prefer *dunyawiyya* (worldly) in contrast to *dini* (religious).

In Egypt, the term *almani* was first used in the later part of the Nineteenth century in the sense of worldly and non-ecclesiastical. When the Wafd-party was established in 1919, it was called *Hizb Almani* (secular party), meaning that it was based on social, political and national identities, with no reference to religion. Its slogan was *al-din lilah wa al-watan li al-jami’a* (religion belongs to God, the homeland belongs to all). The party was not opposed to religion; it simply rejected any ecclesiastical order in Islam, as well as the king’s attempt to use religion to buttress his authority.⁸

In 1924, Mustafa Kamal Atatürk abolished the caliphate in Turkey and established an anti-religious political system, described as *laique*

⁷ Fuad Zakariyya “al-Thaqafatan” *al-Ahram*, News Paper 19 January, 1994.

⁸ Muhammad Sa’id al ‘Ashmawi, “al-Islam wa al-’Almaniyya,” in *al-Ahram* (News Paper), 23 March, 1993.

(secular). Thus the term acquired its “bad” connotation in the Muslim world, and *almaniyya* has been associated with irreligion ever since. Nowadays, Islamists have succeeded in equating it with atheism in the mind of the public, using it a slogan to intimidate their political adversaries, charging them with apostasy and unbelief, deserving the death punishment.

Most Islamists look upon secularism as a kind of *Kufr* (unbelief) and whoever advocated secularism a Muslim apostate, according to Muhammad al-Ghazali, a leading Egyptian theologian. “A separation of religion and state secularism is unadulterated *Kufr*.” The Saudi Arabian Directorate of *Ifta* preaching and Guidance has issued a decree that whoever believes that there is a guidance more perfect than that of the Prophet, or that someone has a better judgment than his...is *Kafir*. It lists a number of specific tenets which would be regarded as serious departure from the precepts of Islam namely: The belief that:

1. Institutions and laws enacted by human beings are superior to Sharia.
2. Islam has been the cause of backwardness of Muslims.
3. Islam is irrelevant in the 20th century
4. Islam is limited to one’s relation with God, and has nothing to do with the daily affairs of life.
5. The application of *hudūd* (legal punishments decreed by God) is incompatible with modern age.
6. It is permissible not to rule according to what God has revealed.

It concluded that whoever permits what God has prohibited is a *Kafir*.⁹

Muslim liberal thinkers, secularists and westernized writers have always been looked upon as renegades from Islam. Abd al-Raziq’s case mentioned above was a high water mark in the tension between Islamists and secularists. For his contention that the Prophet was only a messenger and not a ruler, that he preached a religion and not a state, and that the caliphate was not part of Islamic dogmas, al-Raziq

⁹ Muhammad Ibrahim Mabruk, *al’Almaniyyun* (Cairo, 1990), 148; Fauzi M. Najjar, “The Debate on Islam and Secularism in Egypt,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* (ASQ), Vol. 18, 1996.

was vilified and excommunicated. He became anathema to Islamists, and those who upheld his views evoked vengeance from extremists.¹⁰

Simultaneously Taha Husayn (1889-1976), Egypt's blind scholar suffered a somewhat similar fate for his book *Fi al-Shi'ri al-Jahili* (pre-Islamic poetry) published in 1926. In this book, Husayn argued that "religious motives had contributed to the forging of the so called pre-Islamic poems" and that the Quranic stories of Abraham and Isma'il were myths. For such unorthodox opinions, he was branded an apostate by al-Azhar, and al-Manar magazine which demanded his dismissal from the university. Under pressure the book was withdrawn from circulation and reissued under a different title, with the reference to Ibrahim and Ismail deleted.¹¹

Husayn did not fare any better with the publication of his book, *Mustaqbal al-Thaqafa fi Misr* (the future of culture in Egypt), published in 1938. For his advocacy of separating religion from politics, and for adopting Western ways in research and education, he was vilified as the "living symbol" of secularism. Following in the foot steps of Europeans was to him the key to reform.¹²

In an article entitled "To secondary school students: Beware of the writings of Taha Husayn," published in al-Mukhtar al-Islami (17 April 1992), Dr. Layla Bayyumi charges that including Husayn's novel "*al-Shaykhan*" in the curriculum is intended to "disseminate the poison and ideas of Husayn and the like, those who always were supporters of crusades, Christianity and Zionism and leaders in Westernization and secularization." The central point in the novel for which Husayn is condemned is his contention that the Qur'an did not prescribe a system for the selection of caliphs; neither did the Sunna. Bayyumi regards the novel as a "specimen of the conspiracy to confuse the minds of the youth of this Muslim nation, and a proof of Taha Husayn's falsification, hatred and hostility to Islam."¹³

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Ahmad Baha'al-Din, *Ayyamlaha Tarikh* (Days with History) Dar al-Kitab Al-Arabi, 3rd ed. (Cairo 1967), 213-222.

¹² Piere Cachia, *Taha Husayn: His Place in the Egyptian literacy Renaissance* (London: Luzac & Company, 1956), 60.

¹³ Muhammad al-Bahi, *al-Fikr al-Islami wal - Mujtama al-Muasir* (Beirut Dar al-Kitab al-Islami, 1975).

Other contemporary advocates of secularism include Yusuf Idris, Muhammad Khalaf Allah, Fu'ad Zakariyya, Zaki Najib Muhammad and Najib Mahfuz the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature.

The Case of Faraj Foda

The assassination of Faraj Foda by two members of Islamic Jihad on 8 June 1992, for having been a secularist, underscores the degree of bipolarization in the Muslim community. Foda, a former university professor and a prominent writer, had published a number of books and articles in support of freedom of expression, democracy and separation of religion and politics. While the Islamists described his arguments as *mantiq al-kufr* (logic of blasphemy), he accused them of obscurantism, narrow-mindedness and bigotry, and called them "enemies of democracy and freedom."¹⁴

Foda maintained that the caliphate was a worldly and not a religious affair, a political and not a divinely-ruled institution. Islamic history provides sufficient evidence that mixing religion and politics has been responsible for violence and intolerance in Islamic movements, he asserted. He attacked the Islamist idea of a religious state, which "neither the modern age would accept, nor the *Watan* (homeland) could embrace without endangering its unity, and destroying whatever margins of culture it has acquired."¹⁵ A religious state, he added, "is bound to lead, to rule, by divine right, a kind of rule Islam did not know except at the time of the Prophet. Rule by divine right cannot be exercised except by clergymen, either directly or indirectly, which would certainly lead to the collapse of national unity in Egypt."¹⁶

While the Egyptian Organization of Human Rights deplored the assassination of one of its founders, calling him "a martyr of freedom of thought and belief," and many Egyptians and non-Egyptians expressed outrage and moral indignation at this senseless act of murder, others regarded Foda's execution as an act of divine justice. This latter position was adopted by one Islamic scholar, who despite his expounding of the merciful virtues of Islam, argued that a

¹⁴ *Al-Ahali* (News Paper), no. 579, 11 November, 1992.

¹⁵ Yahya Hashim Farghal, *Haqiqat al-Almaniyya* (Cairo, 1989), 315-316, (The debate on Islam and Secularism in Egypt), Faraj Foda, *Gabla al suqut* (Cairo, F.A. Fawda 1985), 26-28.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

secularist must be punished by death. In his testimony before the High Court of State on 22 June 1993, in the murder trial of the Islamic extremists accused of Foda's assassination, the scholar stated that a secularist represented danger to society, and it was the duty of the government to put him to death. He added that if the government failed to carry out that duty, groups or individuals were free to do so.¹⁷

Not all Islamists countenance the vilification and murder of secularists. Moderate Islamists have advanced arguments against secularism, which they regard as Western institution. According to them secularists are misguided or simply wrong, even though they may be well-intentioned. They blame them for assuming that everything Western is good.

Muhammad Imara divides the secularists into two categories: the extremists, a minority, who reject religion altogether, and the moderates, the majority, who believe in God, have no quarrel with religion, or who may even observe religious rites, and nonetheless, advocate separation between religion and state. Imara says:

They are believers in God as Creator of the universe, and non-believers in Him as the Controller of worldly affairs. They are not infidels, nor are they believers; they believe parts of the Scriptures and deny others.¹⁸

Fahmi Huwaydi, a columnist for *al-Ahram*, adds that moderate secularists accept the dogma, albeit with reservations, but express serious misgivings about Shari'a application, lest it would jeopardize freedom, equality and democracy.¹⁹

Muslim scholars regard secularism as a purely European phenomenon, an outcome of certain conditions prevailing in the Middle Ages.

Unlike Christianity, Islam is a faith and a law, a Shari'a that envisages a religio-political community (*umma*) governed by God's laws. Hence, there is no way Islam can be separated from state. "Islam is a religion as well as state" goes the often repeated dictum. Tariq al-Bishri, says:

Secularism and Islam cannot agree except by means of *talfiq* [combining the doctrines of more than one school of

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

¹⁸ *Al-Ahali* (News Paper), No. 557, 10 June, 1992.

¹⁹ *Al-Ahali* (News Paper), No. 612, 30 June, 1993.

thought, i.e., falsification], or by each turning away from its true meaning.²⁰

Of all Western institutions, theories and ideas, secularism poses the biggest challenge to Islam. Compared to the dangers of Westernization in the modern age, the Crusades were less threatening, because "they had brought along nothing that was attractive to Muslims. Rather they returned carrying with them elements of Islamic culture." They were, in the words of 'Usama bin Munqiz (1095-1188), an Arab knight and a man of letters, who fought the Crusaders and sometimes befriended them, "animals lacking all virtues except that of fighting."²¹

In modern times, the situation was quite different. Under Ottoman rule, the Muslim world stagnated for centuries, while the West experienced development and progress. Western civilization was "human civilization," "world civilization," or "the civilization of the age;" everything else belonged to a bygone heritage, or the dump heap of history. Imara asserts that, "We do not reject secularism because it has been imported from the West. We need only examine our circumstances in light of our Islamic religion and its nature, to find out whether secularism would mean progress for us in the same way it did for Europe, or whether it would prove to be inappropriate and harmful."²²

In his effort to demonstrate that secularism is either inimical, extrinsic or inappropriate to Islam, Imara, focuses on basic differences between the two ideologies:

1. Whereas Islam gives priority to public interest, and sanctions what the Muslim community considers good and beneficial, Western secularism is utilitarian, and individualistic.
2. Lack of interest in the supernatural and emphasis on human reason are some of the distinguishing features of secularism.

²⁰ An article in *al-Sha'b* (News Paper), of 7 January, 1994, quoted in *al-Ahram* (News Paper), 17 January, 1994.

²¹ Fahmi Huwaidi, "Tahriral-Mas'ala al-'Almaniyya," *al-Ahram* (News Paper), 1 September, 1992, Muhammad Imara, *Ma'rakat al-Islam wa Usul al-Hakm* (Cairo, 1989), 170-171.

²² *Al-Ahram* (News Paper), 12 December, 1989; *Al-Sha'b* (New Paper), No. 316, 24 December, 1985.

3. Secular society is indifferent to traditional values.²³

The Muslim fundamentalists' slogan, *la hukma illa li-Llah* (sovereignty belongs to God alone) repudiates the notion that the 'Umma is the custodian of authority, and plays in the hands of secularists, who see in it a threat to the basic principles of modern society. The slogan was first used by the Kharijites when they opposed Ali's acceptance of human arbitration with regard to his conflict with Muawiya. However later figures, like al Ghazali (1058 – 1111) and al Amidi (1156 – 1233), used it to affirm God's sovereignty.

In modern times the concept of *Hakimiyya* was used by Abul-A'la al-Mawdudi (1903 – 1979), who rejected democracy which according to him was "sovereignty of the masses." *Hakimiyya* was also welcomed by Ayotollah Khomeini because it is synonymous to his doctrine of "*Wilayat al-fagih*" (rulership of jurist).

In late 1992 *Jam'iyyat al-Nida' al-Jadid* (New Appeal Society) was established as a "platform for liberal thought." The founders, mostly Muslim Egyptians, university professors, businessmen, media persons and leading thinkers, stress the need for disseminating and strengthening liberal values and ideas, as a prerequisite for Egypt's ability to face the challenges of the 21st century. They also believe that Egypt had experienced a long liberal tradition worthy of revival and development.

On 20 February 1993, the Society inaugurated its "cultural season" with a lecture by its president, Dr. Sa'id al-Najjar, an economist and former World Bank official. The title of the lecture was "Egypt and the Challenges of the Age." In his presentation, Najjar outlined the new developments that had taken place in the world, such as the collapse of Soviet Union and the socialist camp, the failure of economic and political totalitarianism, and the trend toward market economy. Stressing that Egypt has a long way to go before becoming a democracy, he called for a revision of the Constitution, political reform, popular participation, freedom of the judiciary, and the media.

²³ Muhammad Imara, *Al-'Almaniyya wa Nahdatuna al-Haditha* (Cairo, 1986 Dar Nahdat Misr, Silsilat Tanweer al Islami), 9-10 "Hakimiyyat Qanun al-Suq" a commentary on a conference on "The Down fall of secularism and the Islamic challenge to the West "Organized by center for Democratic Studies of Westminster University, *al-Ahram* (News Paper), 5 July, 1994, "Mukhatabat Allah bi al-fax, in *al-Ahram* (News Paper), 12 July, 1994.

A society's position regarding the Islamic activities is based on five principles:

1. Recognition of the fact that a nation without a history is a nation without a future.
2. Belief that Islam is the religion of reason, and reason presumes and accommodates change.
3. The Muslim world's deliverance from underdevelopment, poverty and dependency requires the adoption of modern science and technology.
4. Logical interpretation of the Shari'a confirms that it is compatible with human rights.
5. All political forces must be regulated by a set of inviolable values.²⁴

In October 1992 *Jam'iyyat al-Tanwir* (Enlightenment society) was established. The Society seeks to counteract the claims of Islamists (whom it describes as *salafi* and reactionary) by disseminating liberal and rational ideas, thus reviving Egypt's enlightenment tradition. In addition to holding seminars, the *Tanwiriyyun*, as they are called, publish a bulletin (*al-Tanwir*) to propagate their views. The first issue appeared in December 1993, and contained articles by the late Faraj Foda, Yunan Labib Rizq, Rif'at al-Sa'id, Sa'd al-Din Ibrahim, and others.²⁵

Of equal importance is a series of books (*kutub al-Tanwir*), published by the General Egyptian Book Organization. The fact that the Book Organization is a government institution reveals the position of the state on the question of the Islamists. The sixty or so books already published are divided into three categories:

1. Books on enlightenment, rationalism and scientific thought. Most of these are reprints of publications that had challenged the traditional Islamic outlook on society, law and culture.
2. Books that propagate enlightenment.
3. A collection entitled *al-Muwajaha*, consisting of articles and studies dealing with extremism, national unity and the application of the Shari'a.²⁶

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-18.

²⁶ *Al-Ahram* (News Paper), 23 February, 1993, Al-Ahli, no. 595, 24 February, 1993.

Writing in al-Ahram on 26 May 1993, Abd al-Muati Hijazi, the first president of the Society, applauded the courage and dedication of the pioneers of enlightenment, who risked everything to lead Egyptians out of darkness into light, defended democracy and constitutionalism, condemned backwardness, fanaticism and oppression, and called for separation of religion and state.

They sought to liberate the mind from rigidity and bondage, to save women from ignorance and idleness, emancipate them from the harem-prison, and to open up to different cultures of the world. They recognized that culture, throughout history, has been a common endeavor, to which all nations contribute, and that truth is not the preserve of any culture. For a nation to be closed upon itself is a sign of weakness, backwardness and inertia.²⁷

In a three-day workshop on the enlightenment movement, sponsored by the Committee on History and Thought of the Supreme Council for Culture, held under the auspices of the Minister of Culture, Faruq Husni, the *Tanwiriyyun* declared that Islam and Islamic thought encourages the use of reason. In his presentation, Dr. Asfur, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Culture, defined *tanwir* as simply the "use of reason." He quoted statements by early Muslim philosophers extolling reason as being the foundation of knowledge, and that knowledge emanates from reason as light emanates from the sun.

By comparing reason to light, he sought to convey that enlightenment is ingrained in the Islamic heritage. The Mutazilites, he said, were the first champions of reason in Islam. In modern times, the reformist Muhammad Abduh stressed that rational inquiry is one of the principles of Islam.

Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and the Enlightenment Movement

Of all Muslim authorities cited by the *Tanwiriyyun* in support of the use of reason, none has been given greater coverage and importance than the Muslim philosopher Abu al-Walid Ibn Rushd (1126-1198), known to the West as Averroes. Murad Wahba, professor of philosophy at 'Ayn Shams University, was the first to call for an Arab

²⁷ *Al-Ahali* (News Paper), No. 637, 22 December, 1993.

enlightenment movement based on the philosophy of Ibn Rushd, in particular his theory of *ta'wil*, allegorical interpretation. According to Ibn Rushd, the religious text has an exoteric and an esoteric meaning. If the exoteric meaning is at variance with reason, the text must be interpreted according to reason. His assertion that there is no authority above reason made Ibn Rushd's thought one of the roots of the European Enlightenment, says Wahba. He recalls that Frederick II (1194-1250), Emperor of Germany and King of Sicily, had ordered Ibn Rushd's works translated so that he could use them as an argument in his war with religious authorities.

After a brief review of the influence of Averroism on European thought, Wahba mentions how the great philosopher was persecuted for his ideas, his books burned, and how he was tried for *kufur* and *zandaqa* (atheism) and banished to his village. His theory of *ta'wil* subordinated religion to reason, and turned it into a collection of representations, as al-Ghazali had put it. In general, Muslim ulema reproach Ibn Rushd, and insist on the literal meaning of the text. Conservative Muslims have always regarded philosophy as an enemy of religion. That is why when Farah Antun's book, *Ibn Rushd wa Falsafatuhu*, one of the first reprints by the Enlightenment Society, was published in 1903, al-Manar magazine accused him of blasphemy. It was Rashid Rida, editor of al-Manar, who urged Muhammad Abduh to respond to Antun's contentions, accusing him of atheism.²⁸

It can be argued that the naturalism and rationalism of Averroism provided a philosophical justification for the doctrine of separation of church and state. Secularism in the West may claim Ibn Rushd as one of its philosophic exponents. It is for this very reason that his teaching has had no influence in the Muslim East. While Ibn Rushd is alive in the West, says Wahba, he is dead in the East, and where Averroism is dead, enlightenment is dead. Muslim conservatives have always been intent on "smothering the seeds of secularism" in Ibn Rushd's thought, because if these seeds germinate, they would emancipate reason, whose absence in the Muslim world is at the bottom of its backwardness, Wahba contends.²⁹

Wahba is one of the pioneers of the enlightenment movement. In 1975, he edited a "Supplement on Philosophy and Science" for *Al-*

²⁸ *Al-Ahram* (News Paper), 2 June, 1993.

²⁹ *Al-Ahram* (News Paper), 26 May, 1993.

Tala'a magazine, with the first issue appearing in April (1975). It came to an abrupt end when in March 1977 President Sadat ordered the closing down of the magazine. At the time, Wahba stressed the need for a cultural revolution based on the "emancipation of reason, which is the distinctive feature of the age of enlightenment." The emancipation of reason, he suggested, calls for a commitment to apply reason in addressing the problems of society, just as the advanced world had done.³⁰

As a contribution to the enlightenment movement in Egypt, 'Atif al-Iraqi, professor of Arabic philosophy at Cairo University, and a champion of the philosophy of Ibn Rushd, edited a volume on the Muslim philosopher, with contributions from eighteen scholars, among them Dr. Ibrahim Madkour, president of the Arabic Language Academy, Dr. Murad Wahba, and the late Father Georges Anawati. The book was published by the Committee on Philosophy and Sociology of the Supreme Council of Culture. In it, as well as in his other writings, Iraqi stresses Ibn Rushd's rationalism, his impact on European thought and the need to rehabilitate his philosophy in the Muslim world.

Following Aristotle, Ibn Rushd gives priority to demonstrative proof (*burhan*), the highest form of certainty, over dialectic and rhetoric.

Wisdom is inquiry into things in accordance with the rules of demonstration, he asserts. While philosophers apply demonstration, theologians use dialectical and rhetorical arguments. The principles guiding "men of demonstration" are rational and logical.

Demonstration determines that we know things by their causes, and that is true knowledge. The condition for true knowledge is that conclusions necessarily follow from necessary premises or propositions, which are neither impossible nor variable. Among the theologians who deny the role of reason, al-Ghazali and the Ash'arites receive the most devastating attack by Ibn Rushd, and their arguments are dismissed as mere sophistry and contrary to human nature.³¹

Al-Iraqi insists that only through reason and the rational method can Muslims address issues like enlightenment, religious extremism, tradition and modernity. He maintains that Europe progressed

³⁰ *Al-Ahram* (News Paper), 17 April, 1994.

³¹ Murad Wahba, "Ibn Rushd bayna Farah Antun wa Rashid Rida" in *al-Ahali* (News Paper), No. 607, 26 May, 1993.

because it adopted Ibn Rushd as a model. In contrast, the Arabs have regressed because they followed traditional thinkers, like al-Ghazali, the Ash'arites and Ibn Taymiyya, whose thought and teachings augur backwardness and descent into the abyss. Had the Arabs taken Ibn Rushd's call to science, they would have achieved greater progress in thought and culture.

Unfortunately, "we are still talking about mythical and legendary beings, and things that elude the imagination." Muslims tend to mix science with religion, and, according to al-Iraqi, there is no relationship between philosophy (science) and Islam; all attempts to reconcile the two have failed miserably. "Woe to the Arab nation when it seeks to derive scientific theories from Quranic verses. Such an attempt is totally wrong and would cause harm to both religion and science."³²

Al-Iraqi goes further to suggest that the Arab World should become "a part of Europe," bringing to memory Khedive Isma'il's (1863-1879) famous statement.

Laudable as its activities have been, the Enlightenment Society has not escaped criticism, even by some of its supporters. Dr. Hasan Hanafi, a professor of philosophy at Cairo University, has described most of the contributions on Ibn Rushd as "rhetorical," and blamed the authors for using Averroist philosophy to attack religious extremism in the name of reason, and by so doing buttress the regime against its political enemies.³³

Mustafa al-Nashshar disputes the Tanwiriyyun's premise of every advocate of enlightenment. Although they were linked together during certain periods of the Western Renaissance, enlightenment and secularism had different origins, al-Nashshar asserts. The result of this linkage, which liberated the Western mind from the hegemony of the Church, has been progress in the sciences, politics, economics and the arts. But despite this historical linkage, many Western thinkers, like Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) and Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), have lamented the fact that spiritual and moral development has not kept pace with material progress. They warn that unless the balance between the two is restored, the downfall of Western civilization is inevitable. Thus Western enlightenment in the Twentieth Century is no longer tied to secularism; it stresses the

³² *Al-Ahali* (News Paper), No. 581, 25 November, 1992.

³³ Milaf Abd al-Nasir; *Hiwar al-Yasar al-Masri Ma'a Tawfiq al-Hakim* (Beirut, 1975), 128-129; *Al-Ahali* (News Paper), No. 586, 30 December, 1992.

role of religion and moral thought in human life, and the development of religious and spiritual consciousness has become in the eyes of Western advocates of enlightenment one of the foundations of modern education.³⁴

Ever since, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk abolished the Caliphate and separated religion from state, a great debate has raged in the Islamic world. Perhaps nowhere is it more intensely debated than Pakistan, where Jinnah very clearly and consistently declared that religion would have nothing to do with business of the state. The debate is whether the concept of the separation of religion from state is acceptable to Islamic discourse. There are obviously two camps, one which believes that yes it is and the other one which believes that such a concept is alien to the Islamic understanding of politics.

Muhammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher who the Islamists do not tire quoting, was in fact the first to accept that a separation of religion and state is indeed possible in Islamic political thought. While defending the Republic of Turkey and its actions, Iqbal said in his famous lecture on "The Principle of Movement in the Structure of Islam." "They therefore, reject old ideas about functions of state and religion and accentuate the separation of church and state. The structure of Islam as a religion-political system no doubt does permit such a view." This is essentially the argument of the secular Muslims, and the idea that was floated by Muhammad Ali Jinnah at the time of the creation of Pakistan. To him the whole debate about a theocratic Islamic state was "nonsense" as Islam, in its idealism had spoken about complete democracy.

No doubt to arrive at this view, he was greatly influenced by Iqbal who had convinced him that "social democracy" was not "revolutionary" but a return to the true spirit of Islam. Hence to him and most of his comrades, Islam in no way was a limitation, and even when some tried to make it a limitation, Jinnah was quick to shoot it down, by declaring any and all theocratic moorings to be an anti-thesis of the egalitarian and progressive spirit of the Islamic ideas.³⁵

³⁴ Atif al-Iraqi, ed. *Ibn Rushd Mufakkirah Arabiyyan wa Raidan li al-Hijah al-Aqli* (Cairo, 1993); *al-Ahali* (News Paper), No 657, 11 May, 1994.

³⁵ Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (London and Lahore Ashraf, 1930).

Islamic “Reformism” and Jihad: On the Discourse of Tariq Ramadan

One of the fundamental concepts of the discourse of Tariq Ramadan is that of “reformism.” He has recourse to this concept whenever he presents his own conception of Islam or when he makes reference to the Muslim Brothers. Thus, in his book *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, Ramadan constructs a typology of philosophical currents in contemporary Islam and distinguishes six major tendencies: scholastic traditionalism, salafi literalism, salafi reformism, literalist political salafism, “liberal” or “rationalist” reformism and Sufism. In the third category of “reformism,” he cites the names of Hassan al-Banna, Rashid Rida and Sayyid Qutb, as well as those of the Indian author Mawdudi and the Iranian Shariati.

The use of the term “reformism” to designate this school of Muslim thought is deceptive; strictly speaking, the term “reformism” designates a political doctrine aiming to transform political, economic and social structures by legal means. This definition immediately sets in relief the problematic character of the use of the concept “reformism” by Tariq Ramadan. The theorists whom he treats under this heading are, in effect, the principal theoreticians of contemporary Islamism: those who aim at the overthrow of the ruling regimes in the Arab – Muslim world via violent Jihad. Thus, the authority of Sayyid Qutb is invoked by the most radical currents in Islamist movement. As for Shariati, he was one of the inspirations for the Ayatollah Khomeini.

These are not reformists then, but revolutionaries: i.e. partisans of a radical transformation of existing political structure who advocate the use of violence. In fact, Ramadan intentionally creates a confusion between two schools of thought that are distinct, even if historically linked: the first is that of Muslim thinkers known as “Reformists” of the end of 19th century, such as al-Afghani and Abduh; the second is that of the theoreticians of contemporary Islamism, such as al-Banna, Qutb, and Mawdudi.³⁶ As Gilles Kepel explains, the appropriate term in scholarly usage to designate the first school is “salafism,” which he defines as: “a school of thought which surfaced in the second half of the 19th century as a reaction to the spread of European ideas. It

³⁶ Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the future of Islam* (New York: Oxford University press, 2004), pp. 24-28.

advocated a return to the traditions of the devout ancestors (*salaf*). Exemplified by the Persian al-Afghani, the Egyptian Abduh, the Syrian Rida, it sought to expose the roots of modernity within Muslim civilization.³⁷

Those called “reformists” by Tariq Ramadan are the precursors of contemporary Islamism. Al-Afghani and his disciple Abduh, in effect, established the foundations of Islamist doctrine and they have exercised a direct influence on the development of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Al-Afghani is the first Muslim thinker in modern times to have formulated the claims of Islam in political terms. He interpreted the message of the Quran in a revolutionary manner and transformed it into an ideological weapon against the colonial powers and against “the Muslim sovereigns accused of having dismembered the *Ummah* into nationalist micro-states.”³⁸ A half a century before Mawdudi, al-Banna and Qutb, al-Afghani defined the supreme objective of the Islamist movement; to re-establish the *Ummah*.

One of the pivotal ideas of Muhammad Abduh – an idea that is also found in al-Banna and Tariq Ramadan – is the essential importance of education. Latifah bin Mansur has noted that a large number of Islamists have been school teachers (al-Banna and Qutb in Egypt, Madani and Benhadji in Algeria). Tariq Ramadan (himself a school teacher in Geneva) insists on this point in his book *Aux Sources du renouveau Musulman* [on the source of Muslim Renewal]. The chapter on Abduh is titled “Muhammad Abduh, Education and Teaching.” It is the importance that Abduh attaches to education that explains his position to al-Afghani, who gave priority rather to political action. Ramadan comments:

Two aspects of his engagement will have priority henceforth: education and teaching, on the one hand, by the necessity of things and far removed from the participation of al-Afghani, a politics of stages conceived for the long term.³⁹

This idea of a politics of stages is fundamental to the history of the Islamist movement. One finds it in most of the theoreticians of the

³⁷ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 219-220.

³⁸ Paul Landau, *Le saber et le Coran* (Edition du Rocher, 2005), Chapter II.

³⁹ Tariq Ramadan, *Aux sources du renouveau Musulman. D'al-Afghani á Hassan Al-Banna, un Siècle de reformise Islamique* (Lyon: Editions Tawhid, 2002).

Islamist revolution (al-Banna, Qutb and Ramadan himself). It is in fact the same opposition between Afghani and Abduh that is playing itself out again today, a century later, between the two tendencies of the Islamist movement: that of the “*Jihadi*” who advocate the use of violence to ensure the triumph of Islam, and that of the Islamists sometimes mistakenly described as “moderates” – such as Yusuf al-Qardhwi and Tariq Ramadan – who give priority to education and the effects of propaganda over the long term and who criticize the “participation” of Ben Laden and his followers. Tariq Ramadan is indeed a salafi. He preaches a return to the original idealized origin of Islam – i.e. to the Qur’an and Sunna: to an “Islam purified of the accidents of its traditional interpretation.” He claims to “uncover the roots of modernity” in Islamic civilization. This idea of the “modernity of Islam” that Ramadan adopts is already to be found in Hassan al-Banna, who formulates it as follows:

The best thing for all humanity is that Muslims return to their religion. This would be one of the most important factors favoring peace on earth. What pushes us in this direction is not a blind fanaticism, but rather the most intense conviction concerning the well-foundedness of Islamic traditions, as well as the fact that the message of Islam is in perfect agreement with what modern thought has revealed concerning the most healthy norms of society and its intangible foundations.⁴⁰

This insistence on the modernity of Islam and its universalist peretensions accounts for the constant efforts of Tariq Ramadan to gain recognition as a scholar by virtue of his style of discourse. Tariq Ramadan tries to acquire legitimacy in the academic world, attempting to pass for a “Muslim reformer” whose attachment to modern ideas and democratic values cannot be doubted. In doing so Tariq Ramadan exploits a fundamental misunderstanding in the popular view of Islamist movements: namely the idea that Islamists are “obscurantists, who know nothing about modern world. Now, on the contrary, Islamists, as many observers have remarked, are in effect Westerners, inspired by modern political ideologies. Thus, the

⁴⁰ Hassan Al-Banna, *As-Salam fil Islam* [“peace in Islam”], Cited in Tariq Ramadan, *Aux sources du renouveau Muslman*.

historian Bat Ye'or notes that Islamist ideologies developed – not at all in traditional and obscurantist milieu – but among intellectuals holding degrees from American and European Universities.”⁴¹

Daniel Pipes provides several concrete examples that illustrate this too often overlooked fact. Hassan Tourabi, the Sudanese Islamist leader holds degrees from the University of the Sorbonne. Abbasi Madani, Leader of the Algerian FIS [Islamic Salvation Front], has a doctorate in education from the University of London. Mohammed Abu MarZook, head of the political branch of Hamas, holds a degree from the University of Louisiana. Osama Ben Laden, who we have become used to seeing bearded and with a turban in front of his cave on al Jazeera is western educated.

What this enumeration shows is that Islamists are in effect Westerners educated in western universities and using the concepts and tools of western thought.

And – contrary to popular opinion – it is precisely there in that their danger lies. What is dangerous about Islamists is not Islam, but the ideological usage that they make of it. For the Islamists, Islam serves, in effect, as a substratum upon which they construct an ideology of power inspired by European political ideologies (communism, Fascism, Nazism). Paradoxically, however, at the same time the Islamists use their Western education to make themselves accepted among western audiences and to dissimulate the subversive and dangerous character of their ideology and their political objectives.

Tariq Ramadan is a virtuoso in playing upon this confusion and the basic misunderstanding of the real nature of Islamism that it entails. He presents himself as a “professor of philosophy and Islamology” and invokes his title of expert consultant to different commissions attached to European parliament.”

The best example to illustrate this is Jihad to which he has devoted a small book entitled Jihad, violence, war and peace in Islam. Here is what he writes in the introduction:

⁴¹ Bat Ye'or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christian under Islam* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985). *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations collide* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001); Sidney H. Griffith, “The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: from Jihad to Dhimmitude, Seventh-Twentieth Century by Bat Ye'or, Miriam Kochan, David Littman,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Vol. 30, No. 4, November, 1998.

The term Jihad, which has become so widespread in the media, seems alone to bear the entire burden of the fears of Islam and Muslims provoke. What has one not heard, in effect, about "holy war," about the fanatic mobilization of "God's crazies," about this "new scourge of rampant fundamentalism"?

What follows in characteristic of Ramadan's *modus operandi*? To start with, he recognizes the pertinence of the question: "The observer is indeed forced to admit that Islam is in a regressive state nowadays, since everywhere we see groups, movements, parties and governments calling for Jihad, for armed struggle, for political violence: But immediately thereafter, having recognized the reality of Jihad, he insidiously relatives its significance:

Wars have never provoked as many deaths as the world order instituted over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries: Currently, 40,000 persons die each day of hunger of which approximately 10,000 die because of debt. Never before this famous globalization...has any world order provoked as many deaths as have been provoked in the last two centuries and especially today. The calculation is very simple: every two days the current world order provokes the same number of deaths as the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. This global reality, this violence, is not a matter of arms.

The true war mongers are not those who call for Jihad. The real guilty parties are the current world order and globalization.⁴²

Ramadan is in, effect, in favour of Jihad. Not only does he not condemn the terrorist groups who engage in Jihad, but he justifies their actions by describing Jihad as "armed resistance" and invoking the authority of the pope and the Abbe Pierre in support of this characterization! Thus, just as "the pope took a position concerning the situation in former Yugoslavia" i.e in favour of the use of force, and just as "the Abbe Pierre called for an armed intervention by the west in appealing to the example and the teaching of Jesus," so the exist situations in which armed resistance is legitimate."⁴³

⁴² Paul Laudau adapted from chapter 8 of *Le Sabre et La coran*, translated from French by Transatlantic Intelligencer, 2005.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

An Alternative to Islamism: The Evolutionary Thought of Mahmud Taha

Along with a host of other reformist theologians and Muslim modernists, Mahmud Taha subscribed enthusiastically to evolution. Such a theory enabled him to project Islam as a culmination of gradually unfolding revelation. All the Biblical and non-Biblical prophets had paved the way for the coming of Muhammad, who brought the ultimate wisdom. Thereafter, humankind is left to itself, without further initiatives from the above. It has attained the age of maturity and may master its own destiny with the help of the revelation enshrined in al-Qur'an.

Although this view of history was stimulated by the ideas of Darwin, it was not altogether foreign to Muslims; Mystics and philosophers had many times pointed in this direction, spurred on by what was said in the Qur'an. Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d.1887) and Muhammad Iqbal (d.1938) in Pakistan, and Muhammad Abduh (d.1905) and Ahmad Amin (d.1954) in Egypt, were only the most outstanding thinkers who popularized such ideas in the last hundred and fifty years.

The problem they faced was how to reconcile the idea of never – ending progress, the basic theme of evolution, with the belief that history attained its peak with the advent of Muhammad in the Seventh Century. For the majority of traditionalist theologians, it was even more complicated, they could not discern any upward movement in Muslim history, all they perceived was a steady downward trend. The decline of Muslim empires and subsequent subjugation to colonial rule caused many scholars of religion – ulama – to glorify the earliest periods of Islamic history as golden ages. Neo-fundamentalists restricted the golden age of justice to the earliest phase of the caliphate, when Medina was the capital of the Muslim empire. For some this meant no more than thirty years of the Righteous Caliphs including Ali's reign. By contrast, modernists, with a more tolerant acceptance of cultural history, concluded that later period – such as the centuries of splendor alternating between Baghdad, Cordova, Istanbul, Herat, and Delhi were in fact more glorious and durable. Such an outlook, however, prescinded from the religious quest for moral perfection that stimulated the vision of Madinese heights in the Prophet's time, an apex of history never again reached.

Muhammad Iqbal (1876 – 1938), one of foremost Muslim thinkers, simply begged the question in the *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. He does not confront fundamentalism head on, but merely stipulates ceaseless progress and the continual spiritual journey of the ego from the finite to the infinite. At the same time Iqbal offered some seminal ideas that clearly run counter to those of traditionalist and fundamentalist theologians.

The most noteworthy feature in Iqbal's "nucleus" theory is that, Medina served simply as a staging area for a much larger enterprise that is to unfold in the course of time, after having out grown its seventh-century shell upon this vision in the writings of Shah Waliy-Allah of Delhi, an eighteenth-Century Scholar with a mystic bent whom many scholars regard as india's greatest Muslim theologian. He wrote in Arabic, and his best-known book, *Hujjat-Allah al – Baligha*, was republished in Egypt at the beginning of this Century.

Whether or not Mahmud Taha was familiar with Shah Waliy-Allah's train of thought, their kindred approach to a number of issues is evident. The "nucleus" theory is one case in point. In addition Taha was one of the first religious thinkers in Islam to subject the Medinese period of the prophet's life and the "rightly guided Caliphate" of his four immediate successors to scientific historical criticism shorn of the customary glorifications.

Mahmud Taha endeavored to harmonize evolutionary theory with the religious concept of historical perfection, which for Muslims, culminated in the advent of the prophet Muhammad. He did this by distinguishing between a First and a Second Message; a primary or initial and an ultimate or final meaning of *islam*.⁵ According to this line of thought, *Islam* in its primary meanings stands for "submission" in the sense of giving up opposition to God and His messengers, and signifies monotheism in its crudest form. This was the Islam of Abraham and Ishmael, and of the Bedouins who had to be forced to accept the message. When the latter claimed to be believers (*mu'minin*), the Prophet rebuked them, saying that they had merely submitted – that is, they were merely muslimin (from *islam*). To be a *mu'min*, therefore, was to be at higher stage than a *muslim* of the initial type. Ultimately, believers (*mu'minin*) would reach a yet higher stage; they would be *mu'minin* but not like those crude learner-monotheists of the early days.

In its second stage, *islam* denotes the highest stage of human perfection. When the Qur'an says that the religion God prescribed for humanity is *islam*, it refers to this second, yet unattained stage. It does not refer, Taha insisted, to the Islam of those nowadays known as Muslims, because they have not yet progressed from the First to the Second Message. In fact, they may not even have advanced from initial *islam* to the intermediary stage of *iman*.

An uninitiated reader may be tempted to ask whether there is a Third and Fourth Message as well. This is what some traditionalist *'ulama* – allergic to all that originates in philosophy and mysticism – asked Muhmud Taha. Had this been so, Taha's teachings might have aroused less hostility, since spiritual progress in symbolic stages is in itself not uncommon, despite the fundamentalist proclivity for oversimplification. Suspicion was awakened because the idea of the Second Message of Islam was the basic tenet of Muhmud Taha's teachings, and he endowed it with the concreteness of historical reality.

Taha proceeded from an insight common among Sufis, but generally ignored by the legalist *ulama*: every word has two meanings. He emphasized this as a law enshrined in the Quran and made it the cornerstone of his thought. This idea of the two-fold meaning (*mathani*) is the key to his new interpretation. One should guard, however, against equating it with outer and inner meaning, *zahir* and *batin*.

His critics often objected that Muhmud Taha revived Gnosticism by attributing to every word of the Qur'an a second, deeper meaning. Both the bedeviled Gnostics of an earlier age and the Sudanese mystic believed that the idea of a two-fold meaning originated in a verse of the Quran. "God has revealed the best of speech in a book of similar and dual meanings" (30:23).

Traditionalists referred to Taha as a devotee of *báttini*, as if that made him a heretic. Out of loyalty to the Sufi legacy, to which he gave his allegiance, he did not reject the label, though it misrepresented his philosophical position. For Muhmud Taha, it was essentially a question of evolution, of beginning and end. When talking about the twofold sense of every word in the Quran, his conceptual pair consisted of one significance that was close at hand and another that was far away. Where the Gnostics spoke of exoteric and esoteric, Taha preferred the terms "immediate" and "remote."

His key concepts were *level* and *degree*. There was an initial Islam and a final Islam – an Islam at the bottom of the pyramid and an Islam at its summit. The difference is not of kind but of degree. Everything develops from a primitive stage to a stage approaching perfection. A reality bears the same name at its beginning and its end, but assumes different forms at each level of development. Applied to the *shari'a*, the ossified law of the earliest age of Islam, this concept of evolution opened the doors to fresh thought and creative innovation.

The historical Muhammad, in Mahmud Taha's eyes, was more than just the apex of history – this would have limited him to a single event. His achievement, rather, resembled a great leap forward, the most important advance of its kind in human history. Humanity will reap the fruits of this seminal event only after the effects of this evolutionary leap make themselves felt in full measure. Seventh-century Arabia, the historical era of Muhammad, was in fact a kind of intermediary stage of Islam, standing somewhere between primary and ultimate *islám*. The Prophet himself achieved ultimate *islám*, but for his followers he was merely a signpost, leaving its implementation to later generations. Muhammad did not usher in ultimate *islám*; he merely pointed toward it, and showed the way.

In Muhammad Taha's evolutionary pyramid of spiritual progress, Muhammad is at the peak. From there the Prophet climbed back down to the bottom, endeavoring to lift up others from the sphere of primary *islam* to the next higher stage, that of *iman* – from the crude monotheism of mere submission to that of genuine belief. Knowing that it would be impossible for them, he did not demand that his followers immediately ascend to the top, but showed how they might rise stage by stage. He helped them consolidate themselves at the stage to which he had just been able to lift them by providing a *shari'a* that met the needs of their position. Muhammad himself, however, went beyond the beginner's level of *shari'a*. He lived the *shari'a* of the uppermost sphere, thereby reminding his followers that their present station was just a halting place, not their final destination – their journey had not come to an end; much more was to be achieved.

Islam I and II: Mecca Replaces Medina

The major bone of contention between Mahmud Taha and traditionalists as well as fundamentalists was the question of traditional law, the *shari'a*. Islamists have come to mystify this law,

referring to it as “the Islamic system” – a system of law, government, economics, and everything else. When they speak of Islam as “a complete code of life,” they do not think in theological terms but have primarily the *shari’a* in mind. Traditionalist doctors of the law are fond of discussing minute legal details and often get lost in trivialities. Islamists, in contrast, talk about the *shari’a* in very general terms; this vagueness allows them to use it as a kind of magic formula for producing solutions to all socio-economic problems. For them, the *shari’a* has become almost synonymous with “Islamic ideology.”

Viewed from an historical perspective, the *shari’a* greatly resembles a revised and enlarged edition of the Jewish *halacha*, which in fact helped to nourish the emerging Muslim understanding of law. In addition to material from the Quran and the Prophet’s practice (*sunna*), other influences came from Roman and Persian law, Arab tribal custom, and other regional traditions. In the noncritical and unhistorical view of the Islamists, however, the entire *shari’a* is divine in inspiration and identical with the primary sources of Islam the Quran and Sunna. Though in general they know little about the *shari’a*, they declare dogmatically, “There can be no *shari’a* without Islam and no Islam without *shari’a*.”

Muhammad Taha’s approach was historical. Muhammad’s career as a prophet lasted for twenty-three years, thirteen of which were spent in Mecca, and the remaining ten in Medina (622-632), two very different phases of his life. Knowing that the Meccans were conspiring to assassinate him, the tribes of Medina invited him to become their judge and ruler. Muhammad Taha considered the golden age of Medina was a magnificent example – the ideal of its historical moment – but rejected the idea that all the laws transmitted from that incipient polity could still be valid today. Moreover, he differentiated between the moral teachings enunciated by the Prophet when he was a persecuted preacher in Mecca – the essence of the Islamic message – and his experiment in Medina, where he endeavored to implement those ethical norms as far as possible. Taha regarded Medina as subsidiary to Mecca.

Muhammad Taha stuck to the orthodox view that the Quran was nothing but the word of God, from cover to cover, without the Prophet’s having had a hand in composing it. But Taha discerned in this supernatural text a twofold divine purpose: first, believers are taught the theory and are presented with the highest ethical

standards; second, they are given an example of how the revealed norms can be applied to given circumstances. The Quran contains both theory and practice.

In Medina, God allowed the Prophet to make certain concessions, and not insist on completely enforcing the ethical norms. Otherwise it would have been impossible to lay the cornerstone of the Islamic edifice. However, those concessions made sense only in those days. Taha taught that it was the believers' task to build on those foundations and reach beyond them – i.e., to complete the implementation of the ethics enunciated by Muhammad and put more of it into practice than their spiritual forebears were able to do in Medina. Since his Companions were children of their time, the Prophet did not ask them for more than they could bear.

Looked at from a certain angle, Muhmud Taha might at first appear to be a fundamentalist himself: he carried out the most radical return to the sources, and in a more consequential way than any other Muslim thinker. He taught that only the first part of the revelation, the Meccan verses, is eternally binding; the second part is also divine and deeply important, but it is subsidiary and timebound. He adhered to the traditionalist dogma that all of the Quran came to the Prophet from God, but held that only the ethical principles (*asl*) revealed in Mecca are of everlasting validity. The practical shape (*far'*) given those principles in Medina was of a temporary nature.

In Medina God had granted concessions to the Companions of the Prophet by abrogating some of the high moral standards set in the earlier verses revealed in Mecca. For instance, He allowed them to take up arms for the spread of their faith and even to carry out preemptive strikes, whereas Meccan ethics prescribed strict pacifism. God had, as it were, met the Medinese believers halfway, in order to set in motion what was to be fulfilled in the course of time. During Muhammad's life, Medina takes precedence over Mecca; in the fullness of time Mecca would take precedence over Medina.

To fully appreciate this line of thought, one has to be familiar with the classical terms, *nasikh* ("abrogator") and *mansukh* ("abrogated"), in Islamic theology. The theory behind them is that certain verses of the Medinese revelation abrogated others of the Meccan revelation. One example is the permission to fight given to Muslims in Medina, whereas during the Meccan persecution they had followed the previous verses of the Quran commanding nonviolence.

The abrogation theory was attractive to many reformers, particularly Shah Waily – Allah of Delhi (d. 1763) and such disciples of his as Ubaid – Allah Sindhi (d. 1945) whose reasoning anticipated some of the points raised by Muhammad Taha. They too-and following them such Egyptians as Muhammad Abduh and Amin – felt the urge to give greater prominence to Meccan ethics and Medinese politics. They tried to do this by limiting the number of Meccan verses said to have been abrogated by Medinese ones, or by explaining the abrogation's as merely symbolic.

Mahmud Taha was faithful to history, and accepted the reality of abrogation without tampering with facts. He argued that the abrogation was temporary, not permanent; the Prophet has postponed implementation of the abrogated verses and wanted latter-day believers to reverse the process. Some aspects of the traditional (Medinese) Sharia would then fall into disuse and a new (Meccan) Sharia, in tune with the knowledge and requirements of twentieth – century society would be developed.

This does not mean that Medina no longer has significance for present day Muslims. However, it does not serve (as for the Islamists) as a model, but only as an illustration, teaching modern believers how to push ahead with Meccan ethics in a realistic manner.

The social patterns and community structures that developed under the Prophet and his immediate successors in Medina were clearly a phenomenon of their age, and their practical relevance was obviously restricted to seventh century Arabia. The Islamist attitude of regarding Medina as an unalterable model shirks the responsibility incumbent on the believers. God provided humanity with moral guidelines (*asl*) and one feasible method (*far'*) of implementing them-together with the demand that this process be constantly repeated; each generation should exert itself to its utmost capacity to bring this enterprise closer to perfection

Faith and Reason

Traditional, faith and reason have each been considered to be sources of justification for belief. Because both can purportedly serve this some epistemic function, it has been a matter of much interest to philosophers and theologians how the two are related and thus how the rational agent should treat claims derived from either source. Some have held that there can be no conflict between the two – that

reason properly employed and faith properly understood will never produce contradictory or competing claims – whereas others have maintained that faith and reason can (or even must) be in genuine contention over certain propositions or methodologies.

The basic impetus for the problem of faith and reason comes from the fact that the revelation or set of revelations on which most religions are based is usually described and interpreted in sacred pronouncements, either in an oral tradition or canonical writings, backed by some kind of divine authority. These writings or oral traditions are usually presented in the literary forms of narrative, parable or discourse. As such, they are in some measure immune from rational critique and evaluation. In fact even the attempt to verify religious beliefs rationally can be seen as a kind of category mistake. Yet most religious traditions allow and even encourage some kind of rational examination of their belief.

The key philosophical issue regarding the problem of faith and reason is to work out how the authority of faith and the authority of reason interrelate in the process by which a religious belief is justified or established as true or justified. Four basic models of interaction are possible.

(a) The conflict model: Here the aims, objects, or methods of reason and faith seem to be very much the same. Thus when they seem to be saying different things, there is genuine rivalry. This model is assumed both by religious fundamentalists, who resolve rivalry on the side of faith and scientific naturalists, who resolve it on the side of reason.

(b) The incompatible model: Here, the aims, objects, and methods of reason and faith are understood to be distinct. Compartmentalization of each is possible. Reason aims at empirical truth; religion aims at divine truths. Thus no rivalry exists between them. This model subdivides further into three subdivisions. First, one can hold that faith is transnational, in as much as it is higher than reason. Reason can only reconstruct what is already implicit in faith or religious practice. Second, one can hold that religious belief is irrational, thus not subject to rational evaluation at all. This is the position taken ordinarily by those who adopt negative theology, the method that assumes that all speculation about God can only arrive at what God is not. The latter subdivision also includes those theories of belief that claim that religious language is only metaphorical in nature. This and

other forms of irrationalism result in what is ordinarily considered fideism: the conviction that faith ought not to be subjected to any rational elucidation or justification.

(c) The weak compatible model: Here it is understood that dialogue is possible between reason and faith, though both maintain distinct realms of evaluation and cogency. For example, the subject of faith can be seen to involve miracles; that of reason to involve the scientific method of hypothesis testing.

(d) The strong compatible model: Here, it is understood that faith and reason have an organic connection, and perhaps even parity. A typical form of strong compatibilism is termed natural theology. Articles of faith can be demonstrated by reason, either deductively (from widely shared theological premises) or inductively (from common experiences). It can take one of the two forms: either it begins with justified scientific claims and supplement them with valid theological tradition and refines them by using scientific thinking. An example of the former would be the cosmological proof for the existence of God; an example of the latter would be the argument that science would not be possible unless God's goodness ensured that the world is intelligible.

Some natural theologians have attempted to unite faith and reason into a comprehensive metaphysical system. The strong compatibilist model, however, must explain why God chose to communicate to man at all since we have such access to Him through reason alone.

The orientalist interested in the history of Muslim theology trace the origin of this incompatibility to various sources. However, Arberry who maintains the compatibility between faith and reason, argues that the discussion among the Muslim doctors about legal matters could not have been possible without the knowledge of the method of Aristotelian logic.

He sees the germs of rationalism in the Quran itself.⁴⁴

The term *Kalam* was used to refer to the early Muslim rationalistic theology the term literally means speech and is used in: Arabic translations of the work of Greek philosophers as a rendering of the term "Logos" in its various senses of "word," "reason," and argument.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ A.J. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957).

⁴⁵ H.A. Wolfson, "The philosophy of the Kalam (Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 1-2.

Muslim rationalistic theology began with the discussion about free will and determinism (*Qadar*). Ma'abad al Juhani and Gilán al-Dimashqi are considered the originators of the doctrine of free will. It had always been characteristic of religious thought to concentrate on the issue of free will, and Jews and Christians had discussed the issue exhaustively before the Muslims.

The Mu'tazila became the champions and defenders of Islam against alien ideas. They learned and acquired the rational methods of their opponents and used them as weapons in defence of Islam. Wasil bin Atta and Amr Ibn Ubaid were the first Mu' tazila thinkers who gained reputation for their rationalistic views. Abul-Hudhail al-Allaf is reported to have written seventy treatises in the refutation of the claims of the critics of Islam. Forty thousand couplets are attributed to Bashir bin Mu'tamir, and eighty books to Jahiz on the subject of rationalization of Islamic principles.⁴⁶

The Mu'tazila started the study of Greek philosophy, particularly logic to use it as a handmaid of religion. But they soon began to study philosophy for its own sake and developed a taste for the rational method. This tendency brought Islam into contact with Greek thought.

According to Mu'tazila a grave sinner is in an intermediate position (*Bain al-Manzilatain*). He is neither a believer nor a non-believer. This doctrine was at the beginning a distinctive mark of the Mu'tazilism but was modified by latter thinkers who considered it a projection of Islam as a golden mean. It was a mean between the extremes of religion and philosophy and therefore a reflection of true Islam.

The Mu'tazila struggled hard to reconcile religion with philosophy. For example they sought to reconcile between the religious position of the createdness of the world and the Aristotelian position of the eternity of the matter. A number of suggestions were brought forward. Some Mu'tazila scholars considered the world eternal but attributed movement to God's act of creation. Others maintained that God could not destroy all existence but destroys parts of it. Still others talked about God Creating the world by bringing it out from the state

⁴⁶ Záhade Hussein Járallah, *Tarikh-i-Mu'tazila*, Urdu trans. by Rais Ahmad Ja'fari, pp. 103-13.

of non-existence to existence. And by ending it is meant putting it back to its original state.⁴⁷

The Asharites rose to defend the orthodox Islam against the Mu'tazila rationalism. They opposed the Mu'tazila's reliance on reason; however they too adopted Greek logic to refute the views of the Mu'tazila.

The difference between the two was that the Mu'tazila interpreted the dogma using reason and logic, while the Asharites stuck to the orthodox teachings and used their rational skills to prove them.⁴⁸

Al-Maturidi, the founder of Maturidi Kalam and a senior contemporary of al-Ashari, maintained that there were three ways of acquisition of knowledge:

1. Sense organs
2. Narratives
3. Reason

In his *Kitab al-Tawhīd* he denounced skepticism as a means of attaining knowledge.

He said that narratives are means of acquiring knowledge about the past events, religious traditions, genealogy, etc. He maintains that confining knowledge to the rational and discrediting sense perception is wrong but reason is nevertheless, the most important source of knowledge. Without the assistance of reason (intellect) sense and narrative can not give reliable knowledge. Knowledge of metaphysical realities and moral principles is acquired through reason. And it is reason by which man is distinguished from animals. Maturidi admits that, all human ways of acquiring knowledge including reason and sense are limited. Divine relation is the surest guide, the necessity of which in his view is not restricted to religious affairs only but its guidance is required in worldly affairs as well.⁴⁹

In contrast to the Rationalism of the Mu'tazila, Asharites and Maturidi's, the extremist theologians rejected the use of reason in all religious matters. These were the Hanbalites and the Zahirites.

Al-Maturidi has pointed out many cases where nothing but reason can reveal the truth. This is why the Qur'an repeatedly enjoins man to

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 2 – 4 and see, pp. 133-9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, part IV ch.I.

⁴⁹ Al-Maturidi, *Kitab al-Tauhid*; M.S. Cambridge, fol. I, footnote al Sayyid Murtada.

think, to ponder, and to judge by reason in order to find out the truth. Refuting the ideas of those who think that reason cannot give true knowledge, he says that they can not prove their doctrine without employing reason.⁵⁰

Reason, no doubt, occupies a very eminent place in the system of al-Maturidi; but it can not give, he holds, true knowledge concerning everything that we require to know, like senses, it has a limit beyond which it cannot go. Sometimes the true nature of human intellect is obscured and influenced by internal and external factors, such as desire, motive, habit, environment, and association and as a result, it even fails to give us true knowledge of things that are within its own sphere. Divergent views and conflicting ideas of the learned concerning many problems are mentioned by al-Maturidi as one of the proofs in support of his statement.

Hence, reason, often requires, he asserts, the service of a guide and helper who will protect it from straying, lead it to the right path, help it understand delicate and mysterious affairs, and know the truth. The guide, according to him, is a divine revelation received by a prophet. If anyone will deny the necessity of this divine guidance through revelation and claim that reason alone is capable of giving us all the knowledge we need, then he will certainly overburden his reason and oppress it quite unreasonably.⁵¹

The necessity of the divine revelation is not restricted according to al-Maturidi to religious affairs only, but its guidance is required in many worldly affairs too. The discovery of the different kinds of foodstuffs, medicine, invention of arts and crafts, etc, are the results of this divine guidance. Human intellect cannot give any knowledge in respect of many of these matters, and if man had to rely solely on individual experience for the knowledge of all these things, then human civilization could not have made such rapid progress.⁵²

Al-Maturidi refutes the idea of those who think that the individual mind is the basis of knowledge and criterion of truth. He also does not regard inspiration (*Ilham*) as a source of knowledge. Inspiration, he argues creates chaos and conflicts in the domain of knowledge, makes true knowledge impossible, and is ultimately liable to lead humanity

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92 – 95; *Ta'wilat*, Surah VII, 54.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

to disintegration and destruction for want of a common standard of judgment and universal basis for agreement.⁵³

It is evident from this brief account that reason and revelation both occupy a prominent place in the system of al-Maturidi. The articles of religious belief are derived, according to him from revelation, and the function of reason is to understand them correctly. There can be no conflict between reason and revelation if the real purport of the latter be correctly understood.

⁵³ Záhade Hussein Járallah, *Tarikh-i-Mu'tazila*, Urdu trans. by Rais Ahmad Ja'fari, pp. 2 – 4 and see, pp. 133-9.

Interpreting the Qur'ān and Appropriating a Text: The Farahi-Ricoeur Affinity

ABDUL RAHIM AFAKI

Hamīd al-dīn Farāhī and his student Amīn Ahsan Islāhī were the pioneering figures in the twentieth century Qur'ānic hermeneutics in the Subcontinent. Farāhī was born in a small village, Pharīhah of Uttar Pardesh, India six years after the Hindu-Muslim uprising against the British Imperialism in 1857. After the unsuccessful uprising, there arose two distinct currents of Muslim intellectualism in the Subcontinent. The first was characterized by a conservative approach to the accumulation of traditional Islamic sciences including *tafsīr*, *hadīth*, *fiqh* and *tārīkh*. It excluded everything from the academic curriculum external to the fold of Muslim tradition of intellectualism except certain small traces of Aristotelian logic and Euclidian geometry. The second was the so called Islamic modernism. It was not just opposite to the first instead an attempt of reconsideration of Islamic tradition under the yoke of Western modernism. The Seminary of Deoband and Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College of 'Alīgarh were to represent at that time the two intellectual currents respectively. Farāhī's academic life reflects both of these currents as his educational curricula. In the first phase of his educational life, he as a beginner memorized the Qur'ān and learned both Persian and Arabic languages. Then he as a grownup student went through the advanced level Persian as well as Arabic with especial emphasis on *al-adab al-jāhili* (the pre-Islamic literature) along with *'ilm al-hadīth* and *fiqh*. In the second phase, he learned English language and took admission in Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, 'Alīgarh in order to pursue modern Western sciences including philosophy.

After having completed his formal education, Farāhī started his professional career by joining Sindh Madarsat al-Islam, Karachi as a teacher of Arabic language. He remained on this post for about ten years (1897-1906), though the post did not match his intellectual stature. It is those days when his idea of *Nizām al-Qur'ān* had started to take shape as a new method of Qur'ān exegesis (1903). In February 1907, he joined 'Alīgarh as an Assistant Professor of Arabic while Dr.

Joseph Horowitz, the then famous German orientalist, was the full Professor of Arabic whom Farāhī taught Arabic and in return learned Hebrew. In 1914, he accepted an offer for the post of Principle of the newly upgraded Dār al-'Ulūm College or Oriental College, Hayderābād Deccan which later took shape as 'Uthmānīyyah University. In fact it was a partial realization of Farāhī's and Shiblī's grand educational scheme for the Indian Muslims. Just after the establishment of 'Uthmānīyyah University (1919), Farāhī resigned from his office to go back to his home, A'zamgarh where he remained till his death in 1930. Farāhī seems not to agree with the idea that if both traditional Islamic and modern Western sciences are taught in students' mother tongue, Urdu, then they can reach the highest level of those academic disciplines, and so it will guarantee the development of Muslim society in the modern world. This idea might be the ultimate alternative after the unexpected failure both of the traditionalism of Deoband Seminary and the modernism of 'Aligarh College in attaining the same result.

When he was back home he, instead of secluding himself, reestablished in A'zamgarh an institution named *Madarsat al-Islāh* whose main focus was to prepare the students who could interpret the Qur'ān in the light of his notion of *Nazm al-Qur'ān*. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī was one of the students at the same institution whom he gave privilege of being a co-worker of his grand project of accomplishing an exegesis on the basis of the notion of *Nazm al-Qur'ān*. As regards his day's currents of Muslim intellectualism namely the traditionalism, the modernism and the idea of accumulation both of modern and traditional knowledge through one's mother tongue, Farāhī was to transcend all of these notions and their failures. This transcendence was not a reduction which might lead his *self* to the depth of its subjectivity instead a revitalization which made his *self* find the way to attain the objectivity of the meaning of the Word of God. As far as his position as a Qur'ān exegete is concerned, he identifies himself as an exponent of the old tradition of *tafsīr bi'l-rā'y* yet along with a novel trait of *Nazm al-Qur'ān*. In this paper, we shall see the different facets of this unique identification which later gave rise to the Farāhīan School of Qur'ānic hermeneutics through Islāhī's

complementary contribution to the trait.¹ The thoughts of one of them are to complement that of the other. Farāhī initially and originally explored the thought but Islāhī further developed it with its comprehensive application in construing a full-fledged exegesis of the Qur'ān titled *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān* comprising of nine volumes. Focusing the notion of autonomy of text, this paper draws parallels between the Farāhīan School of Qur'ānic hermeneutics and Ricoeur's scheme of appropriating a text.

The whole argument is divided into two parts. Part I deals with the Farāhī-Islāhī hermeneutical approach to the Qur'ān as an autonomous text. The major thrust of the discussion is the notion of *Nazm al-Qur'ān*. Part II is concerned with finding certain thematic affinities between the Farāhī-Islāhī Qur'ānic hermeneutics and Ricoeur's methodology of appropriating a text. In this regard, the notion of autonomy of text is to become the blurred area where the horizons of two distinct thought schemes are found fused.

Farāhī's Hermeneutical Approach to the Qur'ān as an Autonomous Text

In the perspectives of Muslim intellectual currents of the Subcontinent in the early twentieth century, Farāhī's objectivist hermeneutic approach to the Qur'ān seems to be highly mature and distinct in terms of its theoretical depth and originality. Unlike his contemporaries, he neither contends to excavate a new *'ilm al-Kalām* owing to interpreting Islamic faith by the handmaid of modernism nor he comes into the line of fundamentalist approach to the revival of traditional ways of Islamic learning. He instead puts the foundation stone of Neo-Qur'ānic hermeneutics as a primary Islamic study. For, he opines that the Qur'ān is originally to complete the knowledge of religion (*'ilm al-Dīn*) so 'it becomes requisite (*al-wājib*) to found principles (*usūl*) for the interpretation (*tā'wīl*) of the Qur'ān in order that it becomes a universal knowledge (*'ilm^{an} 'āmm^{an}*) being applicable to whatever is derived from the Qur'ān.'² *Al-Dīn* (Islam), for Farāhī, is

¹ For the details concerning Farāhī's biography see Dr. Sharaf al-Dīn Islāhī, *Dhikr-e-Farāhī (Reminiscing Farāhī)* (Lahore, Dār al-Tadhkīr, 2002), and also see the Preface of Hamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr-e-Farāhī*, Urdu trans. by Amīn Ahsan Islāhī (Lahore, Fārān, 1991/1412).

² Hamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, *Rasā'il al-Imām al-Farāhī fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 3rd Reprint (A'zamgarh, Al-Dā'irat al-Hamīdiyyah (Madarsat al-Islāh), 2005), p. 214.

a threefold structure of the uplifting of human selves (*tarqīyyat al-nufūs*), the refinement of the intellects (*tarbīyyat al-'uqūl*) and the mending of manners (*islāh al-a'māl al-zāhirah*) namely the morals (*al-akhlāq*), the beliefs (*al-'aqā'id*) and the laws (*al-shariā'*) respectively. In the threefoldness of Islam, the elements are not atomistically dispersed rather integrally related to each other to give rise to the purification (*al-tazkīyah*) of self which is the purpose of Islam. And the Qur'ān is to guarantee the attainment of this task very appropriately.³ As regards the attainment of the threefold task of Islam, there arose, according to Farāhī, three different sciences namely *'ilm al-akhlāq* (ethics), *'ilm al-kalām* (the science of dialectic or scholasticism) and *'ilm al-fiqh* (jurisprudence). It is only the latter most in which one can find certain traces of *'ilm al-tā'wīl* (hermeneutics) otherwise in case of the remaining two there had hardly been any hermeneutical element throughout their development. Ethics was broadened on the illusive ground of *al-hikmat al-'amalīyyah* (the practical reason) of the philosophers, the personal experiences of individuals and the inauthentic religious remnants. Whenever the ethicists, though very rarely, drew from the Qur'ān they accorded it with their poor interpretations (*tā'wīlātihim al-rakīkah*), as they thought that there was no need to authenticate their argument regarding the arousal of a desire to adopt the good and to abandon the evil.⁴ In this regard, Farāhī also condemns the group of Sufis (*tā'afah min al-mutasawwifah*) who express their beliefs by 'interpreting the Qur'ān as per their mere imagination (*zunūnihim*) and their ignorance of Arabic language and the reality of Islam.' In the face of it, 'they pretend that they better know the Qur'ān and its secrets. The examples of such attitudes can be found in the works of Ibn 'Arabī'.⁵ The scholastics, according to Farāhī, had also been no less incautious as regards their hermeneutic approach to the Qur'ān. Owing to their being engaged in the intellectual controversies with the apostates (*mulāhidah*), they inevitably overlooked the tradition (*al-naql*) advancing their arguments rationally in order that their adversaries might convince of them. Drawing from the inappropriate meaning, they contingently interpreted the Qur'ān in order to cope with the adverse arguments. When they were unable to arrive at the appropriate interpretation of

³ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 213-14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

the Qur'ān or at the convincing 'implementation of the rational on traditional (*tatbīq al-ma'qūl bi 'l-manqūl*),' they cited from the Qur'ān distortionally. For, they found that they could not defend their claims by an undistorted meaning. Some of them, like Rāzī, even used to say that one could not rely, in one's interpretation, upon 'a clear and obvious meaning of the Qur'ān (*zāhir al-Qur'ān*), as it might be from the allegorical meanings (*la'allah yakūn min al-mutashābihāt*).⁶ It is what made the Qur'ān obscure. It would not be like that if there were foundations of the general hermeneutical principles (*usūl al-tā'wīl al-āmmah*). For, in that case one would always rely upon the general rules of interpretation in one's drawing out the meanings from the Qur'ān irrespective of the specificity of the *sharā'i'* (laws), the *akhlāq* (morals) and the *'aqā'id* (beliefs).⁶ This is to be noted here that Farāhī's general hermeneutics is not "general" in the sense that one can apply it to *any* text but it is "general" in the sense that the different spheres of learning derived from the Qur'ān can be appropriately developed through the instrumentality of the general hermeneutical principles he construes as we shall discuss them in what follows.

Farāhī's Conception of Interpretation

Farāhī draws his conception of interpretation from the verse 100 of *Sūrah Yūsuf* (12):

And he made his parents sit on the throne and all (of the attendants) fell down in prostration before him. He said: 'O my father! This is the interpretation (*tā'wīl*) of my dream. Allāh hath made it come true' (*Yūsuf* 12:100).

This verse, according to Farāhī, teaches us three things about interpretation:

- (a). "The interpretation of something (*'amr*) is its real meaning (*haqīqah*) which tells about it in terms of something similar (*mutashābih*) to it by the way of allegory (*tarīq al-tamthīl*)."
- (b). "If the interpretation of an object is valid, it also makes the object be genuine itself. Joseph saw (in his dream) the sun, the moon and eleven stars prostrating before him, and the allegorical happening of the dream came true in terms of the happening described as such."

⁶ *Ibid.*

(c). "Allāh uses this way to show some matters portentously or with some other insight (*hikmah*) as He wishes."⁷

He further draws in this regard from the verses 102-105 of *Sūrat al-Sā'ffāt* (37):

Then, when he reached (the age of) work and walk with him, he said: 'O my son! I see in dream that I am immolating thee. Now see what is thy view.' He replied: 'O my father! Do as thou art commanded. Thou will find me, if Allāh so wills, one firmly determined.' So when they both had submitted their wills (to Allāh), and he laid him down prostrated on his forehead, We called out to him: 'O Abraham! Thou hast already made thy dream come true.' Thus indeed do We reward those who do right (*Sāffāt* 37: 102-105).

Farāhī explains that Abraham's attempt of realizing his dream becomes an exemplar both of realistic and intellectualistic (*nazarī & istidlālī*) forms of interpretation. Abraham understood through his prophetic wisdom that the message of his dream was that his Lord wished to see whether he was able to sacrifice the most precious thing he owned, that is, the life of his son he loved most. This intellectual interpretation of his dream led him to concretizing it on the plane of experience as he saw it in the dream. So he made up both his and his son's minds to realistically enact that dream exactly just as he saw it. The realistic-intellectualistic twofoldness of Abraham's interpretation of his dream is, according to Farāhī, the apex of human intellect (*ra's al-'ilm*) which essentially coincides with his absolute submission to and fear of the Lord (*al-khashyah li'l-rabb*).⁸ So far Farāhī's approach to the concept of interpretation appears to be objectivist. Interpretation of a text is, owing to his explanations regarding the verses cited above, not an additional account which an interpreter may construe by his own regarding the meaning of the text to be understood. Instead, interpretation is an intellectual attempt which leads one to the one-to-one coincidence between the real meaning of the text and one's understanding of it. Farāhī further elaborates his conception by

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 226-7.

demarcating interpretation both from misinterpretation or distortion (*tahrif*) and elaboration (*tafsil*).

'Interpretation,' says Farāhī, 'is the construing of text to mean what it bears transcriptionally or intellectually.' On the contrary, 'misinterpretation is the construing of text to what it does not bear' while elaboration is the description of details of it which are not mentioned inclusively.⁹ Moreover, the misinterpretation of a text is 'merely futile (*bātil mahd*) and (like a) fabrication of lies against Allāh (*iftarā' 'alā Allāh*).' It is an instrument of 'subverting His religion and constructing another one.' He cites the examples of those Jews and Christians who went astray due to the misinterpretation of their scriptures. The same examples, according to him, can also be found in the history of Qur'ān exegesis. The Qur'ān is the manifestation of truth, and one part of truth cannot contradict the other. Under the yoke of a particular belief when one refers to the Qur'ān and finds the clear meaning of the Qur'ān contrary to one's belief then one tries to mold the interpretation of the meaning in the favor of one's belief.¹⁰ The mold of hermeneutic attempt from the interpretation to the misinterpretation is a divergence from the objectivist derivation of the meaning to the subjectivist imposition of it on the text. The subjectivist motive regarding the mold of meaning through the process of misinterpretation gives rise to the multiplicity of meaning. For, if every individual justifiably misinterprets the clear meaning of the Qur'ānic text in order that it may approve his own subjective belief, it will be inevitable to sanction the multiplicity of meaning of a single text. But Farāhī, rejecting the subjectivist motive of attaining multiple meanings of a text, brings forward the notion of singular meaning (*ma'nā wāhid*) in correspondence with singular text. He opines that it is the historical process through which Muslims gradually shifted their mind-set from the task of attaining the singular meaning of the Qur'ān to the justifiability of multiple meanings.

During the early days of Islam, according to Farāhī, the companions, owing to 'their piety (*taqwā*), their knowledge of Arabic language and the occasions of revelations,' used to interpret the Qur'ān in order to arrive at the singular meaning. Their successors, since some of the occasions of revelations were not known to them,

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

interpreted the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān itself as well as by the remnants of the companions. They followed in their interpretation two principles: first, the Qur'ānic verses do not contradict each other; and second, the acts and deeds of the Prophet and his companions are conformed to the Qur'ān. However, Farāhī does not reject the possibility of finding the difference of opinions, even in those days, in their aiming at the singular meaning.¹¹ But during those very days, the inauthentic remnants were augmented and included in the Qur'ān exegeses abundantly. This was the first step toward the hermeneutic culture characterized by the justifiability of plurality of meaning of a singular text. Then there arose the tradition of philosophy and with it the difference of opinions in the sphere of beliefs. 'Each group (*firqah*) was to stick to the remnants and to the philosophy it had an appeal to,' and the people started to refer to the philosophical underpinnings and the inauthentic exegetical remnants for the judgment regarding their particular belief. That situation gave rise to the multiplicity of interpretation concerning a singular text, and the multiple interpretations transformed the clearly meaningful (*wādih*) text into the dubious (*mushtabah*) one. So 'the ways of exegesis (*subul al-tafsīr*) became darkened and the door of the Qur'ān (*bāb al-Qur'ān*) closed.' Farāhī cites in this regard an example of Rāzī's interpretation of a Qur'ānic verse, which leads to the multiplicity of meaning reducing the Qur'ān to a dubious Book (*kitāb^{am} mutashābih^{am}*). In the verse 1 of *Sūrat al-Nasr: Idhā jā'a nasr Allāh wa 'l-fath* (When there comes the Help of Allāh, and the Victory), the word *fath*, according to Rāzī as Farāhī mentions, 'refers to the Conquest of Mecca, the Conquest of *Tā'if*, the Conquest of *Khaybar*, the Conquest in general, the Conquest of knowledge, the Conquest of reason...' This is the dubiousness of the matter that one is not getting certain about the meaning of a single word rather one has got several connotations in correspondence with the word. Farāhī calls it an intellectual disease and the only remedy for the disease, that is, the multiplicity of meaning, is 'the adherence to the Qur'ān' by adjusting all remnants and opinions to the standard of the Book of Allāh. This standardization remains unlikely unless we do believe that 'the Qur'ān involves nothing but a singular interpretation (*al-Qur'ān la yahtamil illā tā'wīl^{am} wāhid^{am}*).' Moreover, Farāhī's notion of singular interpretation renders the Qur'ān

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

something 'absolute in meaning (*qat'i 'l-dalālah*)' rather than 'dubious in meaning (*maznūn al-dalālah*)' as Rāzī thought of it.¹²

Islāhī fully agrees with Farāhī on the issue of the singular meaning of Qur'ānic text, though he relates this issue to the notion of *Nazm al-Qur'ān* which we shall discuss in detail later. According to Islāhī, when an interpreter understands a part of the Qur'ān in the perspective of *Nazm*, 'he cannot adopt anything except one single opinion regarding its meaning.' That is, if one cuts off a part of the Qur'ān from all of its contextual relationships, that is, if one sees a part of the Qur'ānic text in isolation, 'it will be easier for one to impose several meanings' on that part of the text rather than to construe one singular meaning. Islāhī believes that the imposition of multiple meanings on the singular text has caused Muslims a huge 'collective (*ijtimā'i*) and political (*sīyāsī*)' drawback in terms of the emergence of multiple sociopolitical-religious groups in the Islamic society. Every group is to have its own specific interpretation of a particular part of the Qur'ān taken in isolation, which makes the Qur'ān have a tendency of bearing several meanings at the same time. But for Islāhī, the Qur'ān, owing to its *Nazm* and context, cannot afford to have more than one meaning. In this regard, one needs not to deliberate to draw one singular meaning out of many rather one must be 'helpless to adopt one singular meaning, as one cannot justifiably draw multiple meanings after having reflected on the Qur'ānic text in the context of *Nazm*.'¹³ The Farāhīan-Islāhīan notion of singular interpretation of the Qur'ān is one of the various characteristics of the objectivist hermeneutical approach to the Qur'ān as an autonomous text. In the context of the objectivist hermeneutic syndrome, there are multiple dimensions of one's interpretation of a particular part of the Qur'ān but each leads one to arriving at a singular meaning of that part. That is to say, the Farāhīan-Islāhīan hermeneutical principles help one adopt only one interpretation regarding the meaning divinely objectivated in the Qur'ān making it an autonomous text. Owing to their emphasis on the necessity of reflection on the Qur'ān for singling the meaning, one should not guess that there may be some element of subjective imposition of meaning in one's interpretation of the Qur'ān. Instead, Farāhī's canonical Qur'ānic hermeneutics is a deviation from

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 229-30.

¹³ Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān (Reflection on the Qur'ān), Volume I*, 7th Reprint (Lahore, Fārān, 1997/1417), pp. 21-2.

all forms of subjectivism one may opt in the interpretation of the Qur'ān. In what follows we shall discuss the hermeneutical canons as primarily expounded by Farāhī and extensively concretized by Islāhī in order to guarantee the autonomy of Qur'ānic text.

Farāhī's Hermeneutical Canons Concerning the Autonomy of Qur'ānic Text

Farāhī's grand scheme of Qur'ānic hermeneutics is canonical. He expounds several principles of interpreting the Qur'ān as an autonomous text. He divides the hermeneutical canons into three categories namely (i) 'fundamental canons (*usūl al-awwalīyyah*),' (ii) 'canons of preference (*usūl marjihah*)' and (iii) 'canons of fallacy (*usūl kādhibah*).' There are in total ten canons out of which six are concerned with the autonomy of Qur'ānic text namely (i) 'canon of *Nazm* of the Qur'ān and its context (*siyāq*),' (ii) 'canon of interpreting the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān (*tā'wīl al-Qur'ān bi'l-Qur'ān*),' (iii) 'canon of focusing the addressee (*mukhātab*),' (iv) canon of variety of senses and singularity of meaning, (v) canon of derivation of meaning as per its similar appearance at the various places, and (vi) canon of fallacy. The first three of the canons belong to the category of fundamental canons, the next two to the category of canons of preference and the last is the canon of fallacy. The details of the canons are as follows:

Canon of Nazm of the Qur'ān and its Context: Farāhī begins with the fundament of 'canon of *Nazm* of the Qur'ān and its context,' as 'the Qur'ānic discourse cannot engage meaning in variance with its *Nazm*.' Even in case of a common literary work, the incoherence of expression is rare, it is therefore unlikely to find it in the Book of God.¹⁴ The *Nazm* is an essential feature of expression. It is an additional reality (*zā'id haqīqat*) in the expression as a whole, which is lost if one acquaints with the particular parts of the whole in isolation.¹⁵ He criticizes those scholars who deny the finding of *Nazm* in the Qur'ān and substantiate their view by certain *ahādīth* engineered in their favour.¹⁶ One should note here that the notion of *Nazm* of the Qur'ān is not only one of the several canons of Farāhī's Qur'ānic hermeneutics but it is also the major thrust of his hermeneutical thought, as the latter is identified by

¹⁴ *Rasā'il* (2005), pp. 262.

¹⁵ Hamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, *Majmū'ah Tafāsīr-e-Farāhī*, Urdu trans. (Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, Lahore, Fārān, 1991), p. 30.

¹⁶ *Rasā'il* (2005), p. 262.

the former and the vice versa. Farāhī's notion of *Nazm* of the Qur'ān states that the whole structure of the Qur'ān is thematic and that thematic structure is absolutely coherent. That is to say, all of the verses of a *sūrah* of the Qur'ān are integrally related to each other to give rise to the major theme of the *sūrah* and again all of the *sūrahs* are interconnected with each other to constitute the major theme(s) of the Qur'ān. This view is entirely different from the older conception of the *Munāsabah* (proportionality) of immediate verses or *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān as expounded by Rāzī and Suyūṭī (d. 1505/911) etc.¹⁷ According to Farāhī, '*Munāsabah* is a part of *Nazm* or *Nizām* in the sense that the *Munāsabah* is to relate one verse or *sūrah* to the preceding and following verse(s) or *sūrah*(s) while *Nazm* makes the whole *sūrah* 'a perfect unity' (*kāmil^{an} wāhid^{an}*). Moreover, the part-whole relationship between *Munāsabah* and *Nazm* is to establish the Qur'ān as a unit-word (*Kalām^{an} Wāhid^{an}*).¹⁸ The *Nizām* of a *sūrah* depends upon its specific major theme which both Farāhī and Islāhī call '*Amūd* (pillar). The '*Amūd* of a *sūrah* is its purport (*mahsūl*) and purpose (*maqsūd*) that dynamically effects the entirety of the *sūrah*. That is to say, one can never find the '*Amūd* of a *sūrah* in the elementary order of the verses rather it is a living spirit (*rūh*) of the *sūrah* that manifests intrinsically in the *kalām* as an explanation (*sharh*) and detail (*tafsīl*) and as an output (*intāj*) and justification (*ta'līl*) of the *sūrah* as a whole. And the only

¹⁷ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Tehran, Dārul Dhavīl-Qurbā, 2001/1422). In the sixty-second chapter titled "*fī Munāsabāt al-Āyāt wa 'l-Suwar* (On the Proportionality between the Verses and the *Sūrahs*), Suyūṭī mentions the names of Abū Ja'far ibn al-Zubayr and Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā'ī, along with himself, who wrote full-fledged exegeses on the ground of the notion of *Munāsabah* and *Nazm*. See pp. 211-223.

¹⁸ After explaining the difference and relationship between *Munāsabah* and *Nizām*, Farāhī says: "...and upon this basis you can see or understand the whole Qur'ān as a unit-word." (*Rasā'il* [2005], pp. 86-87) Also see Mustansir Mīr, *Thematic and Structural Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Study of Islāhī's Conception of Nazm*. This is Mīr's dissertation which he submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Near Eastern Studies) in the University of Michigan, 1983, pp. 51-56. The dissertation was later published as a book, Mustansir Mīr, *Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Study of Islāhī's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān* (Indianapolis, American Trust Publication, 1986). Also see Mustansir Mīr, "The *Sūrah* as a Unity: A Twentieth Century Development in Qur'ān Exegesis," in G. R. Hawting and 'Abdul-Kāder A. Shareef, eds., *Approaches to the Qur'ān* (London, Routledge, 1993), pp. 211-224.

way to decipher the 'Amūd is to reflect (*Tadabbur*) deeply on the *sūrah* in its totality.¹⁹

As the verses are integrally related to each other to give rise to the 'Amūd of a *sūrah* all of the *sūrahs* are interconnected to constitute the coherent structure of the Qur'ān as an organic whole. According to Islāhī, the whole of the Qur'ān comprising of 114 *sūrahs* is structurally divided into seven groups each of which starts with one or more *Makkī sūrah(s)* (*sūrahs* revealed at Mecca) and ends with one or more *Madanī sūrah(s)* (*sūrahs* revealed at *Madīnah*). The whole scheme of Islāhī's in this regard is as follows:

1st Group: From *Sūrat al-Fātihah* (1) to *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5): The first is *Makkī* and the remaining *Madanī*.

2nd Group: From *Sūrat al-An'ām* (6) to *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9): The first two are *Makkī* and the remaining two are *Madanī*.

3rd Group: From *Sūrah Yūnus* (10) to *Sūrat al-Nūr* (24): All are *Makkī* except the last one.

4th Group: From *Sūrat al-Furqān* (25) to *Sūrat al-Ahzāb* (33): Only *al-Ahzāb* is *Madanī*.

5th Group: From *Sūrah Sabā* (34) to *Sūrah Hujurāt* (49): The last three are *Madanī*.

6th Group: From *Sūrah Qāf* (50) to *Sūrat al-Tahrīm* (66): The last ten are *Madanī*.

7th Group: From *Sūrat al-Mulk* (67) to *Sūrat al-Nās* (114): The first forty-two are *Makkī* and the last five *Madanī*.²⁰

Islāhī claims that his theory of the structural and thematic division of the Qur'ān into seven major groups is not something extraneously imposed by him to the Qur'ān. Instead, this division is 'taken from the Qur'ānic text' (*mansūs min al-Qur'ān*). In this regard, he refers to the verse 87 of *Sūrat al-Hijr* (15) as a textual evidence to support his theory:

And we have bestowed upon thee the seven [groups of the *sūrahs* in] couples (*sab'ān min al-athānī*) and the great Qur'ān (*Hijr* 15:87).

Islāhī's interpretation of the phrase "*sab'ān min al-mathānī*" as the seven thematic groups in which the Qur'ān, according to him, is

¹⁹ *Rasā'il* (2005), p. 85.

²⁰ *Tadabbur* (1997), Volume I, p. 25.

divided is unique. Usually this phrase is understood by the Qur'ān exegetes to be '*Sūrat al-Fātihah*, the opening *sūrah* of the Qur'ān, as this *sūrah* comprises of seven verses including "*bismillāh*" (In the name of Allāh, Most Gracious, Most Merciful) and it is repeated again and again in the prayers five times a day.' Islāhī rejects this idea on account of two reasons. First, *Sūrat al-Fātihah* is actually comprised of six verses and 'it can be taken as being comprised of seven verses if "*bismillāh*" is supposed to be as its part.' But "*bismillāh*," according to Islāhī, comes in the beginning of this *sūrah* as it comes in the beginning of all other *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān. 'There is no reason to consider it as a part of this *sūrah*.' Second, the word "*mathānī*" is interpreted as 'something that is repeated again and again' which Islāhī rejects, as for him it means 'something that is in pairs.' Therefore, the phrase *sab'ān min al-mathānī*, according to Islāhī, refers to the whole of the Qur'ān being comprised of the seven groups of pairs of the *Makkī* and *Madanī sūrahs* in which every *sūrah* has got its *zawj* (spouse) *sūrah* as a complementary part of it.²¹ In order to support his view he again refers to the Qur'ān:

Allāh has revealed the best discourse in the form of Book [being comprised of the absolutely] coherent (*mutashābihān*) pairs (*mathānī*) [of the *sūrahs*] (*Zumar* 39:23).

Islāhī calls the seven group scheme 'the apparent or outer aspect' of the coherent structure of the Qur'ān while the 'inner aspect' is characterized by *Nazm* of the Qur'ān. As there is a specific '*Amūd* of *sūrah* which thematically binds all of its verses to make it a unit likewise each of the seven groups of the *Makkī* and *Madanī sūrahs* has a comprehensive theme (*Jāme'* '*Amūd*) which interconnects all of the *sūrahs* of that group to make it a thematic unit. For Islāhī, in each group, every *sūrah* is to have its spouse (*zawj*) *sūrah* and this coupling of *sūrahs* is like the relationship between husband and wife,²² i.e. one

²¹ *Ibid.*, Volume IV, pp. 376-378 & Volume VIII, pp. 479-481.

²² Islāhī's notion of spouse *sūrah* seems to be applicable universally on all 114 *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān, but there are certain exceptions whose spousal relationship with the other *sūrahs* remains unexplained in *Tadabbur*. Dr. Mustansir Mir has critically discussed this issue of discrepancy in the workability of Islāhī's notion of spouse *sūrahs*. He mentions several cases where a *sūrah* is found without any spousal relationship with the other *sūrah*. For example, the case of spousal relationship between *Sūrat al-Ahqāf* (46), *Sūrah Muhammad* (47) and *Sūrat al-Fath* (48) remains 'unresolved,' as the two preceding *sūrahs* namely *Sūrat al-Dukhān* (44) and *Sūrat al-Jāthiyah* (45) are considered by Islāhī to be spouse of each other, and

of the two is to complement the other in the sense that if an issue is ambiguous or veiled in one *sūrah*, then in its spouse *sūrah*, the same issue will become extremely clarified and unveiled.²³

This whole scheme of the thematic- and structural-coherence of the Qur'ān as established by Farāhī and Islāhī is, on the one hand, to make Qur'ānic text autonomous seemingly similar to the concept of autonomy of text, and on the other, it reflects the notion of hermeneutical circle that seems to be very close to that of the classical Western hermeneuticians particularly Friedrich Ast (1778-1841) and Schleiermacher (1768-1834). The thematic- and structural-coherence of the Qur'ān is established by the revealed parts it is comprised of, and the meaning of every verse, as both Farāhī and Islāhī opine, is determined by the major theme ('*Amūd*) of the *sūrah* the verse is the part of, as the '*Amūd*, as we have shown above, is to effect the whole thematic structure of the *sūrah* dynamically. So for Farāhī and Islāhī, the interpretation of the Qur'ān is always circular. But this is not a vicious circle of logic rather a hermeneutical circle that has always been a principle of understanding and interpretation of a text throughout the Western tradition of hermeneutics. In Part II of the paper we shall see along with Ricoeur's conception of autonomy of text the hermeneutical circularity of the notion of *Nazm*.

The notion of autonomy of text as explored by Farāhī and Islāhī is further strengthened by the principle of *Tafsīr al-Āyāt bi'l-Āyāt* (interpretation of the verses by the verses) or *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi'l-Qur'ān* (interpretation of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān). Although we shall discuss this issue in what follows as a separate canon, here we shall briefly take it in its relation to the notion of *Nazm*. As we have seen in the particular case of the spouse *sūrahs* where if the meaning of a verse appears 'darkened' in one *sūrah*, it can be 'enlightened' in its spouse *sūrah*. The same is taken as a general principle to interpret the whole of the Qur'ān by Farāhī and Islāhī. According to them, in order to interpret a verse of the Qur'ān one should not primarily refer to some external authorities like *hadīth*, tradition or other exegetes, instead one

Sūrat al-Hujurāt (49) as supplementary to *Sūrat al-Fath* (48). Now the question arises that which one of the three (46, 47 & 48) is a spouse of one of the remaining two. For the details of this issue see Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'ān: A Study of Islāhī's Concept of Nazm in Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān* (Indianapolis, American Trust Publication, 1986), pp. 75-84

²³ *Tadabbur* (1997), Volume I, pp. 24-27

should refer to some other parts of the Qur'ān where one may find the meaning of the same verse in a satisfactorily clarified form. Although they do not absolutely abandon the external sources as reference for interpreting the Qur'ān, they consider them as secondary sources in this regard.²⁴ That is to say, one may refer to the external sources if one is to authenticate one's interpretation of a verse by the support of some external source but one cannot interpret the verse by incorporating from outside.

One can better understand the comprehensive notion of the thematic coherence of the Qur'ān as expounded both by Farāhī and Islāhī if one goes through an example of their interpretation of a particular *sūrah* in the light of that notion. We have chosen *Sūrat al-Tīn* as such an example. This *sūrah* belongs to the seventh and the final group of the Qur'ān which is comprised of 58 *sūrahs* from *Sūrat al-Mulk* (67) to *Sūrat al-Nās* (114) as shown above. Owing to his theory of the thematic division of the Qur'ān into seven groups, Islāhī believes that the major theme (*Jāmi' 'Amūd*) of the seventh and the final group of the Qur'ānic *sūrahs*, to which the chosen *Sūrat al-Tīn* belongs, is *Indhār* (forewarning) in addition to all of the three fundamentals of the Qur'ānic invitation namely *tawhīd*, *risālat* and *ma'ād*.²⁵ So the theme ('*Amūd*) of *Sūrat al-Tīn*, being a part of the seventh group, is the 'confirmation of reward and punishment in the life-hereafter.' And the next *sūrah* of that group, *Sūrat al-'Alaq* is its *zawj sūrah*, as there is no major difference between their themes. In *Sūrat al-Tīn*, as we shall see below, the salvation is guaranteed for man, through certain historical evidences, if he believes in God and His Prophet and so he becomes willing to do good deeds. In the light of these teachings, the *Quraysh* and particularly their leaders are threatened in *Sūrat al-'Alaq* to be punished in the life-hereafter if they are not willing to change their attitude toward the Prophet.²⁶ The similar thematic elements can be observed in the previous *sūrahs* as well like *Sūrat al-Layl* and *Sūrah A lam-Nashrah*.²⁷ *Sūrat al-Tīn* says:

By the mounts, the *Tīn* and the *Zaytūn*, and by the mount of *Sīnīn* and the peaceful land [that] we have created man in the best of moulds (*fī ahsani taqwīm*). Then we have

²⁴ *Tadabbur* (1997), Volume I, pp. 7-28 & *Majmū'ah* (1991), pp. 33-34.

²⁵ *Tadabbur* (1997), Volume VIII, p. 479.

²⁶ *Tadabbur* (1997), Volume IX, p. 449

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 433

abased him to be the lowest of the low (*asfala sāfilīn*) except those who believe and do righteous deeds. [So] they will have a reward everlasting. Now what will, after this, make you deny the judgment to come? Is not *Allāh* the Judge par-excellence (*Ahkam al-Hākīmīn*)? (*Tīn* 95:1-8).

Usually, the words, *al-Tīn* and *al-Zaytūn* are translated as the names of two fruits, Fig and Olive respectively. But both Farāhī and Islāhī, owing to the theme (*‘Amūd*) of the *sūrah*- the ‘confirmation of the retribution’ in the life-hereafter, emphasize that these are the names of two mounts where the most significant events of the divine retribution (*jazā’*) took place in the history of the revealed religions. The two mounts are named as *Tīn* and *Zaytūn* because fig and olive were produced on that mounts. And it is the normal course of Arab culture that they name certain places with respect to the main product of those areas. In order to establish the *Tīn* and the *Zaytūn* as the names of two mounts Farāhī cites a pre-Islamic poet al-Nābighah al-Dhubayānī who used the word ‘tīn’ as a name of a mount of Northern Arab:

*Suhib al-zilāl*²⁸ atayn al-Tīn ‘an ‘urud

Yuzjīn ghaym^{an} qalīl^{an} mā’uh shabim^{an}

(Reddishness [of the sky] in the night came to the *Tīn* from [the northern] sides driving some clouds and water to cool)

Farāhī also quotes from the Book of Luke of the New Testament which states that:

Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives (Luke 21:37).

Furthermore it states that before his crucifixion:

²⁸ Ibn Manzūr, citing the same verse of Nābighah, puts *al-shimāl* instead of *al-zilāl* see Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab (Language of the Arabs), Volume II*, corrected by Amīn Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahāb & Muhammad al-Sādiq al-‘Ubaydī (Beirut, Dār Ihyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1999/1419), p.72, whereas in *Tadabbur (1997), Volume IX*, p.436 and in Hamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Tīn min Nizām al-Qur’ān Tā’wīl al-Furqān bi ‘l-Furqān*, (Aligarh (India), Faid-e-‘Āmm, 1908/1326), p.6, there appears *al-zilāl* in place of *al-shimāl*.

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him (Luke 22:39).

The *sūrah* starts with the swearing on four places namely the three mounts-*Tīn*, *Zaytūn* and *Sīnīn* along with Mecca-the city of peace (*al-balad al-amīn*). According to both the exegetes, when the Qur'ān swears on something, 'it does not mean to give honour (*ta'zīm*) to that thing.' Instead, 'it means to cite that thing, on which the Qur'an swears, as a testimony for that thing which the Qur'ān has to prove.'²⁹ The Mount of *Tīn* which is, according to both the exegetes, also called by the Qur'ān the Mount of *Jūdī* (*Hūd* 11: 44) is a place where two most important events of divine retribution took place. First, both Adam and Eve were punished by God to leave the heaven and to go to the earth. The particular place where they first arrived on the earth was the Mount of *Tīn*. Second, it is the Mount of *Tīn* where Noah survived the Flood which drowned the whole world except Noah, his companions and the couples of various creatures. The Mount of *Sīnīn* is the place where the Children of Israel were blessed by God for their patience against the suppression of Pharaoh who was drowned retributively by God in the Nile. The Mount of *Zaytūn* (Olive) is the place that observed the great event of retribution, the crucifixion of Jesus for which the Crucifiers were retributively deprived of the blessing of prophet-hood forever. Finally, Mecca is the place where Abraham, for his great sacrifice, was blessed a son by God as well as He promised Abraham to send prophets in both of his sons' generations namely the Children of Israel and the Children of Ishmael.³⁰

The next section of the *sūrah* comprises of that issue for which the Qur'ān swears on the four places as mentioned above. The issue is the confirmation of reward and punishment in the life-hereafter. The Qur'ān argues, according to Farāhī, that man is created in *ahsani taqwīm* and so he is bestowed with an innate character of demarcating good from evil. Since man is to lead his life between these two options of good and evil, therefore there is always a possibility that he may go astray due to the attraction he feels toward evil. In order to safeguard man from going astray, God has sent prophets with the divine

²⁹ *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Tīn* (1908), p.1 and also see *Tadabbur, Volume IX*, p. 436.

³⁰ *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Tīn* (1908), pp. 7-17.

invitation of good against the evil. If man accepts the invitation to have a belief (*īmān*) in God and His prophets, he will adopt the right path. If he does not do so, then he should be punished for deviating from *ahsani taqwīm* to *asfala sāfilīn*. Furthermore, man has no reason to deny the divine judgment or retribution after the evidence of four great events of reward and punishment. Finally the *sūrah* confirms that God is the Judge par-excellence (*Ahkam al-Hākīmīn*), so He will never allow human beings to escape from the divine judgment concerning their good and bad deeds.³¹

Canon of Tā'wīl al-Qur'ān bi'l-Qur'ān: There are, according to Farāhī, a lot of places where the Qur'ān leaves the statement 'abridged (*mujmal*) which is elaborated at some other place.' That is, a statement of the Qur'ān appears to be an interpreted version of some other statement appearing at some other place. He gives example of the verses 72 and 73 of *Sūrat al-Anfāl*. The former says:

Those who believed and emigrated and fought with their assets and their selves in the way of Allāh...(Anfāl 8:72).

The latter says:

Those who believed and emigrated and fought in the way of Allāh...(Anfāl 8:73).

In the latter, the phrase, with their assets and their selves (*bi amwālihim wa anfusihim*) is not mentioned, though, according to Farāhī, its sense is there. Moreover, the verse 75 of the same *sūrah* says:

And those who believed subsequently and emigrated and fought (being) with you...(Anfāl 8:75).

Here there is no mention either of *fī sabīl Allāh* (in the way of Allah) or of *bi amwālihim wa anfusihim*, but both the senses are there as shown by the addition of *ma'akum* (with you).³²

Farāhī also makes an attempt to interrelate the canon of *tā'wīl al-Qur'ān bi'l-Qur'ān* and the canon of *Nazm al-Qur'ān*. In fact, he suggests a method of applying the former by grounding it upon the latter. As per this method, an interpreter has to bring into light both the abridged statement of the Qur'ān and the statement implicitly

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-25 and also see *Majmū'ah* (1991), pp. 328-332.

³² *Rasā'il* (2005), p. 263.

detailed version of it by the process of interpretation focusing the *Nazm* of the discourse. This enlightening of the statements substantiates the conformability (*mutābaqah*) between the statements. After having enlightened the conformability between the statements, the interpreter is supposed to focus the preceding (*al-sābiq*) and the following (*al-lāhiq*) parts of each of the two statements, as the *Nazm* is not only found between the two but everywhere in the discourse.³³

Islāhī further elaborates this issue with reference to the verse 23 of *Sūrat al-Zumar*:

Allāhu nazzala ahsan al-hadīth kitāb^{am} mutashābih^{am} mathānī
(Allāh has revealed the best discourse in the form of Book
[being comprised of the absolutely] coherent
(*mutashābih^{am}*) pairs (*mathānī*) [of the *sūrahs*]) (*Zumar*
39:23).

If one reads the Qur'ān, according to him, one can realize that 'a single theme recurs repeatedly in different forms.' It is not merely a repetition of the single theme rather at each place the theme is understandable differently owing to its placement with other clearly understandable themes. 'It may be that at one place an aspect of the theme concerned is latent (*makhfi*) but at some other place it becomes completely clarified.' It means that all of the abridged themes and statements of the Qur'ān can further be elaborated by the Qur'ān itself. That is, in interpreting the Qur'ān there is no need to refer to anything external to it rather it is perfectly autonomous in giving rise to its themes with their meanings and realities. Even in case of interpreting the rhetorical and grammatical issues of it, the Qur'ān is highly autonomous in making those issues perfectly understandable.³⁴

Here one can understand how the Farāhīan-Islāhīan concept of the autonomy of Qur'ānic discourse is comparable with Ricoeur's notion of the autonomy of text. Ricoeur defines text as a 'discourse' which is fixed in meaning being discarded from all of its 'outer references' including the world in which it was fixed by its author and the author himself. The concern of author is obviously irrelevant in case of the Qur'ān as a divinely revealed discourse. Yet Ricoeur's objectivist view of text as a linguistic structure of 'interplay of oppositions and

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

³⁴ Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Mubādī-e-Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān* (Lahore, Fārān, 1991/1412), pp. 59-61.

combinations of signs' being discarded from worldly references is no less comparable with the Farāhīan-Islāhīan objectivist notion of the autonomy of Qur'ānic discourse as a thematically coherent structure divinely revealed for this world. Drawing from the French structuralists particularly Claude Levi-Strauss, Ricoeur considers text as a 'bundle of relations' and '[i]t is only in the form of a combinations of such bundles that constitutive unities acquire a meaning-function.'³⁵ The meaning-function, for him, is not the meaning of unities of a text but the arrangement and the disposition of unities, that is, the structure of the text. The Farāhīan-Islāhīan notion of *Nazm* of the Qur'ān is to have more or less the same approach to the Qur'ān wherein all the parts acquire meaning in relation to the other parts through a major theme of the whole structural discourse. In Part II of this paper we shall discuss this issue in detail.

Canon of Focusing the Addressee: Although the Qur'ān is all-in-all a divine discourse which God revealed onto the Prophet through Gabriel, it is not necessary that in every part of this discourse the addresser is God Himself. For instance, in the verse 4 of *Sūrat al-Fātihah*: "*īyyāka na'budu wa īyyāka nasta'īn* (Thee do we worship and Thine help we do beg to seek)." 'It is obvious,' according to Farāhī, 'that the address is from man to God.'³⁶ The fixation of addressee (*mukhātab*) and addresser (*mukhātib*) is very significant with hermetic point of view, as the mix up of addressee and addresser in a discourse may lead one to an inappropriate meaning of the discourse. As regards the Qur'ānic discourse, 'an address,' says Farāhī:

has one origin (*masdar*) and one terminus (*muntahā*). The origin may be Allāh, Gabriel, the Prophet or the people. Similarly, the terminus may be Allāh, the Prophet or the people. The sphere of people is not also fixed, it may include Muslims, hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*), people of the book, Children of Ishmael, two of them, three of them or

³⁵ Paul Ricoeur, "What is a Text? Explanation and Interpretation," trans. by David M. Rasmussen, in D. M. Rasmussen, *Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology: A Constructive Interpretation of the Thought of Paul Ricoeur* (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 141.

³⁶ *Majmū'ah* (1991), p.60.

all of them. Out of the people of the book, an address may refer to Jews, Christians or both.³⁷

Owing to the above citation, one can realize that there is a huge possibility of mixing up both between the various origins and termini regarding one single address. As far as the origin of an address is concerned, one may be confused in referring clearly to Allāh, Gabriel and the Prophet, as all of these origins with their variable appearances are so intimately overlapped that nothing can help in deciphering them clearly except the context of the discourse. However, Farāhī introduces a rule regarding God's being addresser, as in that case the address shall be 'loaded with the apparent Grandeur (*Jalāl*) and Dignity (*Haybah*) as well as Power (*Quwwah*) and Authority (*Satwah*).'³⁸ For instance, 'from its very beginning *Sūrat al-'Alaq* (96) is,' according to Farāhī, 'narrated as if it is an address of Gabriel but when it tends to express anger in the verse 15, it clearly reflects that it is the address from God:

Kallā la'in lam yantahi lanasfa'um bi 'l-nāsiya (It is nothing if he desists not, We will drag him by the forelock) (*'Alaq* 96:15).

In case of terminus, the confusion may arise due to the mix up between the Prophet and the Muslims. At times the address seems to be directed to the Prophet but due to his being leader and representative of the Muslims the real addressee is a group of Muslims or all of them in general. At times the address is directed to an individual but it is meant to apply on the Muslims in general without the intermediacy of the Prophet.³⁹ In case of the former, the example Farāhī gives is of *Sūrat al-An'ām*. In the verses 66 and 67, the addressee is the singular one and he is the Prophet:

But the people reject this, though it is the Truth. Say: 'Not mine is the responsibility for arranging your affairs; for every message is a limit of time and soon shall ye know it' (*An'ām* 6:66-67).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.61.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.62.

³⁹ *Rasā'il* (2005), pp. 160-1.

Thereafter in the verse 68, addressee is again the Prophet but it is applied to the *Ummah*:

Then thou seest men engaged in vain discourse about
Our Signs, turn away from them unless they turn to a
different theme. If Satan ever makes thee forget, then after
recollection, sit not thou in the company of the ungodly
(*An'ām* 6:68).

The next two canons namely canon of '*variety of senses and singularity of meaning*' and canon of '*derivation of meaning as per its similar appearance at the various places*' belong to the category of canons of preference. As their name implies canons of preference are applicable when one acquaints with multiple meanings of a singular word or issue, and when one has to prefer one on the rest of the meanings. All of the canons of this category are language oriented in the sense that they can be used as an instrumental when one is to arrive at a singular meaning out of many through the process of interpretation. In this regard, Farāhī and Islāhī refer to the historical-conventional facet of Arabic language as a source of interpretation. Both reject the rules of grammar as instrumental of Qur'ān exegesis, as the sphere of grammatical rules is extremely narrow regarding the derivation of meaning of a divine discourse. In this regard, the significance of grammatical rules is secondary, as they were drawn mainly from the ancient Arabic literature. As Farāhī opines, 'the art of rhetoric (*'ilm al-balāghah*) was derived mainly from the Arabic poetry, and the sphere of poetry is obviously limited to the delicacies of words, the characteristics of perfect expression and the technicalities of good style.' But the style of Qur'ānic discourse cannot, according to Farāhī, be justifiably appreciated by the help of limited rhetorical features of Arabic poetry. Regarding such failure of rhetorical appreciation of the Qur'ān, he poses the example of Bāqillānī.⁴⁰ Overlooking the technicalities of linguistics, Farāhī refers to a relatively larger sphere of language rooted as a whole in the soil of a cultural-historical life-form. That is, the language of the Arabs, shared

⁴⁰ Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Tayyib al-Bāqillānī (d. 1012/403) is an Ash'arite scholar famous for his work, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān (Inimitability of the Qur'ān)* in which he, owing to the rules of rhetoric, tried to establish the Qur'ān as a literary miracle in terms of its quality of inimitability. The recent edition of this work of Bāqillānī is published by Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah (Beirut) in 2001/1421.

between the Prophet and his addressees, whose characteristics are objectivated not only in the prose and poetry of that era but above all in the Qur'an itself. Farāhī counts ten distinct characteristics of that language including

the variety of demonstrativeness, the different ways of connotative relationship, the variety of proverbial styles, the various modes of deterrence through narratives, the ascending of discourse to its central idea, prevention & admonition, the manifestation of the intensity of belief of the addresser, the supercilious expositions, the exhortative expression of sorrow etc. whose examples can only be found in either the literature of oratory or the divine speeches of the prophets.⁴¹

Islāhī also emphasizes on the life-language necessity as an instrument of Qur'an exegesis. For, the cognition of various cultural and conventional symbols of the Arab life-world during the Prophetic era are, according to him, essential in the true understanding of the Quran, and the symbols are objectivated in the literary language of that era.⁴²

Canons of preference, as mentioned above, are language oriented. Therefore the applicability of these canons, as we shall discuss them in what follows, presupposes the life-language necessity along with *Nazm* of the Qur'an.

Variety of Senses and Singularity of Meaning: According to this canon of preference, 'in case of variety of senses (*wujūh*) and significances (*i'tibār*) of a word only that one shall be adopted which is closest (*awfaq*) to its contextual position and the major theme of the discourse (*'amūd al-kalām*).'⁴³ One should interpret the words and the issues by reflecting on their meaning derived with reference to their contextual position. For instance, the words and the phrases, which connote the attributes of the perfect monism (*al-ahādīyyat al-kāmilah*), are specially used for God and they vary in accordance with their contextual positions where they appear like '*Rabb al-nās, Malik al-nās, Ilah al-nās* (which are different in connotation from others) like *Rabb al-'ālamīn, al-Rahmān al-Rahīm, Mālik Yawm al-Dīn* (or) like *al-'Azīz, al-Ghaffār* (or)

⁴¹ *Majmū'ah* (1991), pp. 39-42

⁴² *Tadabbur* (1997), Volume I, pp. 14-17.

⁴³ *Rasā'il* (2005), p. 267.

like *al-Malik, al-Quddus, al-Salām, al-Mu'min, al-Muhaymin, al-'Azīz, al-Jabbār, al-Mutakabbir'*.⁴⁴

One cannot, according to Farāhī, take into account the contextual position of the words and be diligent for the understanding of their various dimensions unless one reflects on the Qur'ān. This canon although belongs to the second category, it appears to be an extension of the very first canon of the first category namely the canon of *Nazm al-Qur'ān*. The contextual position of words and phrases of the Qur'ān is determined by the major theme(s) of the discourse while the major theme makes the *Nazm* flow like a current throughout the discourse. So there are several connotations bound together by the single meaning of a word and the reflection on *Nazm al-Qur'ān* gives rise to the interpretation as an appropriation of the closest connotation of the word as per its contextual position in the discourse.

Derivation of Meaning as per its Similar Appearance at the Various Places: The previous canon of preference is coupled with this one according to which if 'there are several connotations then one shall take one which is as per the rest of its appearances throughout in the Qur'ān.' That is to say, all of those connotations will be abandoned which are not in accordance with the rest of the Qur'ān. Again in order to see the word-Qur'ān accord one should inevitably refer to *Nazm al-Qur'ān*. Regarding the application of this canon, Farāhī gives example of the verse 24 of *Sūrat al-Anfāl* (8): "*Wa'lamū' anna Allāh yahūlu bayna 'l-mar' wa qalbihi wa annahu ilayhi tuhsharūn* (And know that Allah cometh in between a man and his heart, and that it He to whom ye shall (all) be gathered)." There are, according to Farāhī, two different interpretations for this verse. According to the first, the statement- "Allāh cometh in between a man and his heart" means that 'God knows better than you your conscience,' and according to the second, it means that 'Allāh hinders the man from his will (*irādah*).' There is a match in the Qur'ān,' says Farāhī, 'for the former as well as it is also consistent with the *Nazm*.' In the Qur'ān, there are a lot of examples that the phrase-'*tuhsharūn* (ye shall be gathered) comes with the piety (*taqwā*), and the piety comes with God's knowledge ('*ilm Allāh*) as it is said: *ittaqu Allāh fa innahu a'lam bi sarā'irikum wa innakum tuhsharūn ilayhi* (Be afraid of Allāh, He indeed knows thy secrets and ye shall be

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

gathered to Him).⁴⁵ This interpretation of the verse is with respect both to the connotative similitude (*tashābuh al-ma'nā*) and the *Nazm* whereas the second interpretation of the same verse as mentioned above 'is based upon the literal similitude (*tashābuh al-lafzī*) which is prohibited by the Qur'ān: "wa hīla baynahum wa bayna mā yashtahūn (And between them and their desires is placed a barrier)" (*Sabā* 34:54).

Canon of Fallacy: Canon of fallacy is concerned with the instrumentality of *ahādīth* or exegetical remnants in interpreting the Qur'ān. In the beginning of this debate, Farāhī poses the question: "Does the *hadīth* interpret the Qur'ān or the vice versa?"⁴⁶ To the first part of the question his reply is absolutely negative. However, he does not reject every possibility of interpreting the Qur'ān benefiting from *ahādīth*. He emphasizes on the reflection both on the Qur'ān and the *hadīth* in order to draw from the latter to interpret the former. In any case, the Qur'ān must be given priority over *hadīth*, as the hermeneutical stature of the Qur'ān is characterized as a root (*asl*) source while the *hadīth* is a branch (*far'*) or secondary source.⁴⁷

As regards the second part of the question, he is absolutely positive, as he is the great proponent of the interpretation of history, culture, the Prophetic life-world and whatever external to the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān itself. He, therefore, considers the canon of interpreting the Qur'ān by the *hadīth* as the canon of fallacy. Islāhī as usual agrees with Farāhī on the issue of the root-branch relationship between the Qur'ān and the *hadīth* respectively. Although the stature of *hadīth* is secondary, it becomes for Islāhī the major source of Qur'ānic wisdom. He does, therefore, not only focus those *ahādīth* which are related to any of the verses of the Qur'ān, but he claims to benefit from the entire source of *ahādīth* in general.⁴⁸

***Nazm al-Qur'ān* and Autonomy of Text: The Farahi-Ricoeur Thematic Affinity**

The notion of *Nazm al-Qur'ān*, which is one of Farāhī's ten hermeneutical canons, appears to be the major thrust of the whole scheme of the Farāhī-Islāhī Qur'ānic hermeneutics. That is, the notion is although the subject matter of the first canon, it is found echoic

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 268-9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁴⁷ *Majmū'ah* (1991), p.37.

⁴⁸ *Tadabbur* (1997), Volume I, p.30

throughout the process of theoretical and applicatory development of the Farāhīan School of Qurānic hermeneutics. Thereby the Farāhīan School is identified by the notion of *Nazm* and the vice versa, while Islāhī's Qur'ān exegesis, *Tadabbur* is identified as an applicatory form of the notion. In what follows we shall see how their Qurānic hermeneutics is to have relevance with Ricoeur's notion of autonomy of text.

The notion of *Nazm* along with the canon of *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi'l-Qur'ān* mainly leads one to the interpretation of the Qur'ān as an autonomous text while the remaining four canons are found to be secondarily supportive to the issue. The conception of *Nazm* is a unique version of the notion of hermeneutical circle⁴⁹ that different parts of the Qur'ān are integrally-thematically related to each other to constitute it as an organic-thematic whole and vice versa. Drawing upon the notion of *Nazm*, both Farāhī and Islāhī expound the doctrine of *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi'l-Qur'ān* that 'one part of the Qur'ān interprets the other (*al-Qur'ān yufassir ba'dah ba'dan*)' by the way of context, as the Qur'ān defines itself as '*kitāb^{an} mutashābih^{an}*' which is to say that 'its one part has got a connotative similarity with the other.'⁵⁰ This twofold interplay of the thematic coherence and the hermeneutical circle within the Qur'ān guarantees that the Qur'ānic discourse is an

⁴⁹ The notion of hermeneutical circle that the overall meaning of a text is determined by the integral relationship between the meanings of its parts and vice versa has been a living thrust throughout the history of Western hermeneutics. This notion has been so significant that one can write a whole history of hermeneutics in terms of the development of this notion through the ages. As far as the earliest shaping of the concept of hermeneutical circle is concerned, one may trace its roots back to the Renaissance in the West. The most initial form of the notion of hermeneutical circle was the argument which the Protestant reformers developed questioning the Church authority as a sole interpreter of the divine Scriptures. Rejecting the subjective imposition of meaning by the Church on the Scriptures, they argued that there was no need to impose external meaning on the Scripture rather it 'contained an internal coherence and continuity', which is to say, 'an individual passage [of a Scripture] must be interpreted in terms of the aim and composition of the whole work.' See Wilhelm Dilthey, *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Writings*, ed., trans. and Intr. by H.P. Rickman (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 254 and Kurt M-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present* (New York, Continuum, 1985), p. 2.

⁵⁰ Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Mubādī-e-Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān* (Lahore, Fārān, 1991/1412), p. 60. Also see *Rasā'il* (2005), pp. 263-267.

autonomous structure. The autonomy of Qur'ānic text makes it free from all of the complementary hermeneutical relationships with anything external to it. That is, it guarantees that 'the Qur'ān is the key to interpret itself requiring nothing external to it in order to specify its meaning, to expound its objectives (*maqāsid*) and themes (*matālib*), and to interpret its realities.'⁵¹ The Farāhīan-Islāhīan notion of the autonomy of Qur'ānic discourse seems to be reminiscent of the views concerning the autonomy of text as expounded both by Emilio Betti and Paul Ricoeur. Regarding the issue of textual autonomy the latter seems to be closer to Farāhī and Islāhī than the former, as in case of the former the text is conceived as 'meaning-full form' being 'suitable for preserving the character of the mind that created it or that is embodied in it'⁵² while the latter is characterized by an objectivist 'appropriation' of a text 'bracketing' all subjectivity which may involve at the moment of interpretation of the text as an 'utterance or set of utterances fixed by writing'.

The divine spirit of Qur'ānic discourse makes it absolutely closed in terms of the creation of its meaning which does not suit Betti who conceives text as the meaning-full form always represents itself as an objective manifestation of some mental (rather than the divine) reality. The mental reality may be expressed in the form with or without an intent. If it is contained in the form implicitly, that is to say, if it is manifested in the form unconsciously or without any intent, it becomes the object of interpretation. So interpretation, according to Betti, 'does not presuppose that the thought-content has been expressed with an intent towards conscious representation or towards communicating something about social life.'⁵³ Rather interpretation is concerned with certain spontaneously created expressions in which the meaning is implicitly contained. And this unconscious and unintentional meaning contained in the form invites an interpreter to decipher it. In this regard the representational function of the meaning-full form plays a vital role in its interpretation. The internal meaning of the form may be unconscious but 'symptomatic' in its nature. For instance, every practical activity being a meaning-full form

⁵¹ Mubādī (1991), p. 60.

⁵² Emilio Betti, *Allgemeine Auslegunglehre als methodik der Geisteswissenschaften*, trans. by Josef Blicher, in Josef Blicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 54.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

contains internal meaning that being viewed as a symptom 'could be used for arriving at a person's fundamental conceptions and his characteristic way of perceiving and judging things around him.'⁵⁴ And since this internal meaning is created by a mind spontaneously, that is, the representational function is devoid of any conscious intent, therefore, 'it provides the most genuine and reliable indication of the attitude of [its] author by allowing safe inferences as to the underlying mentality.'⁵⁵ That is how interpretation becomes an 'objective activity' based upon the unconscious and unintentional representational function of meaning-full form, that is, it is a cognitive contact whereby the interpreter cognizes a subject whose creative thought is objectivated in the meaning-full forms. So the process of interpretation can be viewed as an inversion of the process of creation of the meaning-full forms wherein 'the interpreter retraces the steps from the opposite direction by re-thinking them in his inner self.'⁵⁶ In this inversion, the interpreter has to understand the meaning-full form being as close as possible to the original meaning expounded by the other mind objectivated in them, which makes the text autonomous and the interpretation objectivist. That is why the first and fundamental canon of Betti's hermeneutical theory is called the canon of the hermeneutical autonomy of the text or of the immanence of the standards of hermeneutics. According to the canon, one should interpret the meaning-full form as an autonomous text that has its own 'logic of development', its own 'intended connections', its own 'necessity, coherence and conclusiveness'. This canon is also known as the canon of the immanence of the standards of hermeneutics, as according to it, the meaning-full forms 'should be judged in relation to the standards immanent in the original intention [rather than] in terms of their suitability for any other external purpose that may seem relevant to the interpreter.'⁵⁷ In the face of all immanence and autonomy of text, it does not remain completely closed, as from the end of its creation the author is always found to have put meaning in it. But in case of the divine scripture like the Qur'ān, the structure of text remains absolutely closed owing to the divine and transcendental source of meaning rather than a worldly mental reality. In this regard,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Ricoeur's concept of text seems to be more autonomy oriented in the sense that it severs the text from everything external to it even the author.

According to Ricoeur, text is obviously a 'discourse' which one speaks but which is fixed in meaning when 'one writes precisely because one does not speak' that time.⁵⁸ 'The birth of a text' is guaranteed by the objectification of discourse in the form of writing. It is meaning intended by the utterance (not only the words), which is fixed in writing. The text is a fixation of meaning in writing calls for a reading. Ricoeur demarcates 'reading' from 'dialogue'. Dialogue, for him, 'is an exchange of questions and answers.' Whereas there is no questioning-answering relation found in the act of reading so it cannot be considered as a dialogical process. Ricoeur does not focus on the author-reader relation, rather he lays emphasis on the text-reader relation, as the text, being a fixed meaning bearer of the utterance of the author, can be taken as a 'substitute' of the dialogue and as something which 'intercepts' it. That is to say, the text is autonomous in itself, as on the one hand, it 'preserves discourse [by the transcription of oral language into graphic signs] and makes of it archives available for individual and collective memory.'⁵⁹ On the other hand, 'the linearization of symbols allows for an analytic and distinctive translation of all the successive and discrete traits of language and thus increases its efficiency' and autonomy.⁶⁰ The conception of the autonomy of text leads Ricoeur to discard it from all of its 'outer references' including the world in which it was fixed by the author as well as the author himself. This 'suspension of the referential relation to the world and the reference to the author' enables the reader to 'stay within the "place of the text" and within the "enclosure" of this place.'⁶¹ In Ricoeur's view, the process of reading has two different attitudes namely explanation and interpretation. In the explanatory attitude, the text is considered as a structure of linguistic signs closed within itself being disconnected

⁵⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *What is a Text? Explanation and Interpretation*, trans. by David M. Rasmussen in D.M. Rasmussen, *Mythic-Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology: A Constructive Interpretation of the Thought of Paul Ricoeur* (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 136.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

from its outer references, while in the interpretational attitude, the reading of the text makes it 'open' to something exterior. That is, the autonomous structure of the text remains close in relation to the author while open in relation to the interpreter. Interpretation as the reading of a text is characterized by the interlinking of some external discourse to the discourse fixed by writing in the text. In this regard, interpretation can be grasped as 'appropriation' which has several dimensions.⁶²

Firstly, when an interpreter reads a text, he not only understands the context rather he understands himself as well. That is to say, the reading of a text is a 'concrete reflection', for 'the interpretation of a text ends up in the self-interpretation of a subject that henceforth understands himself better.'⁶³ But this hermeneutical reflection which guarantees the simultaneity of 'the constitution of self and that of meaning' remains incomplete until and unless it is incorporated with the explanatory attitude of the self. The understanding of a text provides with an alternate route to the reader to understand himself by his mediation to his own life through the appropriation of cultural signs and symbols already fixed in the text. So the explanatory attitude of a reader becomes complementary to his hermeneutical reflection.

The second dimension of interpretation as appropriation is concerned with the aim of hermeneutics 'to fight against cultural distance.' By cultural distance Ricoeur not only means 'the temporal distance but the kind of estrangement in regard to the system of values to which the cultural background of the text belongs.' When one interprets a text, one appropriately brings all of those textual elements together which first seem to be foreign to render them properly one's own.⁶⁴

The third dimension of interpretation as appropriation which Ricoeur considers as the most significant one is concerned with the link of discourse fixed in a text by the process of writing to the 'actual discourse' belongs to the process of interpretation. Drawing an analogy between the reading of a text and 'the performance of a musical score' he expounds that when one reads a text one actualizes 'the semantic virtualities' of it.⁶⁵ It means that the reading of a text is

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

an event of discourse corresponding to the actualization of the textual meaning with reference to the interpreter's real life, i.e. 'to interpret is to appropriate hic et nunc for ourselves the intention of the text.'⁶⁶ In this regard this third dimension of interpretation becomes a condition for the other two, as one first realizes or actualizes the semantic possibilities of a text only then one overcomes the cultural distance as well as understands oneself in relation to the understanding of the text.

Ricoeur's notion of the three-dimensional appropriation of text as an autonomous structure is coherently adjustable with the Farāhīan-Islāhīan view of the autonomy of Qur'ānic discourse as a perfect model of human life-praxis. Putting the foundation stone of his canonical Qur'ānic hermeneutics, Farāhī expressed, as we have seen above, his serious reservations against the absolute lacuna of hermeneutical reflection in drawing from the Qur'ān as regards *'ilm al-akhlāq* and *'ilm al-kalām*. His reservations are justifiable owing to the ethical spirit of Islamic civilization as based upon the Qur'ān, the divine discourse. The purpose behind the revelation of the Qur'ān is mainly to make the mortals understand its verses as well as to purify their souls as the Qur'ān says:

Our Lord! Send in them as apostle from amongst themselves who (can) recite Thy signs to them and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them. Indeed, Thou art the Exalted in Might (and) the Wise. (*Baqarah* 2:129)

Conclusion

The defining aspect of the Farāhī-Islāhī hermeneutical approach to the Qur'ān is the notion of *Nazm al-Qur'ān*. The mutual effect of all of the six canons discussed above leads one to the idea of autonomy of Qur'ānic text. The Farāhī-Islāhī conception of autonomy of the Qur'ān seems, apart from all the differences, to be related to the notion of the autonomy of text as expounded by Betti and Ricoeur who are well-known as objectivist hermeneuticians. Farāhī's and Islāhī's belief that the Qur'ān is thematically coherent requires that one should not refer to anything external in order to interpret any part of the Qur'ān rather the thematic integrality between the various parts of the Qur'ān and

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

their further thematic relationship to the major theme(s) of the Qur'ān are enough to construe the meaning of the Qur'ānic text. That is to say, one part of the Qur'ān interprets the other by virtue of the thematic relationship between them. This is what we call *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bi'l-Qur'ān*.

In contemporary Western hermeneutics, Betti and Ricoeur both are of the view that in order to be interpreted appropriately the text should be taken as autonomous. But their approaches to the view of the autonomy of text are different from each other. The former thinks that at the level of creation the text or the meaning-full form comes into being through the author's unconscious attempt of putting meaning into the text, while at the level of interpretation the interpreter is to minimize the imposition of his subjective views on the meaning-full form through the process of self-effacement. That is to say, the meaning-full form's coming into being owes entirely to the author's life-experiences in his cultural world, and the interpreter is to reciprocally reconstruct those meanings as objectively as possible.

As compared to Betti's, Ricoeur's conception of the autonomy of text seems closer to that of Farāhī and Islāhī. Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach to text is far more objectivist than that of Betti, as the former discards the text from the life-worlds both of the author and of the interpreter. He rejects the author-text relationship as something intervening in the process of interpretation, for it may stir the interpreter's focus from the objective givenness of the text to the life-world of the author. He also rejects the possibility of the subjective impositions of meanings by the interpreter on the text. On the contrary, he believes in the hermeneutical appropriation of the text through the interpreter's explanatory and interpretational attitudes towards it. In the process of hermeneutical appropriation, it is the text that may affect the interpreter's life not the vice versa.

Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach toward the text as something autonomous is highly useful for the objectivist Qur'ān exegetes like Farāhī and Islāhī in two ways. First, it releases the interpreter from the obligation of incorporating the socio-historical-cultural aspects of the author's life in the interpretation of the text, which suits the Qur'ān as a text to be interpreted, as at the level of creation it is rooted into the transcendental divine world rather than the socio-historical-cultural world. Second, it enlightens the way for the interpreter to transform his life through the dictates of the hermeneutical appropriation of the

text, which is a golden rule for the objectivist Qur'ān exegetes like Farāhī and Islāhī to ascend their life through the divine path of righteousness derived from the Word of God.

What Makes a Society Sacred or Secular? An Islamic Brief

SAEED ANVARI

In this article I wish to address the question, "According to what standard can the new secular world, which has been founded on the basis of Charles Taylor's third meaning of 'secular,' make use of the religious world, which has been founded on the basis of the sacred. By 'religious world' here I mean specifically the Islamic world.

Mutual understanding between two individuals is only ever possible when they share something in common. Hence let us undertake a short investigation of the foundational principles of the secular and religious worlds so that their commonalities and the way they might be able to benefit each other might become clear. The most important similarities and differences of the secular and religious worlds are identified below:

1-Their goal for life: The religious person wants this world for the sake of the here-after, whilst the secular person wants this world for the sake of this world. Of course, the religious person can have a good worldly life too, for having the afterlife is not necessarily incompatible with success in the world. However, this is not always the case, and in some circumstances it is necessary to give up this world in order to reach the next. Therefore, in certain circumstances, secular and religious individuals share the desire to create a prosperous world.

2-Knowledge of the self and knowledge of the material (realm): One of the aspects by which the secular person may be able to benefit from the religious world is the religious world's consideration of self-knowledge. (In general) the secular person investigates everything according to phenomenal experience, and pays less attention to self-knowledge, whereas the religious person is in search of knowledge of his self. The goal of religion is the realization of Divine Realities and the transcendence of the Spirit, whereas the goal of the secular world is to accumulate a series of information about religion and all other subjects.

The secular world is pragmatist, and seeks usage in worldly life. One might also venture to say that this conference is also based on this

principle, the secular world wanting to see how it can benefit from and make practical and pragmatic use of religions and the sacred. As I see it, the secular world can benefit from the religious world on the plane of the *psyche*-mind or soul, and fill some of the psychological voids that have opened up in it by means of religion. However, one should be aware that these voids will only be completely filled when the secular person really becomes religious, and in that case he would no longer be secular anymore!

3-Means of knowing reality: The secular person only accepts sense perception and intelligence ('*aql*') whereas the religious person also accepts revelation, intuitive witnessing (of divine realities) and illumination. Also, the meaning of 'intelligence' is different according to the secular and religious person. The secular world has come into existence through a new interpretation of intelligence which differs from that of the world of religion. One should be aware of the difference between 'reason' and 'intellect'. 'Intellect', which can be understood as intellectual 'witnessing' or 'vision', is the very thing which Plato called the 'eye of the soul/spirit' and which Muslim mystics/sages/Gnostics have called the 'eye of the heart', and upon which the religious world has been founded. This understanding of intelligence perhaps contains 'faith' within it. From the point of view of Islam, faith is something completely intellectual, although not on the basis of the intellect which the secular world understands. The meaning of intelligence or intellect in the secular world is 'reason', which is encompassed by the limit of proof and argument, and does not go beyond it.

The question presents itself: to what extent can faith be investigated by means of the intellect? Is faith merely an experiential phenomenon which is to be analyzed by reason? My view is that the third meaning of 'secularism' can be destructive of the religious world-view. Not all dimensions of a religion are rational matters (although they are intellectual in the sense that we have explained the term). Can love be proved using rational premises? Or can it be said to someone, you should be in love with something for the following reasons? These days, some religious societies have become infatuated with reason, and try to analyze faith using philosophy of religion. However, in my opinion, not only do they fail to reach any conclusion but their faith is also ruined in the process.

4-The primacy of doubt or certainty: the secular world begins with doubt and establishes everything on the basis of rational proof, and if it cannot prove something rationally it does not accept it. As opposed to this, religious wisdom is established on the basis of certainty and faith.

5-The possibility of metaphysics: After Kant the possibility of metaphysical being came under question in the modern world, and the difference between sacred knowledge and philosophy, which is only a mental activity, ceased to exist. In the secular world the meaning of philosophy differs from that in the religious world, and in my opinion modern philosophies and religious philosophies, such as Islamic philosophy or Christian philosophy, share in name alone, whereas they differ in their goal, means of knowledge, the possibility of metaphysical being and many other matters.

6-Science in the service of philosophy or philosophy in the service of science: The secular world has become infatuated with science, that is to say, they have attempted to use experimental science to reach a universal conceptualization of the world of being, and by means of this structure their world view. However, they only study a limited part of nature and only present a conceptualization within the realm of the senses.

7-A divine point of view, with God as the axis, or humanism, with man at the center: In the religious world there is allusion to the fact that the root of all human problems is becoming distanced from God, that is to say man's true Ruler and Possessor. It is only through knowledge of the Absolute that one can reach salvation. As opposed to this, the secular world-view has taken shape on the basis of humanism and individualism, with man as the axis. On this foundation, everything has to be in some way in the service of humanity, and in reality the modern secular world takes the human as its god (a reverse anthropomorphism).

8-Means of expression: In the religious world use is made of symbolism and symbolic modes of expression (such as mythology), whereas this has not been the case in the secular world, where expression is direct and based on usage, and the perspective of wisdom has been eliminated from the corpus of knowledge. In reality, modern philosophies, by confining their attention to logic, have failed to seek the benefits of symbolism, allusion and allegory. These days one is obliged to speak in a way which everyone can understand,

whereas from the point of view of Divine Wisdom, "Not everyone is capable of knowing everything." For this reason sages have made use of symbols to express their subjects. The reason for the change in language in the secular world is that they have turned away from inward matters and seek everything in the outward. From the point of view of wisdom, everything (in existence) is a symbol of the Truth. As a result of this, the language of wisdom also expresses truths by means of symbols. Is the sacred, which is closely related to mystery, the mysterious, the symbolic, the mythical, and the secular world which is in search of simplicity and clarity capable of understanding each other?

Therefore: The secular world can only benefit from the religious world in the following matters:

A) On the level of worldly life – (which as has been said, is a shared value of secular and religious people)

B) On the level of psychology – (the secular world contains a vacuum or void on the level of psychological and spiritual matters, which can be reduced using religion, but as I see it can only be solved when an individual becomes truly religious.)

As has been stated, to the extent that the foundations of the secular and religious worlds are different, there is no possibility of mutual understanding and benefit in other matters, unless we change the foundations of one of these worlds. In my opinion, various religions can converse with one another and benefit from the knowledge which each has, but I doubt whether the secular world can really take *great* benefit from the religions.

The Tradition of Rationality in Islamic Culture

Sayed Hassan Akhlaq

Introduction

These reflections aim to develop two major propositions: first, there are no dogmas beyond reasonable examination among the fundamental concepts of Islam; second, rationality here means knowledge based on common sense. The paper thus concludes that Muslims must learn from their substantial treasure of rationalism and need to contribute to a “rational faith” in the current world. Moreover, by rationality, I mean an unbiased thinking for or against religion; this should be the common denominator for all discussions of secularism.

Rationality and religiosity have a long history in human culture, but because humanity has opened a special objectivity in the modern era, those matters gained a new extension and importance in meaning. In this extension a main human question is the search for the relationship between them in their dealings with one another.

Whether we accept it or not, religion is a main human element in the world and Islam is one of the great world religions. As historical entities, human beings cannot but give attention to the history that made us and played a unique role in our identity. This is especially true with respect to Islamic society and culture. Hence we must think about the relation between Islam and modern rationality; this is what Islamic religiosity requires.

The history of Islamic theology’s appearance and growth and its position concerning the other sects and schools show this as well, which joins philosophy and theology in the Islamic world.¹ A contemporary Muslim apologist and theologian writes: the rational and essential right and wrong principle used as a ground for morals in ancient Greek philosophy, provides a firm basis for knowing the

¹ The Contemporary theosophist, the Grand Ayatullah Abdullah Jawadi Amuli, writes: “If something is understood through valid intellectual argument, it will be considered as a part of religion. If the explored point is about a cosmological subject like the origin and the end of the world the same point will be a philosophical study” (Jawadi Amuli, 2005), p.7.

acts and attributes of God (Allah) and fundamental concepts of Islamic theology (Subhani, 1368, p. 8). We can see the importance of this principle in the al-Tusi, Khwajah Nasir's (1201-74) work (*Tajrid al-Itiqad*; Abstract of Theology) when he argues about acts of God and in the Allamah al-Hilli's (d. AH 726/AD 1325) work,² when he argues on the wisdom and justice of God (Allah). The justice and wisdom of Allah were the two main subjects of fundamental Islamic Theology. Islamic theology was divided into two sects the "People of Justice" and the "Others" (*al-Adliyah wa Ghairahum*) because of this principle; the principle of rightness and wrongness based on self-sufficient reason is the core for knowing ultimate truth. The first Islamic theologians "People of Justice" argued for radical rationalism. Later, the opposite group, the Ash'ari, emerged to develop a kind of textualism. However, the later development of the Ash'aris, like Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1149-1209) tended toward rationalism as well. Though rejecting classic theology and philosophy in Islam, the intellectual father of Salafism, Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) approved, to some extent, the principle of rational goodness and badness.

Muslim philosophers searched for agreement in philosophy and the revaluation of religion on the basis of the self-sufficiency of reason. In this discussion there is a special place for Averroes as a great and distinguished expert on Muslim law (Shariah). His thought on the relationship between Islamic religiosity and philosophical rationality was highly significant as he emphasized both the Islamic requirements but also rational independence (Ibn Rushd, 1994, p. 42-3). He opened the way for humanity saying: "Oh human being, I do not say what you call divine knowledge is wrong, but I say what I know is human knowledge." This motto helped usher in the modern world as Corbin showed (Corbin, 1993). Etienne Gilson, likewise, has demonstrated the importance of Averrorism right up to modern times (Gilson, 1999).

When we search the way of living faithfully in these changing times, we must ask whether there is an inevitable gap between human cultures, which puts them in conflict. Euro-centric thought and extremist Islam are two examples of the wrong answer. Even such a deep thinker as Martin Heidegger considers philosophy as a purely

² Yusuf ibn al-Mutahhar al-Hilli, *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-Itiqad* (Qum: Jama'at al-Mudarrisin, no date).

Greek and western product, which in political terms leads to “The Clash of Civilizations.” But what do we Muslims think when we know “The Book” to be the last and most perfect evidence of divine religion, the conclusive argument that begins by “You must Read” (Quran, 78:1) and swears by “the pen” (68:1)? However, can we talk about something, read “the book” and take “the pen” without believing in the capacity for dialogue, respect for the reader and audience, and mutual comprehension? The main basis of the Islamic mission is the nature of reason that leads to intercultural dialogue (listening to all speeches and following the best) (39:18).

There is then a connection between the modern and pre-modern West, and we can examine Western culture through the Islamic perspective and ask how we can live faithfully as our times turn to, more or less, total rationality. To answer this question we shall first consider the characteristics of modern rationality in general, and secondly review its place in Islamic culture.

Rationality as the Axis of Modernity

The base of the modern world is its special rationality that appears by reflecting on itself, as Ernest Cassirer shows, following Alexander Pop, “The proper study of mankind is man” (Cassirer, 1955, p.5). This joins two important concepts: pure rationality and free will of the human.

Pure Rationality

Modern rationality is like Enlightenment rationality, against fideism, voluntarism and composed of empiricism and rationalism. It is self-sufficient and naturalist, though not necessarily materialist. It perceives objective reality in spite of two obstacles: the past dominance of theology and religion and the current dominance of state and government (Cassirer, 1955, p. 238). This autonomy does not mean hostility to both of them, but only the self-sufficiency that can be a background for dialogue and relations.

Free Will

The belief in free will and choice is the result of Enlightenment rationality. In this the Enlightenment was against Luther’s and Calvin’s reform that saw the will as a captive of divine predestination,

and saw human greatness in its humility before the divine will and mystery. Cassirer writes:

Grotius was the real spiritual champion of the movement led by Bishop Arminius in the Netherlands which opposed the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination...He stands at exactly the same spot where Erasmus had stood; he defends the humanistic idea of freedom against the fundamental thesis of the bondage of the will revived by the reformers, Calvin and Luther, in all its rigor (*Ibid.*, 239).

Rationality and Tolerance

These two bases, rationalism and free will, lead to the necessity of tolerance. Because tolerance is the spirit of philosophy and rationality; one must not fall into dogma in believing in rationality itself³. This rational spirit opposes two things at the same time: dogmatism and being careless regarding fundamental questions of human traditions, especially religion (*Ibid.*, 164). Tolerance is the appendage of reason as Voltaire said. It is the base, not a secondary requisite, for philosophy whose history is that of the dialectical movement of different thoughts, for its unity and harmony as Heraclites said (Cassirer, 1961). Also tolerance shows the proximity of religion to philosophy. "It is the greatest triumph of philosophy if today the period of religious wars is over. [...] {as Voltaire wrote down,} 'Philosophy, philosophy alone, that sister of religion, has disarmed the hands of superstition which have so long been reddened with gore; the human spirit awakened from its intoxication is astonished at the excesses it committed under the influence of fanaticism'" (Cassirer, 1955, 169).

This attitude to religion replaced the ethos of objective comprehension instead of the pathos of subjective feeling regarding sublime religious values. Thus we can speak of "the unity of religions" or "one Universal Religion." That was one of the main differences between the Enlightenment and the Reformation: Enlightenment religion was a religious universalism or deism: "Deism springs from the inner repudiation of the spirit in which the religious quarrels of the preceding centuries had been conducted; it gives expression to a deep

³ This is the reason Voltaire rejects Holbach; the Holbach fought against dogmatism with a fanatical zeal for dogma. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

longing for that “peace of faith” which had been hoped for and promised by the Renaissance but never attained. Not in religious wars, but only in religious peace can and will the truth and the nature of God be revealed to us; such is the general conviction of the deistic movement” (*Ibid.*, 175).

The “Philosophers” attention to Eastern religions and schools reflected the will to truth, not pure inquisitiveness. Cassirer continues: “in the eighteenth century, however, the peoples of the Orient especially attracted attention and demanded equal recognition for their religious convictions” (*Ibid.*, 166).

Rationality in Islam

We can distinguish two kinds of religion in a philosophical viewpoint: supernatural or revealed religion and natural religion. These two may be known from their origins. The origin of natural religion is the rational nature and disposition of humans, and its validity is based on human reason. Revealed religion’s origin is revelation and divine will; its validity is from a revealed subject or divine inspiration. So we can distinguish two sorts of religiosity: supernatural religiosity and natural religiosity. Deism or natural religion is a common denominator of all religions, if one believes in a rational base for religions, as Baumer says.⁴ This kind of religiosity was in all the pre-modern religious cultures and joins to the belief in the foundations of the modern world. Voltaire, during the Enlightenment, learned from John Locke’s “The Reasonableness of Christianity.” Locke reduced the three Abrahamic religions to a natural religion. But we can find the seeds of these before Locke: “there is no sharp line separating Christian Deists and orthodox Christian theologians (such as Thomas Aquinas or Duns Scotus) who maintain that some parts of Christian doctrine can be known by natural reason” (Eliade, 1993, 4:263). Thus the deistic approach did not just begin in the 18th century and end in this century, because deism remained alive in all religious societies and all faithful individuals

⁴ See: *Main Currents of Western Thought: Readings in Western Europe Intellectual History from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Franklin Le Van Baumer, ed. (Yale University Press, 1978), Chapter 2, Enlightenment Age.

who believe with independent thought (*Ibid.*⁵). Religious universalism is the criterion of one religion truth, because God and human nature are continuous, such that rational religion is one, continuous and universal. Hence revealed religion is a re-publication of the law of nature. We can identify religion finally as knowing our duties as to the will of God, as Kant put it. We can also find this interpretation of Islam in the primary period of Islamic culture and civilization.

The Grounds of Islamic Rationality

We will consider these grounds in three steps: the Holy Quran, the greatest text in Islamic world; the Tradition that quoted from the great Muslim leaders; and the Islamic Doctrines about what is necessary to be a Muslim.

The Quran

This holy book invites Muslims to a faith that is more than a confession and submission (22:8; 25:44; 49:14). People who do not apply reasoning to their opinions are considered less than beasts (8:22; 25:44). The holy book acknowledges rationality and humanity, and on this basis grounds morals and belief in eternal life (22:5-6; 90: 8-10; 91:7-9).

The Quran speaks of reason or rationality about 50 times. Although reason and revelation have been known as the saving ways, the verse 42 of Yunes (Jonah) chapter says that we cannot understand revelation and transmission without the use of reason. Hence transmission without reason is not what Islam professes. The Quranic verses state the aim of revelation to be the use of reason, namely, the learning of the book and wisdom (2:129; 2:242, 30:28; 43:3; 62:2). The Quran calls itself "remembrance" or "recollection" (*dhikr*) more than one time (15:9; 16:44; 21:50; 36:69). This means that the mission of this Holy Book is the remembering of what people comprehended, but forgot for whatever reasons. Once, God says to his prophet Muhammad: "Remember, you are a reminder only. You do not have domination upon them" (88:21-22).

⁵ Muslim philosophers also contributed in Deism in the Islamic context. See, Sayed Hassan Akhlaq, "Islamic Philosophy between Theism and Deism," in *Rivista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, Braga, Vol. 72, 2016, pp. 65-84.

The words, such as reasoning, knowing, understanding, thinking and being faithful (namely, believing on the basis of reason) are in the holy Quran more than one hundred times. Thus:

- Knowing and its derivations, about 600 times
- Reason and its derivations, 49 times
- Consciousness (intelligence) and its derivations, more than 20 times
- Thinking, 18 times
- Speculation and its derivations, more than 50 times
- Certainty and its derivations, 27 times
- Faith and its derivations, 800 times

It is noticeable that with all the emphasis on, and repeating of, the importance of rationality, the word "reason" was not used in the Quran in its nominal form, but in its verbal form, to show that rationality depends on event, time, subject and object which determine and limit human conditions. And if we have no understanding and reasoning without subject, object and time, then there is no unchanging and absolute comprehension and rationality.

In addition, there are a lot of Quranic verses which: encourage studying and knowing, reprimand those who are lazy in studying, introduce ways of studying, reproach dogmatic imitation, warn followers of unknown subjects going astray, and caution against following them (2:170; 5:104; 7:179; 12:40; 17:36; 31:21; 37:69-70; 43:23; 67:10). Concerning this textual proof, the great Muslim interpreters show that the Quran speaks of "taking the book and truth" or "taking hold of the Quran" and not "just knowing it." The "taking" or "taking hold" indicates a strong approach; meaning faith should be based on demonstrative syllogisms (Jawadi Amuli, 1374, p.47). The Quran itself repeatedly uses demonstrations.⁶

Al-Sunnah (the Tradition)

Action, speech and expressions (verification) of the Islamic Prophet (and immaculate leaders in the Shi'a denomination) are known as the Islamic tradition (al-Sunnah). They are collected and protected

⁶ A recent very rational and humanistic exegeses of the Quran follows: Sayed Yahya Yasrebi, *Tafsir-e Rooz* (The Exegeses Today) (Tehran: Amir Kabir publication, 1387 (A. H. solar)/2008).

throughout Islamic history, and are used usually for new deductions and in search for answers to modern questions. This tradition is full of references to reason and rationality, on which there is a book entitled “the book of reason” or “the book of knowledge” in the first chapters of books in the Islamic tradition, such as “*al-Usol-e al-Kafi*” and “*al-Sahih-e al-Bukhari*.”⁷ For example we have some surprising reports (*Hadith*) on the greatness of reason and rationality in the book of reason in “*al-Usol-e al-Kafi*.” One finds, for example: a transmitter of the Shi’a’s traditions quoted to Imam Sadeq (the 6th Imam of Shi’a and grandchild of the Muslim Prophet): there is a man that is in worship, piety and virtue thus and thus. The Imam asked: How is his reason? He answered: I do not know. The Imam added: the reward corresponds to reason (Kulaini, First book, 7th Hadith). Imam Ali says in the first sermon of his great book “*al-Nahjul al-Balaghah*”: God sent prophets to make the people’s reason bloom. He declares clearly the connection between happiness and the use of reason and experiment, when he wrote “unlucky is he who does not use reason and experiment” (*Ibid.*, the 78th Letter).⁸

Hence for Islamic culture, it seems that any opposition to rationalism and fideism is basically non-Islamic because faith based on reason (or reason’s priority on faith) was the obvious and definite matter for the Prophet and primary Muslims⁹. This is the meaning of a famous story in the Islamic tradition that says: one day the Prophet of Islam asked an aged woman to present an argument for believing in God’s existence, and to others: “You must learn from the aged woman religion” when she gave her answer. This attitude of the

⁷ After the Holy Quran, there are six most important texts in Sunni denomination titled *Kutub-e Sitta* (*al-Sahih-e al-Bukhari* is the first one) and four texts in Shi’a Islam titled *Kutub-e Arba’a* (*al-Usol-e al-Kafi* is the first amongst them). It is believed that these ten volumes consist of the authorized narrations about the Prophet (and infallible Imams in Shia case) (Hadiths).

⁸ The philosopher Allameh Muhammad Hussayn Tabataba’i (1904-1981) had done an advanced study about Imam Ali’s view of Rationality and Islamic philosophy. He recognized Imam Ali ibn Abitalib as the highest role model for divine philosophers. Further, Tabataba’i explains metaphysical and ontological arguments within Ali’s talks. See, Tabataba’i, Sayed Muhammad Hussain. *Ali va Falsafe-e Elahi*. Translated by Sayed Ebrahim Sayed Alavi (Qum: Entesharate Eslami. 1361 (A. H. solar), 1982).

⁹ Also see, Kulaini, First book, 8th, 9th, 20th, 28th & 30th Hadiths.

Prophet shows that gender, age or language could not excuse avoiding reasoning in religiosity.

The second Hadith of "*al-Usol-e al-Kafi*" says from Imam Ali: Adam in the first minute of the human creature was awarded by Gabriel full authority to choose one of three things and leave all others: reason, modesty and religion. He chose reason, but modesty and religion did not leave him because they always accompany reason. The other Hadiths express that human life depends on reason just as death depends on not using reason (*Ibid.*, 30th Hadith). The religious person is not respectable if he does not reason (*Ibid.*, 32th Hadith). The prophets do not reach their high position without achieving the perfection of reason (*Ibid.*, 11th Hadith); however, the prophets talk to people in terms of people's intellects (*Ibid.*, 15th Hadith). Fundamentally God has two proofs (reason and the prophets); from the Islamic viewpoint, these are complementary to one another and do same thing (*Ibid.*, 12th Hadith). This is the high position for rationality acknowledged fully by Islamic sources.

Islamic Doctrines

Islam is not a historical religion; to be a Muslim you do not need fundamentally to accept a history. Rather, Islam is a propositional religion meaning that to be a Muslim implies analyzing and confirming three fundamental propositions: there is a God; God sent people the prophets; and humanity is eternal, and, thus people face Judgment Day. These three fundamental beliefs respectively are called *Tawhid*, *Nabuwwat*, and *Mi'ad*. Islam does not accept for belief any authority or reference except reason and rationality. So it wants its addressees to choose its principles by their reason only and to avoid imitating other's opinions. This means that Islam hesitates neither on its rationality, nor on the understanding of its addressees. For this reason, it takes a discursive status regarding other religions and invites them to full dialogue, supposing equality with their addressees, even polytheists (34:24-26). For more information, we can consider the principles of Islamic faith, which are in propositional form. A Muslim must accept these principles by personal research and acceptance and place them as the criterion for his life:

A. God: The world has an origin and its creator is all-knowing, all-powerful and a cosmic designer. He must be known and believed by reason only.

B. Prophets: God elected some people to guide human beings and sent them for this mission only. They are merely middlemen that invite people to God, not to themselves. They are like other people, neither gods, nor are they appointed to make humans God. Prophets are sent to people as a result of God's grace (*Lutf*); the grace is obligatory to God because He already gave people both rational capacity and irrational desires. This mixture causes many people to not achieve happiness and, thus, being a more perfect human. So, the Prophets came to enrich and flourish human reason.

C. Human beings: humans have free will and are responsible; they can know good and evil by reason. All men and women choose their fates by their wills. Their perfections and deficiencies are the results of their thoughts, actions and speech.

D. The relationship between humans and God: The relation between divinity and humanity is also knowable by reason. The Prophets' rules and principles are declared for human guidance. After this direction and guidance people will be rewarded and punished based on their own response and behavior.

E. Resurrection: After this worldly life, people go to another stage, namely, life in the next world which is the result of human acts in this world. Embracing a world created from our own decisions and being means Judgment Day.

All of these principles and foundations are reasonable; it means our reason can understand, conceive and assert them. We can doubt each of them, which happened in the time of the Prophet and which still form the debates of Muslim leaders today. But we must not forget that none of these principles have their value from a revealed authority. The revealed sources provided Islamic theology with a refreshing meaning, direction and development in order to contribute to the human search for ultimate truth, good, and beauty.

The Influence of Rationality on Primary Islamic Culture

Early Islamic history shows various examples of Muhammad's trying to lay the foundations of a rational tradition. Also Muhammad and his followers exercised opinion (or independent judgment) and encouraged reasoning and deduction. It was said that Muhammad was a follower of reason before receiving revelation¹⁰. At one point the

¹⁰ See, Abd al-Razzaq, 1381, pp. 155-278.

Prophet invited a person to accept Islam but the person wanted two months to decide. Muhammad suggested four months, instead of two months, to decide with more thought and insight (Subhani, 1380, 354). In this background the Mu'tazila appeared as the first speculative school of theology in the Islamic world. This school collected various thoughts and was focused on a pure rationalism: its motto was "reason before revelation." They went so far that some introduced doubt in terms of knowledge and religion as the first duty of an individual.

Islam's emphasis upon rationality provided a ground for dialogue between it and other cultures, sects and thought systems and developed philosophical investigations and questions. This continued as the seat of government (Caliphate) moved from Medina to Baghdad and Damascus, the greatest Islamic translation offices in this period. It is important that the desire for translation was a cultural and social desire, not political or governmental. Aristotelianism was the more appealing to Muslims; it is based on pure rationality and common sense. Although, at first Aristotelianism in Islamic culture was mixed with Neo-Platonism, it became clearer and more direct especially in Averroes and his position on the relationship between religion and philosophy. Picking Aristotle from among all ancient philosophers and developing his philosophy in harmony with Islam and institutionalizing peripatetic philosophy as the mainstream study of philosophy inside Islam, all refer to the inner potential of Islam to adjust with rationalization.

Hence the rational attitude is consistent with Islamic foundations and its religion. In the following section, I will try to show the characteristics of Islamic rationality.

Features of Islamic Rationality

What is the background and characteristics of pure rationality? How can we speak of their coherence with Islamic principles? There are some things to consider.

The Self-Sufficiency of Reason

Reason's self-sufficiency is an explicit expression of believing in reason's independence in understanding ontological and moral truths. We can speak of reason's self-sufficiency if we know reason as the religion ground in Islam. We do not need to find any clear proof

as to its authority. We have no further common and clear concept, it is the judge that can judge itself. This originates from the unique nature of reason. When we say essential good and evil we affirm its independence from divine will. This means the self-sufficiency of good and evil; their merit originates from their essence, not divine or human will. Islamic doctrines emphasize this self-sufficiency of reason.

The Parallelism of Rationality and Humanity

We saw that some verses of the Holy Quran consider those who do not reason as inferior to animals (8:22 & 25:44) because they forget their special nature and fall into a kind of self-alienation. On this basis, it had been said that the believing person, who does not reason, is not notable and they are not addressees to Allah. Reason is the source of moral values. There is a famous and long Hadith in Shi'a denomination that cited "the reason and ignorance soldiers."¹¹ It emphasizes two things at same time: first, speculative or pure reason is not the desired rationality in Islam, because rationality must lead to an objective and pragmatic result. If they are linked together this means they influence one another. Namely, rational acceptances are changeable, deformable and transformable, if the moral characteristics are changeable, deformable and transformable.

The Free Will of Humans

There is communication between accepting pure rationality and free will in Islamic thought so that Muslim Sufis (Mystics) that denigrate reason and reasoning argue based on the free will of human beings. The Quran verses emphasize both of them at the same time: the all powerfulness of God and the free will of humans. So *Adliya's* theologians collect them in such a manner that free will does not become a victim of Allah's greatness and infiniteness.

In this background a great Shi'a apologist "Shaikh al-Mufid" said: Adam's fall is more fit to human rank and dignity than living in the gifted heaven, because living in the heaven obtained by human effort is more honorable than living there based on divine grace without human effort (quoted: Yasrebi, 1388, p.41). Goodness and badness is a

¹¹ Kulaini, the first book. The contrast between reason and ignorance in Islamic Sunnah indicates that reason depends on a training process, as it is in ignorance.

ground and canon for Islamic apologists, based on believing in human free will as they justify divine justice by human free will.

The Quran, the Holy Book of Muslims tells about two human patterns for Muslims in order to show human independence: one person became a monotheist in an atheistic context, while the other became an atheist in a monotheistic context; the first is the wife of Noah and the second is the wife of Pharaoh,¹² respectively role models of evil and good in the Quran (66:10-11).

Respecting free choice and the self-sufficient intellect, this Quranic pattern reappears in *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan's* (The Living Son of the Vigilant) story by Ibn Tufayl. He described a person who reached a high level of Islamic religiosity by his own will and reason without outside aid.

Parallelism of Rationality and Tolerance

The Quran and Islamic traditions accept the limitations and fallibility of reason. When Averroes, the great legal theorist and philosopher, searches Islamic judgments about studying philosophy, he found that philosophical attainments are mixed with right and wrong. But because they are known by a rational necessity (the necessity of the premises producing the conclusion) they could not be purely null and void (Averroes, 1994, 53). Rational necessity and certainty do not, necessarily, lead to dogmatism or skepticism.

The great Muslim philosophers emphasized two matters at the same time: our inability to understanding the essence of things and the importance of collective work and going gradually toward truth (Farabi, 1371, pp.130-1; Averroes, 1994, p.38-9; Kendi, 1369, 103-4).¹³ The desired necessity is rational rather than ontological. Namely, we attain to certainty by rational argument, not ontological arguments. This certainty is not classic logical certainty, but a justified belief consistent with fallibility. We say this because Islamic sources encourage us to attain rational knowledge and express its limitations, and do not require more than human abilities. Also it informs us that some prophets and saints confess their inability to attain perfect

¹² The unjust and dictatorial ruler of ancient Egypt.

¹³ For a detailed discussion about Rationalism in Islamic philosophy see, Sayed Hassan Akhlaq, "Rationality in Islamic Peripatetic and Enlightenment Philosophy," in *Philosophy Emerging from Culture*, Edited by Oliva Blanchette et al (Washington DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington DC, 2013), pp. 71-86.

knowledge. Encouraging independent judgment and the acceptance of its fallibility in Islam could be a sign of this.

Which Rationality? Moses and Khidr

Which rationality is the one that Islamic thought encourages? There is lots of evidence in the Quran and al-Sunnah that reason from the Islamic viewpoint is common sense and that general objective reason is not pure and ideal reason. To repeat our three points from above: the self-sufficiency of reason, religion based on reason, and religious understanding by reason. Let me mention one piece of evidence.

There is a famous story in the Quran about a great prophet called Moses (18: 56-82). He goes to see a very important saint in the Islamic tradition called Khidr. Moses sees three inadmissible and incorrect actions of Khidr (18:71-74), which, according to the Quran, make him protest (18:71; 74 & 77). Those inadmissible things were: making a hole in a ship, killing a child, and rebuilding a wall for persons who did not help Khidr and Moses. Although all of them happened for some mystical and supernatural reason, what is important is that Moses' protesting is based on common sense. He protests on behalf of common and calculative reason and does not know the unseen world. This protest separated Moses from Khidr (18:77). But from the Islamic viewpoint, Moses is one of the arch-prophets so that Muslims must confirm his prophecy, whereas the prophecy of Khidr is not certain. The Holy Quran recalls Moses more than 130 times and he has a lot of valuable characteristics in the Quran.¹⁴

This story shows that a rational person cannot remain loyal in promising submission and not protesting, when appropriate, to a mystic. This is not a negative situation because the rational individual did not forget his nature. This story shows a needed confrontation with non-rationalist doctrines in the Islamic viewpoint. Also there are some Hadiths in Islamic sources which show that God's criterion is worldly reason (Kulaini, the first book, 7th hadith), reason that is appropriate to our times and could open us to new horizons. Another

¹⁴ Moses was qualified to "possess the *Furqan* (the standard to distinguish right and wrong)" (Quran, 2:53), "receive fully and in detail the Book and guidance from God" (6:154); he is known as "the God Interlocutor" (7:144) who wanted to export his people from the darkness to the lightness (14:5). Moses has joined his peoples in a request based on common sense asking God to be seen (4:153).

hadith says that the prophets speak to people in accordance with their sharing of reason (*Ibid.*, 15th Hadith).¹⁵

Finally, I think the opposition between reason (not knowledge) and ignorance in Islamic traditions illumines the human inability to attain either absolute knowledge or absolute ignorance. Being reasonable means first accepting gradations and hence the ability to acquire the character of reason and rationality; second, this graduated openness to reason encourages us to turn our research toward truths that aid human beings in seeking and attaining a better world. Renewing this potential within Islam helps Muslims to adjust themselves to the secular world and contribute positively to dialogue between secular and sacred.

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¹⁵ This is why many Muslim theologians argued, based on the common sense of their time to show the emergence and end of the Prophets was necessary. Islamic theology (kalam) used to apply common sense and natural reason more than transcendental and speculative reason.

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