



Kent Academic Repository

Milne, Joseph Richard (1999) *Sacred anthropology : a study of nodual conceptions of man in Hinduism and Christianity*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent.

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/94530/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/01.02.94530>

This document version

UNSPECIFIED

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives)

Additional information

This thesis has been digitised by EThOS, the British Library digitisation service, for purposes of preservation and dissemination. It was uploaded to KAR on 25 April 2022 in order to hold its content and record within University of Kent systems. It is available Open Access using a Creative Commons Attribution, Non-commercial, No Derivatives (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>) licence so that the thesis and its author, can benefit from opportunities for increased readership and citation. This was done in line with University of Kent policies (<https://www.kent.ac.uk/is/strategy/docs/Kent%20Open%20Access%20policy.pdf>). If you ...

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in **Title of Journal**, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

SACRED ANTHROPOLOGY

A Study of Nondual Conceptions of Man in
Hinduism and Christianity

Doctoral Thesis Presented By

Joseph Richard Milne

University of Kent at Canterbury



DXN030719

F177598

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER 1 Introduction - The Question of Man | 3 |
| CHAPTER 2 The Threefold Relation of Man, Cosmos, and God | 34 |
| CHAPTER 3 Shankara and Nondualism | 119 |
| CHAPTER 4 John Scottus Eriugena | 153 |
| CHAPTER 5 The Mystical Anthropology of Bonaventure | 177 |
| CHAPTER 6 Teilhard De Chardin: Cosmos and Consciousness and the Spiritualisation of the Universe | 215 |
| CONCLUSION | 288 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 300 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Question of Man

What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

(Psalm 8)

The anthropological thesis elaborated here attempts to relate together religious ideas of man which on first sight appear wholly disparate, and so my first concern in this introduction is to orient the reader by providing the perspective from which this whole enquiry arises. This involves, first, imparting some general idea of the kinds of questions this study germinated in and attempts to grapple with and, secondly, gaining an idea of some of the problems these questions raise or run into.

One of the main difficulties that will continually confront us lies in trying to understand precisely where the dividing line lies between the *religious* question of man and the *philosophical* question of man. This is, in part, because theology employs philosophical discourse in its method of enquiry, although it has quite different ends in view. There is an ambiguous line between philosophy and theology which can only be clearly discerned in their different objectives. From the religious point of view man is, of course, *both* a religious being and a philosophical being. Religion, however, is founded and always remains focused on revelatory disclosure which goes beyond the scope and remit of philosophy. One of our concerns, then, is to distinguish between revelatory and philosophical knowledge of man. Here a formal distinction is extremely difficult to make, since even revelatory knowledge is subject to distortion if not understood through philosophical

reflection.¹ On the other hand, the texts we shall be studying, and in particular Shankara, a sharp distinction between theology and philosophy is not drawn in the way we understand it today. This is because philosophy was not regarded as having an independent end to that of theology. Rather

¹ See Paul Ricoeur "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation" in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, Philadelphia 1985. In this essay Ricoeur suggests that the distortion of the idea of revelation lies in "that familiar amalgamation of three levels of language in one form of traditional teaching about revelation: first, the level of the confession of faith where the *lex credendi* is not separated from the *lex orandi*; second, the level of ecclesial dogma where a historic community interprets for itself and for others the understanding of faith specific to its tradition; and third, the body of doctrines imposed by the magisterium as the rule of orthodoxy." Ricoeur goes on to suggest that "It is from this amalgamation and this contamination that the massive and impenetrable concept of "revealed truth" arises. Moreover, it is often expressed in the plural, "revealed truths," to emphasise the discursive character of the dogmatic propositions that are taken to be identical to the founding faith". Ricoeur suggests that the philosopher, if he is to gain some clearer understanding of the idea of revelation, must "carry the notion of revelation back to its most originary level, the one, which for the sake of brevity, I call the discourse of faith or the confession of faith." He then proceeds to analyse the various kinds of discourse found in these originary expressions of faith. In this philosophical exercise, through an analysis of the various types of discourse of faith found in the Bible, Ricoeur brings to light many facets of revelatory discourse that would prevent the theologian from reducing expressions of faith to dogmatic assertions of objective truth. In this way he restores to revelation its own unique mode of disclosure and at the same time overcomes the problems that arise when it is reduced to factual truths which compete with empirical factual truths. Thus revelation is not to be understood as another order of truth alongside or above other orders of truth and competing with them, but rather as another mode of discourse with truth quite distinct from the rational or logical mode of discourse with truth. At the same time, in performing this type of philosophical enquiry into revelation the philosopher does not stray into the territory of the theologian, even though the theologian is able to perform a similar investigation. He may even be said to be contributing to the work of the theologian, but he is not performing the task of theology as such. This is why it is so difficult to make a formal distinction between the philosophical approach and the theological approach to understanding man, because there are no materials to which either has exclusive access or about which they cannot contribute understanding which may have both philosophical and theological significance or implications.

it is understood in terms of applying human reason to the understanding of revelation. Nevertheless, one characteristic of the religious approach to man which clearly distinguishes it from the philosophical is that religious anthropology has a soteriological dimension, and this in turn has a mystical dimension. The religious approach to an understanding of man therefore has two facets: one that attempts to grasp what man *is*, and another that attempts to grasp what he can *become*. Therefore our second concern here will be to suggest the implications of a soteriological view of man and show how it fundamentally shapes the religious question of man.

However, before addressing that I shall briefly try to show why Sankara, Eriugena, Bonaventure, and Teilhard de Chardin have been selected for this study and the ways in which they may be seen to form a coherent group of exponents who each contribute different elements to the anthropology I shall attempt to elucidate. Their obvious *differences*, some of them quite radical, should at least indicate at this point that we are not seeking to demonstrate a straightforward equivalence between them. Rather, I shall try to show how these seminal religious thinkers each represent specific religious insights into man which may be further illuminated through comparison with one another. This in turn will lead us to the formulation of a typology of the main features which characterise the religious approach to understanding man.

First, then, let us try to orient ourselves towards the questions this study poses and the perspective and concerns from which those questions arise.

1. *The Question of Man*

Contemporary theology and philosophy have both taken a renewed interest in the question of man. Heidegger in particular, by raising the question of ontology anew in his *Being and Time*, has brought philosophy back to a fundamental consideration of the ways in which man exists in the world that challenges the dualism of Descartes, as well as all attempts to grasp human nature in its pure subjectivity, which have permeated Western thought over the last three centuries. Similarly the phenomenology of Husserl and the social ontologies of Sartre and Buber have each opened up fresh ways of enquiring into the modes of being and knowing that belong to man. Likewise the interest in symbolic modes of knowledge pursued by Cassirer² and Eliade have disclosed deep relationships between ontology and epistemology which have relativised objective or empirical modes of knowledge,³ at least in so far as they can disclose knowledge of the human subject. For example, Eliade claims that:

Symbolic thinking . . . is consubstantial with human existence, it comes before language and discursive reason. The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality - the deepest aspects - which defy any other means of knowledge. Images, symbols and myths are not irresponsible creations of the psyche; they respond to a need and fulfil a function, that of bringing to light the most hidden modalities of being.

² Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* and *An Essay on Man*.

³ In this they share common cause with the concern of modern existentialism, which holds that the purely "objective" study of man distorts the immediate reality of human experience. As Macquarrie observes, "The difference between existentialism and empiricism . . . reveals itself as a difference between two modes of knowing. The existentialist stresses knowledge by participation, the empiricist knowledge by observation. The empiricist claims that the kind of knowledge that he seeks has an objectivity and universality about it such as confer on it a validity lacking in the more subjective assertions of the existentialist", *Existentialism*, Harmondsworth 1972, p. 27.

Consequently, the study of them enables us to reach a better understanding of man - of man "as he is", before he has come to terms with the conditions of history.⁴

More recently Gadamer has attempted to establish a methodological basis for the human sciences, or humanities, independent from the methodology of the natural sciences.⁵ Springing from these is the vast hermeneutical enterprise of Ricoeur which likewise is grounded in philosophical anthropology.

These philosophers have challenged theologians also to return to the question of man. The most important Protestant theologian to make a substantial response to this challenge is Tillich, who takes up the ontologies of Heidegger and Buber and approaches philosophical theology through the categories of essence and existence. Of Catholic theologians who have likewise taken up the question of man as their point of entry into theological enquiry the most eminent is Karl Rahner, who was also profoundly influenced by Heidegger.⁶ Both these theologians have seen their task as that of re-articulating the primary doctrines of the Christian tradition in ways that make them accessible and meaningful to modern man. For Tillich this was largely a question of restoring an ontological view of human nature which he believes was lost in the debate between the Aristotelians and the Franciscans in the thirteenth century,⁷ in which Thomas Aquinas denied the

⁴Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, Princeton 1991, p. 12.

⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer's seminal work dealing with this in detail is his *Truth and Method*, English translation by Joel Weisheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 1993.

⁶ See for example his *Spirit in the World*, London, 1968.

⁷ This debate led, Tillich believes, to nominalism: "And as soon as nominalism became successful, this was the actual dissolution of the Middle Ages", *A History of Christian Thought*, p. 200. For a full discussion of

view of Bonaventure that God was immediately known by man by asserting that man had immediate knowledge only of the world through the senses and inferential knowledge of God only through reasoning from sensory evidence to first causes.⁸ Tillich sees a direct correlation between Heidegger's self-disclosedness of being and the Augustinian notion, represented by Bonaventure, of the immediate presence of God in nature and in the structure of the mind. According to this view, neither man's immediate self-consciousness nor his immediate knowledge of the presence of God can become entities or objects of deductive discourse because they precede and are the precondition of all thought or discourse. For the Franciscans what was the *first* and primary knowledge of man becomes for the Aristotelians the last. What for the Franciscans was a given unmediated knowledge, founded in human self-consciousness grounded in Being, becomes for Aquinas only an inferred intellectual knowledge setting man at a distance both from his own essence and from God. Thus for Tillich the question of God and the question of man are inseparable and the religious approach to either begins in man's immediate self-consciousness. Rahner likewise takes what he calls man's "unthematic self-presence" as the starting-point for theological investigation:

Man is a transcendent being insofar as all his knowledge and all his conscious activity is grounded in a pre-apprehension of "being" as such, in an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinity of reality.⁹

Tillich's understanding of thirteenth century theology see J. P. Dourley, *Paul Tillich and Bonaventure*, Leiden 1975.

⁸ The obvious example is Aquinas' five ways of proving the existence of God in *Summa Theologia*, 1a, 2, 3.

⁹Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, London 1978, p. 33.

For Rahner this pre-apprehension of being as such precedes any “objective” anthropology which can never wholly grasp human subjectivity.¹⁰

Alongside this renewed interest in the question of man in philosophy and Christian theology there has been unprecedented access to Eastern religious traditions, especially Buddhism and Hinduism, and philosophy and theology are slowly beginning to respond to this influx of new ways of approaching the fundamental philosophical and theological questions.¹¹ These have reintroduced the mystical dimensions of religious experience and presented Christianity with the challenge of re-examining its own mystical tradition, as well as challenging theologians to seeking new ways of

¹⁰ In his essay “Experience of Self and Experience of God” Rahner writes “... we have avoided the terms “knowledge of God” or “knowledge of self”. This should be enough to indicate from the outset that what we are treating of is that kind of knowledge which is present in every man as belonging essentially to the very roots of cognition in him, and as constituting the starting-point and prior condition for reflexive knowledge, and for all derived human knowledge in its function of combining and classifying. We are assuming, therefore, that there is such a thing as a passive experience of this kind as a matter of transcendental necessity, an experience so inescapable, in other words, that in its ultimate structures its reality is implicitly in the very act of denying it or calling it in question. In accordance with this, it must be emphasised, with regard to man’s experience of himself, that we are treating of this here in its initial stages as an unconscious factor in human life, one that is prior to any anthropology (at the philosophical level and as a particular department) in its reflexive and classifying functions, through both of which it exercises the further function of objectifying. Man’s experience of himself sustains all such objectifying anthropology, and can never fully be grasped in man’s findings as he reflects upon his own nature. Thus it would be justifiable to say that man always experiences more of himself at the non-thematic and non-reflexive levels in the ultimate and fundamental living of his life than he knows about himself by reflecting upon himself whether scientifically or (mainly in his private ideas) non-scientifically”. *Theological Investigations, Vol. 13*, London, 1975, p. 123.

¹¹ Tillich, who always takes man’s religious nature as universal, came late in his life to the consideration of other religions. He outlines his views on this, particularly with reference to Zen Buddhism, in *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, Minneapolis 1994.

understanding religion as a universal phenomenon. Because of the primacy given to the experiential element in these religions, and in particular their elaborate notions of different orders or modes of consciousness, Christianity cannot simply be compared with them by way of its different doctrines or beliefs. The traditional notion that the various religions are simply different "belief systems" has been shown to be a quite inadequate way of viewing them and alternative approaches are being sought.¹² This is because

¹² See for example Wilfred Cantwell-Smith, *Towards a World Theology*, in which he argues that "faith" is the fundamental unifying principle of all religions and which provides a common ground for an empathetic dialogue between them both at the theological and the cultural levels. See also Eric J. Sharp, *Understanding Religion*, especially chapter six, "The One and the Many: Religion and Religions", which discusses the problems involved in regarding religion as a universal phenomenon or each particular religion as an independent entity in its own right, and chapter seven, "Four 'Modes' of Religion", in which he formulates a typology of four "functions" that characterise all religions, as opposed to Ninian Smart's typology of "six dimensions". The principle difficulty encountered in trying to find a way to grasp religion as a universal phenomenon lies in two main areas: the claim of each religion to have a unique revelation (its transcendent or unconditional dimension) and their particular practices (the cultural or conditional dimension). But these difficulties lie in trying grasp religion in its diverse manifestations and by comparing them horizontally with one another. Another approach may be to ask: what is religion a manifestation of? From the transcendent side we may say that religion is the manifestation of the sacred, but this reply only leads us back to the original problem of trying to find ways of grasping the diverse forms in which this manifestation occurs. We are left, as it were, with manifestations which we cannot trace back to their ultimate origin. This problem can be overcome by taking another route, and I would suggest that this other route is through man himself. We may see religion from the side of man going out of himself *towards* the sacred. Looked at from this perspective we may ask: what is it in man himself that turns his consciousness towards the sacred? Posed in this way the question of the nature of religion opens the way into the religious question of man himself, into the anthropological question, and it is from this side of the question that we shall pursue it in the present study. As will become evident as our study unfolds, it is by starting with man himself that religious ideas of man may be open to philosophical reflection and interpretation, whereas if we start from the side of the transcendent, with God, we are confronted with revelatory utterances, with declarations about

religious doctrines are reformulations in theological language of more primary religious statements which are embodied in symbolic language. The meaning of symbols cannot be expressed as factual propositions. As Ricoeur observes, theological discourse belongs already to the realm of reflective *response* to these more primary symbolic expressions.¹³ Whatever the outcome of this enquiry, it is clear that both Western theology and philosophy have to come to terms with the fact that religion is a universal phenomenon and that man is a religious being.

One way in which religion, taken as a universal phenomenon, may be approached is through a thematic study of what might be termed the primary elements of all religions. Such an approach has been pioneered by scholars such as Rudolph Otto, who attempted in *The Idea of the Holy* to elaborate a psychology of religious experience, and by Eliade who has shown the fundamental importance of myth and symbol as modes of religious apprehension.¹⁴ Here I shall attempt a thematic study of religious ways of understanding human nature. That is to say, religious ways in which man is faced with ultimate questions of his being and the anthropology that arises from these questions.

This qualification leads us in a particular direction. It is not my intention to examine the whole spectrum of religious conceptions of man, but to focus attention on a group of conceptions which I regard as primary conceptions found in Christianity and in Hinduism, and which produces a distinct and coherent anthropology. The salient feature of this approach to the knowledge of man is that it views man as coming to full knowledge of

God, which can only be assented to or denied, but which are ultimately inaccessible to philosophical reflection or interpretation.

¹³ Paul Ricoeur "Philosophy and Religious Language" in *Figuring the Sacred*, Minneapolis 1995, p. 37.

¹⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, Princeton 1991, and also *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, London 1987.

himself through unitive participation with the creation and with God. It is founded upon the premise that there is an ontological continuity or a unity of being between man, creation and God. It therefore represents an attempt to overcome the divide between Creator and creature and produces a distinctly “sacred” conception of human nature and of human destiny. Because it is an anthropology that grounds the particular being of man in the absolute or unconditioned being of God it is obviously also a mystical anthropology and it is therefore not surprising that we should find aspects or elements of it variously expressed in different religious traditions, besides the two studied here.

This mystical foundation of religious anthropology means, however, that we need to go further than seek a purely *descriptive* conception of man.¹⁵ It requires an exploration of *how* man comes to self-knowledge, and this in turn involves an exploration of human subjectivity from a soteriological perspective. The question of the nature of man and the question of the nature of mystical experience therefore belong together and mutually shape one another. This is another factor that distinguishes the religious question on man from the philosophical question of man.

The study of mysticism and the study of man are usually pursued independently. For example Stace in his *Mysticism and Philosophy* never considers the anthropological question but takes an understanding of man as already given, at least implicitly. It is this which leads him to suggest that mystical experience is independent of religion, which he regards as “beliefs”

¹⁵ The inadequacy of the purely descriptive approach to theological anthropology is illustrated in Edward Malatesta (ed.), *A Christian Anthropology*, Wheathamstead, no date given, which is a translation of the articles “Homme” and “Homme intérieur” from the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Paris 1969, which focuses not so much upon man in himself as upon his relation to Christ.

or as “feelings of the holy, the sacred, or the divine”.¹⁶ To separate the study of mystical experience from the study of the type of being who has such experience leads to inadequate representations of mysticism itself. At the same time, the theological study of man separated from the study of mystical experience also leads to inadequate representations of man. Edmund Hill for instance, in his *Being Human*, asserts that man has sufficient access to knowledge of himself through the “endless variations of anthropology” in the humanities and that these do not “require God to start them off or to complete them”. What distinguishes the theological study of man, in his view, is the study of “our relationship with God”.¹⁷ In saying this, Hill not only evades the question of religious knowledge of man, by assuming there is no such question, but also relegates the question of man’s self-knowledge entirely to the field of secular anthropology. In so doing he has overlooked the sacred dimension of man’s enquiry into himself. Furthermore, he overlooks the fact that if the theological study of man is solely concerned with man’s relation with God, then that in itself calls for an anthropology beyond the scope of the anthropological disciplines he claims provide a complete knowledge of man. Indeed, it may call for an anthropology that is at variance with these. The premise of our approach to anthropology - that there is an ontological continuity between God, man and creation - not only suggests that we should take mystical experience into

¹⁶ W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, Basingstoke 1989, p. 341. To define religion in terms of feeling or emotion has the implicit danger of relegating the divine solely to the sphere of human subjectivity. As Tillich remarks “a doctrine of the holy which does not interpret it as the sphere of the divine transforms the holy into something aesthetic-emotional, which is the danger of theologies like those of Schleiermacher and Rudolf Otto”, (*Systematic Theology* I, p. 215.) although Tillich goes on to defend Otto from this danger.

¹⁷ Edmund Hill, *Being Human*, London 1984, p. 2.

account in our study of man, but it also provides a perspective from which mysticism itself may fruitfully be studied.¹⁸

2. The Materials of this Study

Although I propose to restrict my examination to Christianity and Hinduism, through a comparison of the Nondualism (Advaita Vedanta) of Sankara with the Christian anthropologies of Eriugena, Bonaventure and Teilhard de Chardin, it could easily have been extended to other representatives as well as to other religious traditions. My main concern is to uncover an underlying paradigm of man which arises from a specific way of posing the question of man and which therefore crosses the boundaries of particular religions. The present selection is therefore representative of what could be done in thematic comparison between other religious traditions.

Nevertheless, this selection has not been arbitrary. Each exponent, within the contexts of the religious and philosophical concerns and debates of their times, sought to establish a religious conception of man which grounded his being in the Being of God and which could overcome the rift between man, the universe and God. Each sought to re-orientate man's self-reflective consciousness in such a way that it disclosed the fundamental sacredness and unity of reality as a whole. The ways in which each sets about this task are all quite different, yet they display this common intention. To reconcile the infinite complexity of the creation and the existence of man with the transcendent unity of God is not a task which can be accomplished

¹⁸ A full discussion of this must be deferred to the chapter on the Advaita Vedanta of Sankara in which we shall detail the problems we find in the classifications of mysticism elaborated by Stace and Zaehner.

in one particular way and set to rest for all time. It must necessarily be undertaken in relation to the knowledge, concerns and questions of the particular time and culture. Nevertheless, it is this common enterprise which first of all singles out the religious thinkers we shall discuss in the following chapters. Further to this, the sequence in which I have chosen to study them, although it follows them chronologically, lends itself to a thematic development of my thesis because each one approaches the same questions from a different angle or perspective and so brings to light different aspects of an anthropology I believe they represent - moving from what we might call the purely *metaphysical* anthropology of Sankara at one extreme to the *evolutionary* anthropology of Teilhard de Chardin at the other. These extremes appear at first sight irreconcilable. Nevertheless, if we move carefully from one extreme to the other we begin to see that they each have implications with reference to one another, or raise questions about one another, and by drawing out these implications and questions the underlying connections become explicit and mediation becomes possible between them. For example, we may ask if, at one extreme, Sankara's ineffable and "static" ontology of *Brahman* has no connection whatsoever at the other extreme with Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point as the supreme attractive power of a dynamic or teleological cosmogenesis reaching towards maximum unity and maximum consciousness. Can the *ultimate* in either case be absolutely exclusive, and therefore absolutely opposed to each other? Can two systems based upon the full actualisation of consciousness, regarded in each case as the primary element of reality, reaching its full term in self-knowledge and union with God be mutually exclusive? Are two such independent approaches to ultimacy necessarily mutually negating, or is there an underlying common ground to be discerned between them despite their systematic differences? I shall attempt to show that such a common ground is to be found and also that in seeking such a common ground we may come to a clearer understanding of either system. But to discern this

common ground we shall need to take a long rout from Sankara through John Scottus Eriugena, then Bonaventure and finally to Teilhard de Chardin, clarifying those aspects of each which open the way to the next step. Therefore it will perhaps be helpful to explain the sequence in a little more detail and gain a preliminary idea of the scope and direction of our study, as well as the problems it will address.

3. *Sankara*

The eighth century philosopher Sankara, founder and principal exponent of the Nondualist (Advaita Vedanta) school of philosophy, teaches that knowledge of Reality (*Brahman*) is attained exclusively through knowledge of the Self (*Atman*), which is found to be ultimately identical with *Brahman*. Similarly, the creation is ultimately conceived by him as nothing other than *Brahman*. Sankara's Advaita therefore represents the most radical form of an ontology that traces everything that exists back to an underlying Reality, accessed through the transparent presence of the self to itself, which alone is permanent and absolutely undifferentiated, which alone is the ground of all knowledge, and outside of which nothing has any being or existence. The ultimate identity of the human essence or Self and *Brahman* therefore provides the foundation of an anthropology which conceives the attainment of self-knowledge as a direct path to salvation and to God.

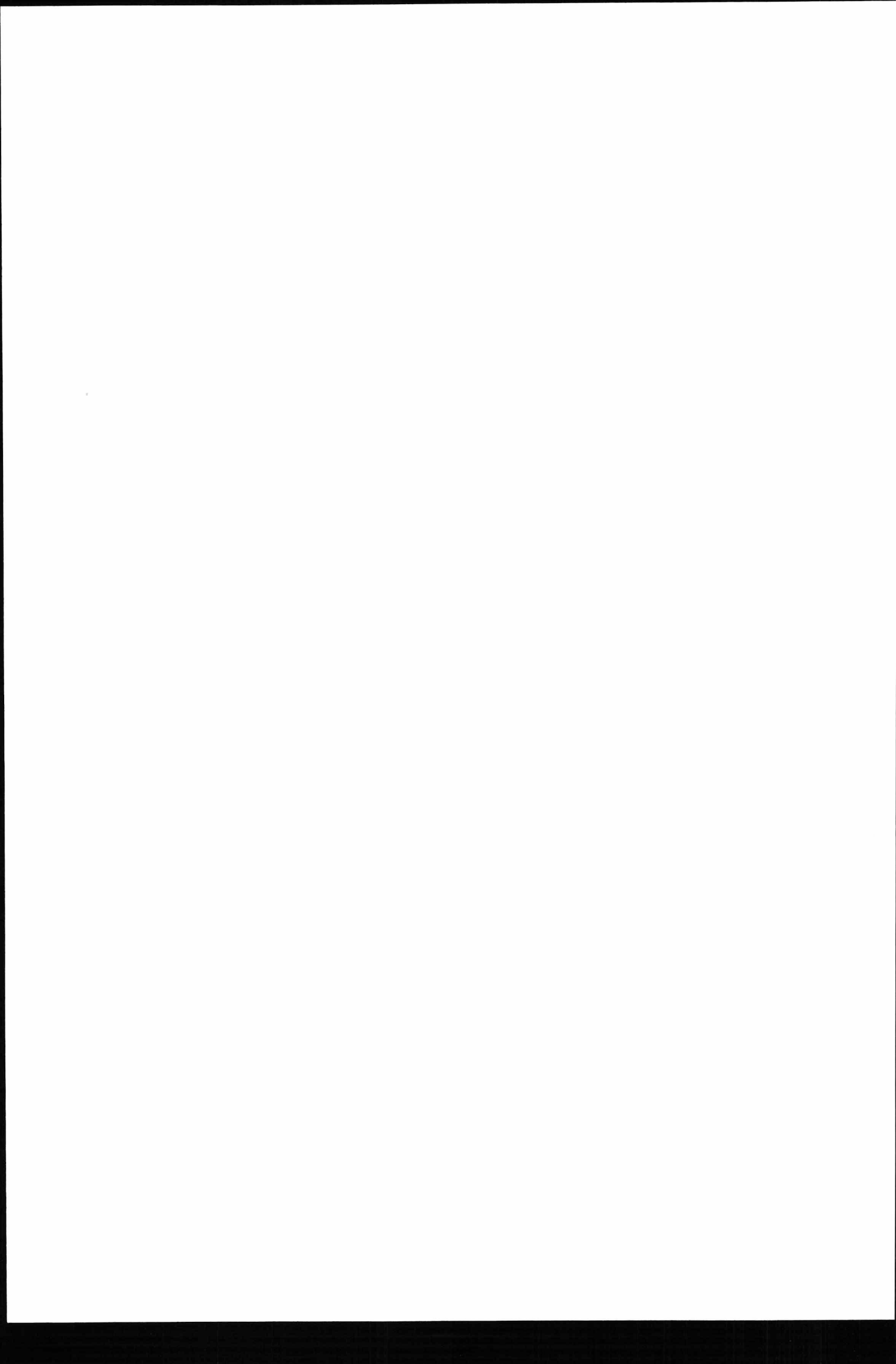
Stated in these sharp terms Sankara's Nondualism would appear to be quite irreconcilable with any Christian conception of man, where man is commonly regarded as a finite created being entirely ontologically distinct from God and able to have only a limited relationship with God. Also, in the light of the Heideggerian rejection of an ontology based on pure subjectivity, Shankara's understanding of Self-knowledge raises serious

philosophical problems. Nevertheless, I shall attempt to show that once the details of Sankara's ontology are drawn out it is not so far distant from the strand of Christian anthropology we shall examine. Its radicalness will serve as a gauge against which all ontological *differentiation* and *pluralisation* may be explored and brought into question. For Sankara's radical self-identity ontology, as a philosophical formulation, stands at the opposite pole to the radically existentialist position which holds that there is no *given* self or essence or *cogito* known through its innate reflective power, but rather an emergent self brought into being either by an act of will (Sartre) or through receptivity and authentic response to the *other* (Buber). But Sankara's ontology also stands in opposition to two other positions: the no-self doctrine (*anatman vada*) of Buddhism and the modern doctrine of the socially conditioned self. Buddhism holds that any notion of a self or of selfhood is false and delusory. There is neither a *given* self nor a *potential* self, such as the existentialists conceive. The Buddhist conception of no-self (*anatman*) bears, however, a certain resemblance to the existential position in so far as it is a protest against a self generated or created from above itself (by God) or from outside itself by social, historical or cultural conditioning.

4. *John Scottus Eriugena*

In the case of Eriugena Sankara's Nondualism offers a particularly fruitful point of departure since he has been accused of pantheism and in more recent scholarship viewed as anticipating Hegelian idealism.¹⁹ Of all Christian theologians, Eriugena perhaps comes most explicitly closest to the Nondualism of Sankara, although there are obviously important differences.

¹⁹ D. B. Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge 1989.



His theophanic elaboration of creation, which he conceives of as an epistemological emanation of God as well and an ontological emanation, and therefore as a disclosure of God's self knowing, or as an act of divine self-knowledge, resembles the vedantic conception of creation as an act of *Brahman* experiencing Himself in the form of *Saguna Brahman*. His conception of God being wholly immanent in every particular created thing, yet remaining wholly transcendent, of the infinite taking on infinity, yet without ceasing to be infinite, of being the "nothing" out of which all things are made, similarly resembles or resonates with the Nondualist conception of creation. Eriugena's theophany has a greater affinity with Vedanta than it does with Hegel's idealism, although there are affinities there too. Yet Eriugena's closest affinity with Sankara's Nondualism is to be located in his anthropology, in which he conceives human nature to be the image of God - the *actual* image of God, not simply a resemblance of God's image. What God is, that is what man is, the only distinction being that what God is He is in Himself and through Himself, while man is what God is by participation - a concept which we will elaborate in the chapter on Eriugena. Also like God, man is in possession of perfect self-knowledge. The Fall is interpreted by Eriugena as man forgetting himself. This resembles Sankara's notion of ignorance (*avidya*) as the root of man's bondage. Further, all that God has created He has created through man, and in man all created things have their *real* existence. This is by virtue of the real existence of things being their knowledge, not their materiality or visibility. This means that all created things return to God through man, in whom they have their real existence. Thus Eriugena, in his adoption of the Platonic Ideal Forms, locates those Forms in man rather than in the mind of God, as St. Augustine does. Man himself, because he is the original Image of God, exists beyond and prior to the Forms. By virtue of man being the Image of God, and by virtue of all created things having their real existence in man, man is himself the knowledge of creation - not the microcosm of the macrocosm as Cusanus

much later in the Middle Ages conceives him, which is a notion that Eriugena specifically rejects - but the actuality, so to speak, of that knowledge.²⁰ Once again, this has an extraordinary affinity with Sankara's conception of the Self as pure knowledge (*jnana*) itself.

These parallels and affinities with Advaita Vedanta invite the most careful consideration. It is not my intention merely to allude to these correspondences between two thinkers of completely independent religious traditions, and certainly not my intention to suggest that Eriugena derives his ideas from Sankara in any way. Their affinities do not arise through historical precedence, but rather through a similar mode of reflection, and it is this that is of central interest in the present study. It is the meaning and implications of Eriugena's anthropology that concerns us, not the historical sources from which he may have derived them. Even his adoption of Platonism is of interest to us where Eriugena has *departed* from Plato, and likewise with his adoption of St. Augustine. What is unique to Eriugena is not so much his emanationism, but the completely original way in which he has adapted it to illustrate the complete and unbreakable unity of God, creation and man and made man himself the key to the knowledge of all things. Further, it is Eriugena's conception of creation as a dynamic process of division and unification, or of unified diversity, that will provide us with a connection with Bonaventure and finally with the evolutionary theory of Teilhard de Chardin where, once again, man as knower of creation is pivotal.

²⁰ In her careful study of Eriugena's *Periphyseon, The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, Leiden 1991, Willemien Otten argues that Eriugena's anthropology is the key to his whole conception of *natura*.

5. *Bonaventure*

The immediate and obvious link between Eriugena and Bonaventure lies in Bonaventure's emanationism, but rather than take Eriugena's fourfold division of nature as his paradigm Bonaventure perceives the creation in terms of images or exemplars of the Divine Trinity, each manifesting the Divine at different degrees of remoteness from God. Yet, like Eriugena, Bonaventure identifies intelligence as the principle of reality in a fourfold hierarchy of exemplars (shadows, vestiges, images, and similitudes) and also identifies man's journey to God in terms of an ascent from corporeal perception to inner knowledge of the mind, and thus beyond the substratum of the mind to God, in which man finally knows God, and through this knowledge of God comes to knowledge of himself, through God's knowledge of him, that is, through participating in God's knowledge of man. At no point in this ascent of the mind to God is God an *inferred* reality. On the contrary, all things that appears to man, either through the outer senses, or through the mind turning its gaze inward to itself, or by lifting it above itself, are instances of the Divine Trinity, distinguishable from one another only by their degrees of nearness or remoteness from God in Himself according to the mode of perception or apprehension. For Bonaventure everything that man looks upon is intelligible to him by virtue of the presence of the Divine Trinity within it and within the mind of man himself as its transcendental structure. Indeed, the very act of human knowing is a participation in God's knowing. As Dourley puts it, "Bonaventure asserted that all of man's knowledge and especially his knowledge of God is a participation in God's knowledge of himself whose ontological presupposition is the immediate participation of the mind in God himself".²¹

²¹ John P. Dourley, *Paul Tillich and Bonaventure*, Leiden 1975, p. 32.

In Bonaventure's epistemology we have a point of contact with Sankara's conception of the Self (*atman*) as the immediate knowledge of all things, including itself, though in Sankara's view by identity and Bonaventure's by participation. But also there is a close affinity between Sankara's view of creation as *Saguna Brahman* and Bonaventure's view of creation as the emanation of God. These affinities require careful elucidation, but what is significant here is that in both Sankara and in Bonaventure the *reality* of creation lies in the immediate presence of God. Also, the realm of rational inferences lies strictly within the domain of created things among themselves, but never towards either God or towards self-knowledge, both of which are immediately present. Consciousness is seated in God and human consciousness is participation in God's consciousness, so neither God nor the human subject can be objects of consciousness from outside themselves. Consciousness or knowledge of created things arises from and is possible only because of consciousness being first present to itself and wholly disclosed to itself. This ontological basis of unmediated knowledge obviously displaces the cosmological argument for the existence of God, which makes of God an external object of inference. It also displaces any anthropology which conceives of man as ultimately distant from God or unable to have direct knowledge of his own essence. For Bonaventure, as with Sankara, there is no Kantian transcendental structure of either the mind or of consciousness that forever remains hidden from man's direct knowledge. Indeed, it is precisely the transcendental realm that is alone immediately knowable. All other knowledge is, so to speak, secondary knowledge for Bonaventure, as it is also for Sankara and Eriugena. Nominalism, which displaced the Augustinian and Franciscan notion of the immediate presence of man to himself and to God and which denies human knowledge of universals, and later positivism, shifts the ground of consciousness from the transcendent to a position midway *between* the transcendent and the objects of sense, and it

is this shift of the seat of consciousness that makes it inaccessible to itself and God inaccessible to man. On the one side it makes the structure of the mind invisible to man, and on the other it creates the subject/object dichotomy in reference to sensory objects. If we might put it so, this Kantian shift represents a move from a sacred to a secular anthropology for which “knowledge” is only ever rational or inferential.²²

6. Teilhard de Chardin

Although this has important implications for our study of Teilhard de Chardin, who takes consciousness as the key to the structure and teleology of the universe, it is another aspect of Bonaventure’s thought that will also serve as our link with his evolutionary thought, namely Bonaventure’s conception of the dynamic nature of the Divine Trinity with which he elaborates his conception of creation as the expression of the infinite fecundity or *fontalis plenitudo* of the interior Trinitarian procession. Within the Divine Trinity itself the fecundity of God expresses itself as God’s communion with Himself, but as the principle of creation it expresses itself as God’s communicability. Thus for Bonaventure the creation is God’s expression of Himself out of Himself to all creatures. Since the creation and all creatures are an expression of God’s being, they in turn express their being back to God, who is their ground. But whereas within the Divine Trinity the dynamic self-communicability of God remains an absolute unity,

²² Tillich argues that the shift from an anthropology based upon the principle of God’s immediate presence to man to one which reduces God to an object of intellectual inference which took place at the end of the thirteenth century paved the way to secularisation and atheism. In *A History of Christian Thought*, p. 186, he says “The divergence between these two approaches to the knowledge of God is the great problem of the philosophy of religion, and, as I will now show, it is the ultimate cause of the secularisation of the Western world.”

through creation it expresses itself as multiplicity. Thus for Bonaventure there is a dynamic tension between the absolute unity of God and the diverse multiplicity of creation, and this dynamic tension is mediated and made whole by the Son who, as the Word, is the silence of God uttered, as it were, back to God. God and creation therefore form a whole in the sense that together they form a coincidence of unity and multiplicity.²³

There are no references to Bonaventure in the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, although he mentions St. Francis favourably, but it is probable that he would have found a lot in common with Bonaventure.²⁴ His insistence that we move from a "static" ontology to a dynamic or teleological ontology which can account for the unfolding process of evolution particularly resonates with Bonaventure's conception of creation as well as with his theological conception of history reflecting the Trinitarian

²³ For an illuminating study of this aspect of Bonaventure's theology see Ewert H. Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, Chicago 1978.

²⁴ It is perhaps a weakness of Teilhard's thought that he appears to have had little interest in systematic theology or philosophy from which he could have drawn more theological and metaphysical parallels with his own discoveries in the scientific field. In particular his insistence that we abandon the "static ontology" of the unmoving prime mover of Aristotle, which only entered theology in the late Middle Ages, could have been backed by an appeal to Franciscan theology in which the seeds already exist for an ontology which accounts for becoming as well as being. It is also of interest that when Paul Tillich published the final volume of his *Systematic Theology* in 1963 he writes "Long after I had written the sections on life and its ambiguities, I happened to read Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's book *The Phenomenon of Man*. It encouraged me greatly to know that an acknowledged scientist had developed ideas about the dimensions and processes of life so similar to my own. Although I cannot share his rather optimistic vision of the future, I am convinced by his description of the evolutionary processes in nature. Of course, theology cannot rest on scientific theory. But it must relate its understanding of man to an understanding of universal nature, for man is part of nature and statements about nature underlie every statement about him." p. 5.

procession.²⁵ But Teilhard's fundamental evolutionary thesis which most clearly resonates with the thought of Bonaventure is that he conceives of evolution as a process of the universe converging upon God through becoming conscious of itself through the expansion of human consciousness, in which consciousness turns back upon itself by going out of itself. Just as Bonaventure finds a coincidence between the ineffable unity of God and the multiplicity of creation, so Teilhard finds a correlation between the highest material complexity which expresses itself in the unity of consciousness which is centred ultimately upon God. And again, as Bonaventure sees Christ as the mediating and unifying principle of the creation, Teilhard sees the "cosmic Christ"²⁶ as the unifying principle of the evolutionary process from ahead, drawing the creation towards what Teilhard calls the *Omega Point* in which it will become most fully itself in union with God. Once again, a central feature of Teilhard's vision is the unity of the universe, God and man, but not a simple "static" unity into which all things are reduced below themselves in some homogenous or undifferentiated substratum, but a dynamic and complex unity in which the more united the elements are, they more they are themselves. It is on the basis of his concept of complex unity that Teilhard suggests a new type of mysticism which brings together the elements of the two types of mysticism that have predominated in the world's religions (God- or soul-mysticism, and nature mysticism).

These parallels, and all the others alluded to above, cannot of course be taken at their face value. They are offered at this point as illustrations of the ground we shall cover. Apart from the great terminological differences between them, there are wide differences in perspective and the intellectual

²⁵ For a detailed study of Bonaventure's conception of history see Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, Chicago 1971.

²⁶ For a valuable study of the history of this term and its use by Teilhard de Chardin see J. A. Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin*, Oxford 1982.

points of departure. Yet in the following chapters, through detailed examinations of each of these theologies, I shall seek to uncover a group of underlying presuppositions which they each share and which will make a discourse between them both possible and fruitful. By focusing upon their theological conceptions of man I shall attempt to show that *taken together* these approaches to the religious question of man may contribute to a vaster vision of man than each one does individually. Our task is to make that vaster vision coherent, and this I shall attempt to achieve by showing that these different approaches to the question of man are complimentary and mutually illuminating. However, before discussing this it is necessary to examine some of the more general problems encountered in approaching the religious understanding of man.

7. Problems Encountered in the Religious Approach to Understanding Man

It is worth emphasising again that this study is largely an interpretive and mediating exercise. In this respect it differs in some measure from the more usual approach to religious or theological anthropology, which is generally descriptive in character,²⁷ or else an occasion simply to speak of man's relation to God without ever examining man in himself, as for example with Edmund Hill's *Being Human* referred to earlier. Another approach regards

²⁷ For example, Anna-Stina Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Gregory of Nazianzus*, (Stockholm, 1981); Bernard McGinn, *The Golden Chain: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Isaac Stella*, (Washington, 1972); Wellemien Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, (Leiden, 1991); Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, (Copenhagen, 1965); Anton Pegis, *At the Origins of the Thomistic Notion of Man*, (New York, 1963); Robert Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology: A Philosophic Analysis of the Nature of Man*, (New York, 1941).

anthropology as the study of the holy or ethical life.²⁸ In Christian theology the descriptive method takes either Biblical notions of man as its material, or else social and psychological theories.²⁹ The descriptive method aims primarily at articulating a doctrine of man, although some theologians believe that Christianity has not developed a full doctrine of Man. Vladimir Lossky observes, "For my part, I must admit that until now I have not found what one might call an elaborated doctrine of the human person in patristic theology, alongside its very precise teaching on the divine persons or hypostases".³⁰

Where such doctrines are elaborated from Biblical sources, we find that very often mythical descriptions, such as the Genesis myth of creation, or of the creation of Adam, or of the Fall, are taken as literal descriptions of concrete realities. To take one example, Moltmann in his study of the Genesis creation myth says that the creation is neither an emanation, nor created from some prime matter, nor eternal, nor divine, nor ontologically rooted in God, but rather a completely original "something" created out of a completely negative "nothing" by an act of God's will.³¹ In this discussion of the Biblical myth of creation he seems not to appreciate that he is dealing with symbolic language which cannot be taken as physically factual. Nor

²⁸ See for example David Flood, "The Theology of Peter John Olivi: A Search for a Theology and Anthropology of the Synoptic Gospels" in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan B. Osborne, New York 1994, p. 127-184.

²⁹ A prime example once again is Edward Malatesta, ed., *A Christian Anthropology*. A better study which surveys the field more widely and more philosophically is J. F. Donceel, *Philosophical Anthropology*, New York 1967. But even this study, although it is theological in intent, is not so much a systematic study of man as an assemblage of vastly disparate materials from the sciences, sociology, psychology, philosophy and theology.

³⁰ V. Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, Oxford, 1974, p. 112.

³¹ Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation, an ecological doctrine of creation*, London 1985, p. 72 ff.

does he appreciate the problems raised by the anthropomorphic language with which he speaks of God. If God, as Moltmann suggests, is completely other than or different from the creation, and if man shares no characteristic in his nature that is the image of God,³² then attributing to God psychological factors such as “decision” and “will” requires special explanation.³³ Qualities such as decision and will are symbolic terms when used in the Bible in reference to God, although they do not occur in the Genesis creation myth. Further, because it is symbolic the Genesis creation myth cannot be used to oppose or contradict other cosmologies, either other mythological cosmologies³⁴ or scientific cosmologies, or even different Christian interpretations of creation derived from philosophical speculation, in the manner Moltmann does.³⁵

Moltmann’s dualistic conception of creation³⁶ leads him to discuss the symbol of man created in the image of God in terms of relationship between man and God:

“So as God’s appearance and image on earth, human beings are involved in three fundamental relationships: they rule over other earthly creatures as God’s *representatives* and in

³² Ibid., p. 220.

³³ Ibid., p. 75.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 72, where Moltmann claims that the Israelite myth was presented as a deliberate confrontation with Egyptian and Babylonian cosmologies.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 75-77.

³⁶ He writes “According to Aristotelian and medieval ontology, the cause actually communicates its own being to the effect. To call God ‘the cause of the world’ (*causa efficiens prima*) in then to imply that there is a graduated participation of all things effected by God in the divine cause that effects them. But there is no ontological link of this kind between the word of creation and created things.” Ibid., p. 77.

The problem of dualism and the related concepts of “monism” and “nondualism” will be discussed in detail in Chapter II.

his name; they are God's *counterpart* on earth, the counterpart to whom he wants to talk, and who is intended to respond to him; and they are the *appearance* of God's splendour, and his glory on earth".³⁷

This type of literal understanding of mythical material draws very little out of the texts and leaves little to be said of the real being of either the creation or of man. If the creation and man are regarded as wholly separate from God, that is, ontologically distinct and discontinuous as Moltmann claims, then this calls for two distinct ontologies, one of God, and one of creation. However, two such independent ontologies would have equal status, but Moltmann wishes to maintain an absolute distinction or discontinuity between God and creation and yet a dependence of the creation upon God. This implies that the creation, although ontologically distinct from God, is in some sense ontologically inferior to God, and this appears to be the position Moltmann accepts by virtue of his denial of creation emanating from God, or being itself divine in any sense. It is reflected also in his anthropology, which gives to man the ontological status of a "representative" a "counterpart" and an "appearance" of God, but again tells us little of the being man in himself. These relational terms evade the question of man's ontological status in himself - no matter how elevated his relational status may be. According to this anthropology, man exists in some shadow region between being and non-being, created out of absolute "nothing" on the one hand, and existent only in some dependent relation to God on the other hand.³⁸ In the final analysis he stands for something other than himself.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 220-221.

³⁸ The status of man is further reduced by Moltmann's ecological concerns (the subtitle of his book is *An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*) which challenge the "anthropocentric" view of man and argues that man is the servant or keeper of the earth on God's behalf. The problem with such a doctrine of responsibility (either to God or to the earth) is that it leaves no

The root of these philosophical difficulties we find in Moltmann's interpretation of Genesis lies primarily in a failure to clearly distinguish between symbolic, metaphysical and literal types of language and in the different orders of meaning each of these are concerned with. Therefore a problem that is of particular concern in trying to understand the religious approach to understanding man is that of the different types of language we find employed. Whatever is said of man within religion has its origin in symbolic or mythical language, and theological or philosophical interpretations of man rely ultimately upon these symbolic and mythical expressions and are elaborations or interpretations of them.³⁹ This is because the mythical descriptions of man are not simply concerned with man as an isolated being but in relation to reality as a whole, as a being amidst reality as a whole, with an origin and destiny bound up with reality as a whole. Thus Cassirer observes "The belief in the *"sympathy of the Whole"* is one of the firmest foundations of religion itself".⁴⁰ Man's origin and meaning is therefore bound up with the origin and meaning of the universe, and so mythological explanations of the universe are also explanations of man himself:

ground in man's own being for him to be answerable to himself. He is answerable to two externals, God on the one hand, and the earth on the other, and as a basis for morality this practically reduces man to a mere servant. Any theological anthropology which places the ethical dimension outside of man's own being is in danger of reducing morality itself to a purely juridical dimension. It is precisely this type of ontological servitude that existentialists such as Sartre protest against.

³⁹ Dourley explains that Tillich understands the task of theology in terms of "conceptualising, explaining and criticising" the "received" or "given" symbolic material (*Paul Tillich and Bonaventure*, p. 88). Tillich writes "Theology can neither produce nor destroy religious symbols. They are that which is *given* to theology; it is not God that is given, but the symbols of the encounter between God and man. As such they are the objects of theology", in "Theology and Symbolism", *Religious Symbolism*, Edited by F. Earnest Johnson, New York 1995.

⁴⁰ Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, New Haven, 1968, p. 95.

In the first mythological explanations of the universe we always find a primitive anthropology side by side with a primitive cosmology. The question of the origin of the world is inextricably interwoven with the question of the origin of man. Religion does not destroy these first mythological explanations. On the contrary, it preserves the mythological cosmology and anthropology by giving them new shape and new depth.⁴¹

The language of myth, however, is not “factual” in the same way that scientific language is, where there is a direct correlation between the signifier and the signified. The referent of myth is not evident apart from the symbolic language of myth itself, and in this sense the myth or symbol is itself the evidence for and access to the reality to which it refers. So, for example, when we read in Genesis “God said, let there be light: and there was light,”⁴² we have only this utterance itself to reflect upon and cannot look to the creation of light itself for verification. It is this characteristic that distinguishes it as a revelatory statement, and as a revelatory statement it cannot be confirmed or denied from evidence outside itself. It cannot be used in a debate with scientific knowledge. A feature of mythic or symbolic language is that it is declamatory. It simply declares or proclaims “it is so”. It offers no proof and is not the conclusion of any argument. Symbolic “truth” and “meaning” is of a different order to empirical fact and cannot be placed alongside such facts, either to support or refute them. Paul Ricoeur offers us a very lucid explanation of symbol in his *The Symbolism of Evil*:

⁴¹ Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 3.

⁴² *Genesis* I. 3.

Man first reads the sacred *on* the world, *on* some elements or aspects of the world, on the heavens, on the sun and moon, on the waters and vegetation. Spoken symbolism thus refers back to manifestations of the sacred, to hierophanies, where the sacred is shown in a fragment of the cosmos, which, in return, loses its concrete limits, gets charged with innumerable meanings, integrates and unifies the greatest possible number of the sectors of anthropocosmic experience. First of all, then, it is the sun, the moon, the waters - that is to say, cosmic realities - that are symbols. Shall we say, therefore, that symbols, in their cosmic aspect, are anterior to language, or even foreign to it? Not at all. For these realities to be a symbol is to gather together at one point a mass of significations which, before giving rise to thought, give rise to speech. The symbolic *manifestation as a thing* is a matrix of symbolic meanings as words. We have never ceased to find meanings in the sky (to take the first example on which Eliade practices his comparative phenomenology). It is the same thing to say that the sky *manifests* the sacred and to say that it *signifies* the most high, the elevated and the immense, the powerful and the orderly, the clairvoyant and the wise, the sovereign, the immutable. The manifestation through the thing is like the condensation of an infinite discourse; manifestation and meaning are strictly contemporaneous and reciprocal; the concretion of the thing is the counterpart of the surcharge of inexhaustible meaning which has ramifications in the cosmic, the ethical, and the political. Thus, the symbol-thing is the potentiality of innumerable spoken symbols which, on the

other hand, are knotted together in a single cosmic manifestation.⁴³

Viewed, then, as a symbolic statement “God said, Let there be light: and there was light” signifies the *meaning* of light as a disclosure or hierophany of God. In declaring there should be light, God declares Himself and so the light, in turn, declares God. It is not a cause and effect description, it is not attributing the origination of light to God as opposed to some other origination, but rather it proclaims that the manifestation of light is at once the manifestation of God, and it is this that makes it a “sacred” statement, not the authority that has been given to the written scripture. The boldness and explicitness of such symbolic statements, however, is matched by their openness of meaning, which Ricoeur calls “the surcharge of inexhaustible meaning”.

This excursion into the symbolism of Scripture and of myth serves to show us that the presuppositions that we bring to interpreting Scripture or symbol can project upon them a conception of man and the cosmos which can conceal the manner in which they address man. The Scriptures or the ancient myths do not present us with a clear-cut conception or theory of man. That is not their manner. Yet, in the way they address us and take as given our concern for the matter presented of itself carries an implicit anthropology. At the very least it assumes that man is concerned and essentially engaged with a quest for self-understanding that is bound up with his spiritual calling and destiny. If man is that being who is concerned for the meaning of the cosmos and desires to know God and the workings of God in all things, that very fact of itself reveals something essential about man. It indicates, at the very least, that man stands in question of himself.

⁴³ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Boston 1969, pp. 10-11.

But more than that, it indicates that he stands in question of himself at once *before himself, before the world, and before God*. It is only when we bring these three ways in which man stands in question that we can get to the meaning of the *religious* question of man, since, in one way or another, all the religious traditions take these three questions together as a unity. To put that another way: religion does not pose the question of man in isolation from man's ontological relations to reality as a whole, including the transcendent. In Psalm 8 which we quoted at the head of this chapter we see that the question is posed in this way: What is man, that *thou* are mindful of him? In the following chapter we shall attempt to elaborate this question further and present a way of seeing the interrelations between the ways in which man stands in question before himself, before the world, and before God.

CHAPTER 2

The Threefold Relation of Man, Cosmos and God

No other epoch has accumulated so great a store of knowledge concerning man as the present one. No other epoch has succeeded in presenting its knowledge of man so forcibly and so captivatingly as ours, and no other has succeeded in making this knowledge so quickly and so easily accessible. But also, no epoch is less sure of its knowledge of what man is than the present one.

Martin Heidegger

In the present chapter I shall attempt to formulate the religious question of man more clearly and present a threefold schema in which man may be understood (a) in terms of selfhood, (b) in terms of his relation to the world and (d) in relation to divinity. This threefold set of relations provide us with a general ontological framework in which man can be seen in all his facets and which, taken together, bring into view not simply what kind of being man is - that is, man taken as an isolated essence - but the manner of being that is distinctly human. As I hope to make clear, it is necessary to look at man in a way that brings to light the nature of his selfhood in relation to existence and being as a whole. This is because man is disclosed to himself in a threefold manner, as a being who reflects upon his being, as a being who is disclosed to himself in relation to the world he occupies, and who is completed in relation to the origin of being as such, that is, as grounded in God his creator. This threefold approach not only provides us with a general schema through which to examine man, it brings into view the ways

in which man is called to self-understanding by the situation he finds himself in. This call to self-understanding has implications in every aspect of human life, but essentially it discloses to us the soteriological element of man's immediate experience of being.

1. *Sacred Anthropology*

The present study is an attempt to understand and elucidate some of the main features of the religious approach to the question of Man. It is a study of what may be broadly called "sacred anthropology". Although rather unfamiliar, I have adopted the term "sacred anthropology" because it describes or indicates the general field of our enquiry more accurately than the narrower terms "theological" or "philosophical" anthropology do. It is precise enough to denote specifically "religious" ideas and concerns about human nature and human destiny, ideas that are held to originate in revelation, yet it is also broad enough to embrace the diverse sacred conceptions of Man of every religious tradition.

A systematic study of *all* sacred conceptions of Man would lie beyond the scope of a single study, since there are probably as many religious conceptions of Man as there are secular ones. Even within any one religious tradition there are to be found a great variety of different ideas of Man, even contradictory ones. It would be difficult to precisely delineate a "Christian" conception of Man, just as it would a "Hindu" or "Buddhist" one. There are certainly profound differences between each of these religious approaches to the question of Man, yet there are also distinct similarities or parallels between them, some of which are quite fundamental. Whatever their divergencies, they all belong to a single class or category.

They are all *sacred* conceptions of Man. They are all concerned with Man in an ultimate sense.

In the present study we shall explore some of these fundamental similarities, although it is not my intention to argue that all religious conceptions of Man are the same. Clearly they are not. It is, however, with a view to showing that there are certain distinctive features in the religious *approach* to the question of Man that characterise that approach as specifically religious. To cite just one fairly obvious example. Every major religious tradition envisages some kind of inner transformation of Man that leads him to the fulfilment of his ultimate destiny. The type of transformation envisaged by different religious traditions may vary widely, yet some kind of transformation is central to them all. A movement from one condition to another, radically different, condition is always envisaged. Thus, in every religion we find a distinction is made between the “given” or “present” condition of Man and some “possible” condition that awaits him. There is in every religion a soteriological dimension to its conception of Man, and this dimension may be taken as representing one fundamental characteristic of all religious approaches to the question of Man.

However, the main focus of this study is upon one particular type of approach to the question of Man that may be found within that general religious approach. The central feature of this approach is that it envisages the attainment of self-knowledge through the union of Man, God and Creation. It is therefore essentially a mystical anthropology that I shall focus upon, or what might be termed a *nondualist anthropology*.⁴⁴

⁴⁴I adopt the term “nondualist” directly from the *Advaita Vedanta* of Shankara. The nondualist philosophy of Shankara is central to my thesis because the sacred anthropology I wish to elaborate is essentially a *unitive* anthropology. I shall elaborate Shankara’s Nondualism in Chapter II and that will serve as a key to the implicit nondualism of the Christian texts discussed later.

Before discussing this in detail, I would like to establish that I intend to consider conceptions of Man that are uniquely religious and which have arisen solely from the religious question of Man. This may seem simple enough, but actually it raises a number of problems that need to be considered. First, there is the problem of how we might distinguish between the *religious* approach to the question of Man and any other approaches. Second, there is the problem of evaluating the various philosophical, sociological or psychological interpretations of religious ideas of Man. And third, there is the problem of the relationship between the religious approach to the question of Man and man's own direct knowledge of himself.

Among modern Christian theologians there appears to be considerable doubt as to where the line can be drawn between each of these approaches. Some theologians, when they address the question of theological anthropology, assume that although revelation is addressed *to* Man, it reveals nothing directly *about* Man. Here Man is regarded as the *recipient* of revelation but not as the *content* of revelation. This is because these theologians understand revelation to be God's act of disclosure of Himself to Man. Consequently it is believed that before he can commence his work of interpreting revelation, the theologian is obliged to bring to his task some philosophical framework, worked out in advance, which includes a *given* anthropology that serves as an interpretive tool. Faricy, for example, in his Preface to *A Christian Anthropology*, states that:

Any theologian, then, works with two sources, with two sets of data: Christian revelation, and some general philosophical matrix in terms of which the data of revelation can be understood. This second set of data, this philosophical framework, is always centred on some

particular understanding of man. Thus, the differences between theologies depend to a great extent on different ideas of man.⁴⁵

According to this view, revelation does not itself offer any “particular understanding of man”, yet it requires some given anthropology through which it can be interpreted and understood. There is surely an anomaly in such a position. If, as Faricy here asserts, the theologian’s understanding of Christian revelation depends upon some given pre-understanding of man, then any *true* interpretation of revelation must be dependent upon a true knowledge of man. But how is the theologian to gain and verify such a knowledge of man outside revelation itself? Further, it follows from Faricy’s assertion that “the differences between theologies depend to a great extent on different ideas of man” that any Christian can either accept or reject the interpretation of revelation that any particular theologian offers through an evaluation of that theologian’s particular anthropology. His interpretation of revelation stands or falls with his “particular understanding of man”. It is with a view to protecting the interpretation of revelation from such difficulties that Tillich asserts that “the truth of revelation is not dependent on criteria that are not themselves revelatory. Knowledge of revelation, like ordinary knowledge, must be judged by its implicit criteria”.⁴⁶ If this is so, then revelation itself must, at the very least, provide some criteria by which the various anthropological assumptions of the interpreter may be judged.

⁴⁵Robert Faricy in his Preface to *A Christian Anthropology*, Ed. by E. J. Malatesta, (Anthony Clark, Weathamstead, 1974), p. vii.

⁴⁶Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, (London, 1988), p. 131. The corollary to this is that the criteria of revelation cannot, according to Tillich, be brought to bear on ordinary knowledge. “Knowledge of revelation cannot interfere with ordinary knowledge. Likewise, ordinary knowledge cannot interfere with knowledge of revelation”, *ibid.* p. 130.

Faricy's assertion may, however, have value if it could be established that the anthropology that the theologian brings to his interpretive task can be verified by revelation itself. But in that case it would not strictly be independent data that he brings to revelation by means of which he interprets it.

But Faricy's assumptions have other far-reaching implications that he seems not to have taken into account. For instance, if the interpretation of revelation depends in some measure upon the anthropological assumptions of the theologian, then its interpretation would equally depend upon the anthropological assumptions of any other interpreter, including the nonbeliever, or the assumptions of any "secular" anthropology that other disciplines may bring to the interpretation of revelation. This opens the way to revelation losing its status as revelation, since any interpreter may conceive of Man as a being incapable of receiving revelation, or as a being who gives revelatory status to certain projections of his own mind. If the theologians' interpretation is to claim more authority than that of any other interpreter, then his particular understanding of man, upon which his interpretation depends, must likewise claim more authority.

In fact, by calling his first data "Christian revelation", Faricy has already made an initial religious assumption about Man, not a philosophical one. At the very least he has assumed that Man is a being who is open to revelation. But more than this, he has assumed that Man is a being who is specifically addressed by God and able to respond to revelation as God intends him to respond. Thus, the designation of certain data as "revelation" contains within itself an initial assumption about man himself, and this initial assumption already contains and affirms a *religious* idea of man: the idea that Man is that being who is addressed by God through revelation. So whatever the philosophical matrix the Christian theologian brings to his task

of interpreting revelation, that matrix will contain within itself the initial conception of man as a being addressed by and open to revelation, and this initial assumption about man will need to be consonant with the whole of his “general philosophical matrix” through which he understands revelation. But this also means, as noted a moment ago, that the conception of man that the theologian brings to his interpretive task must be verifiable by revelation itself. This would obviously involve disentangling the primary or metaphysical notions of Man contained in Christian revelation itself from those which are historically conditioned or philosophically derived.

The conceptions of Man with which the theologian works do not, then, have a strictly independent status from his religious commitment, but are derived from, consonant with, or implicit in it in some way. Even if his conception of man embraces no more than the initial assumption that Man is that being who addressed by God through revelation, that initial assumption on its own has far-reaching religious implications as well as far-reaching anthropological implications.

If the notion of revelation inevitably contains within itself initial assumptions about man, at the very least the idea that man is a being open to revelation, but possibly also the idea that revelation reveals to man something about man himself, then it follows that revelation not only speaks *to* man but also in some sense speaks *about* man.

More specifically, if religious conceptions of man are ultimately revelatory in character, it follows that any statement about the nature of religion is also, and must necessarily be, an anthropological statement, must disclose something about man himself. Any statement about religion, of whatever kind, necessarily includes some notion of man, is in some sense a statement about man, for the two cannot be separated. This indicates that

any conception of the nature of religion ought to account for the anthropology contained within religion. If that anthropology is ignored, set aside or replaced with a different anthropology, then it is hard to see how this will not determine the conception of religion itself in advance of speaking of it. Yet many studies of religion do precisely this. Here is where our second problem arises, that is, the problem of interpreting religion through anthropological presuppositions foreign to those of religion itself. Eliade criticises Tylor and Frazer's conceptions of archaic religion almost solely on the grounds of their positivistic anthropological presuppositions:

Tylor and Frazer, like good positivists, regarded the magico-religious life of archaic humanity as a mass of childish "superstitions", the product of ancestral fears or of "primitive" stupidity. But that value-judgement is in contradiction to the facts. The magico-religious behaviour of archaic humanity reveals an existential awakening of man's consciousness to the Cosmos and of himself. Here, where Frazer could see nothing but "superstition", a metaphysic was already implicit, even though it was expressed by a pattern of symbols rather than the interplay of concepts: a metaphysic - that is, a whole and coherent conception of Reality, not a series of instinctive gestures ruled by the same fundamental "reaction of the human animal in confrontation with nature".⁴⁷

⁴⁷Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, (Princeton, 1991), p. 176. We have no reason to assume that religion arose historically out of some aberrant form of itself, any more than we do in the case of the individual at any time. Religion is an awakening of Man to himself and to the totality of all things, a moment of realisation, of insight. An awakening or an insight does not come gradually into being, but arrives entire and instantaneously. It may, of course, afterwards take an aberrant form, such as superstition or neurosis of some kind. But this happens with individuals at any time, and even the major religious traditions tend to accrue distortions of matters they have already thoroughly worked out, such as the tendency to fundamentalism for instance. But these distortions or

As rationalists, Tylor and Frazer could not see the underlying cogency or completeness of archaic man's symbolic or mythic apprehensions of reality and of himself. Cassirer, in his *An Essay on Man*, observes that the earliest myths embody total conceptions of reality, including a sacred anthropology, and that these conceptions remain essentially intact in religion even though they are later reinterpreted or seen in new ways:

In the first mythological explanations of the universe we always find a primitive *anthropology* side by side with a primitive *cosmology*. The question of the origin of the world is inextricably interwoven with the question of the origin of man. Religion does not destroy these first mythological explanations. On the contrary, it preserves the mythological cosmology and anthropology by giving them new shape and new depth.⁴⁸

This last point of Cassirer's, that religion does not destroy the first mythological cosmology and anthropology, is very important. The symbolic and mythic expressions of religion may later be intellectually elaborated but they are not superseded by these elaborations. From the perspective of religion we have no grounds to suppose that these later intellectual elaborations are superior to or supersede the original mythic or symbolic

aberrations need to be distinguished from the type from which they deviate. Indeed, all the "expressions" or manifestations of religion (rites, symbols, myths, doctrines, etc.) ought not to be equated with the essence of religion as such, any more than a particular culture should be equated with culture as such. From the perspective of this study, every religious tradition is only *representative* of something beyond itself which always transcends its representation.

⁴⁸Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, (New Haven and London, 1968), p. 3.

expressions upon which they depend.⁴⁹ Where these are regarded as revelatory, as with the Bible, the Koran or the Veda, they remain the resource to which the tradition returns whenever certain of their intellectual elaborations lose their vitality or meaning. Indeed, their fresh interpretation restores their revelatory status by “giving them new shape and depth”. Frazer’s notion that religion arises from superstition, or from a primitive type of intelligence, betrays an anthropology that misapprehends or fails to grasp religious or symbolic modes of understanding.

According to Eliade, symbolic thinking and myth open up certain aspects of reality that are inaccessible to any other modes of knowing, and for that reason there is no other type of thought able to supersede them:

Symbolic thinking . . . is consubstantial with human existence, it comes before language and discursive reason. The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality - the deepest aspects - which defy any other means of knowledge. Images, symbols and myths are not irresponsible creations of the psyche; they respond to a need and fulfil a function, that of bringing to light the most hidden modalities of being. Consequently, the study of them enables us to reach a better understanding of man - of man “as he is”, before he has come to terms with the conditions of history.⁵⁰

⁴⁹For example, Meister Eckhart may speak of the eternal birth of God in the essence of the soul in his interpretation of the Gospel accounts of the birth of Christ, but his mystical interpretation in no way supersedes the Gospel accounts. On the contrary, it opens up the significance of the Gospel accounts and reinforces their pertinence to the here and now in which Eckhart speaks. See for example Sermon Two in M. O. C. Walshe, *Meister Eckhart: Sermons and Treatises*, Vol. I, (Longmead, 1989).

⁵⁰Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, p. 12.

Eliade and Cassirer both call our attention to the inseparability of anthropology and cosmology in primitive myth. Archaic myth, according to them, represents a simultaneous awakening of man to the world and to himself and thus to their existential interdependence as a directly experienced reality, not as an abstract conceptual one. For Eliade the term "Reality" includes the spiritual or the divine as well as the material. He suggests that for archaic man "a separation between the *spiritual* and the *material* is without meaning: the two planes are complimentary".⁵¹

This suggests that religion begins at the moment when man awakens to himself and to a sense of the coherent totality of all things, and that at this moment, which is a moment in man's being, not simply an historical moment, religion is already essentially complete, even though its demands and the fulfilment of those demands may lie ahead of him. It also suggests that this initial awakening can only be expressed in symbolic or mythic terms. As Cassirer observes "The belief in the "*sympathy of the Whole*" is one of the firmest foundations of religion itself".⁵² And however that moment of awakening may unfold itself through time, that "existential awakening" may be regarded as essentially the same ontological moment for every human being.

I shall return to this point later in this chapter. All I wish to establish for the present is that, just as we observed earlier that the concept of revelation cannot be divorced from some initial religious idea of Man, neither can it be divorced from some initial religious idea of the Cosmos. Revelation is not about some *other* reality distinct from Man and the Cosmos, but rather, as the observations of Eliade and Cassirer both suggest, it is of reality in its totality and on every level, of Reality as a *sacred whole*.

⁵¹Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, p. 177.

⁵²Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 95.

One might say that this is what distinguishes it as revelation. The “whole” of reality includes the divine, and it is because it includes the divine that it is sacred. This adds a further element to the initial idea of man as a being open to revelation, namely that he is a being capable of *religiously* grasping reality in its totality. We shall discuss the enormous implications of this fundamental idea in some detail later. I now want to address our third problem, the question of the relationship between revelatory knowledge of Man and his own direct knowledge of himself.

2. The Religious approach to Knowledge of Man

When we asked earlier how the theologian was to gain knowledge of Man outside revelation we left out of account the fact that the question of Man is not like any other question because here the *object* in question is also the *subject* posing the question. The question is self-referential, the questioner is also the questioned. Man can, of course, be made the object of empirical investigation just as any other object can. Philosophical anthropology, psychology and social anthropology all investigate man empirically, and each accumulate their own types of factual knowledge of man which is subject to rational verification.⁵³ But religious knowledge of man is different to this. It is concerned with a different type of knowledge. According to Tillich:

There are many insights into the nature of man in revelation. But all of them refer to the relation of man to what concerns him ultimately, to the ground and meaning of his being. There is no revealed

⁵³ This is not to say that these disciplines do not acknowledge regions of mans being that exceed empirical investigation.

psychology just as there is no revealed historiography or revealed physics.⁵⁴

The idea that revelation is concerned with man in terms of his relation to God, and therefore with his life generally in the light of his relation to God, represents the characteristic starting-point of the modern Christian question of man. This is what Tillich means by saying that revelation refers to what concerns man ultimately. But he enlarges on this by saying “to the ground and meaning of his being”, by which he means a direct experience of that ground and meaning of his being, not simply a conceptual or theoretical knowledge about it. It is a mode of knowledge founded on absolute commitment to being, or a mode of knowledge that is itself an act of being. For Tillich, absolute commitment to being necessarily involves absolute commitment to God, which he regards as the ground of all being, and so religious knowledge of being contains a transcendental element. Although Tillich draws upon philosophical ontology to elaborate this idea, particularly that of Heidegger and Buber, essentially he is stating the orthodox Christian position that holds that man comes to knowledge of himself only through his actual relation to God. Thus for Tillich estrangement from self and estrangement from God belong together. They are the two sides of one thing.

From this point of view, the first characteristic of religious knowledge of man, then, is that such knowledge depends upon man turning to God, through whom alone true self-knowledge is possible. It is what may be called an intersubjective type of knowledge, a knowledge that arises through the relationship of man’s particular being with the ground of being.

⁵⁴Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 130.

This approach to the question of man, however, leaves out of account the problem of direct self-knowledge. It does not automatically follow that man turns to God for self-knowledge. He may turn to God solely for knowledge of God. As we observed a moment ago, the question of man's knowledge of himself is not like any other question because it refers to the one asking the question. There is a danger that in turning this question directly to God that the enquiry into the nature of man may be deflected or turned solely into an enquiry into the relationship between man and God, in which the knowledge of man is taken as already given. Edmund Hill for instance, in his *Being Human*, asserts that man has sufficient access to knowledge of himself through the "endless variations of anthropology" in the humanities and that these do not "require God to start them off or to complete them". What distinguishes the theological study of man, in his view, is the study of "our relationship with God".⁵⁵

In saying this, Hill has not only evaded the question of religious knowledge of man, by assuming there is no such question, but also has relegated the question of man's self-knowledge entirely to the field of secular anthropology. In so doing he has dismissed the sacred dimension of man's enquiry into himself. Furthermore, he overlooks the fact that if the theological study of man is solely concerned with man's relation with God, then that in itself calls for an anthropology beyond the scope of the anthropological disciplines he claims provide a complete knowledge of man. Indeed, it may call for an anthropology that is at variance with these. For to assert that man stands in a relationship with God not only raises the question of human nature entirely anew but also takes that question to its very foundations - to the "ground and meaning of his being". From the religious perspective, man is more than an "object" like any other object of enquiry.

⁵⁵Edmund Hill, *Being Human*, (London, 1984), p. 2.

He is a self-conscious “subject” whose subjectivity recedes all the way back to the transcendent being of God, and it is only as such a self-conscious subject, whose being is grounded in the transcendent being of God, that his relation with God becomes religiously intelligible or meaningful. Thus, to assert that theological anthropology is concerned with man’s relation with God calls of itself for an anthropology, or raises anthropological questions, beyond the scope of the academic disciplines which Hill claims provide a complete knowledge of human nature - a claim that these disciplines do not themselves make. Religion, in seeing man as a being in relation to God, no longer takes knowledge of man as a *given* knowledge, no longer regards man as a being in possession of an adequate self-knowledge.

At the same time, the question of man’s own direct or subjective self-knowledge, even before the question of his relation with God is raised, cannot be passed over or simply taken as given. This also has a religious or sacred dimension.

From the perspective of philosophical ontology, Man can raise the question of Man only because he is a self-conscious subject. This is the starting-point of philosophical ontology, as Tillich observes:

Man occupies a pre-eminent position in ontology, not as an outstanding object among other objects, but as that being who asks the ontological question and in whose self-awareness the ontological answer can be found.⁵⁶

⁵⁶Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 168.

As we observed earlier, religion begins with an awakening of man to the world and to himself as a totality. World-consciousness and self-consciousness are two discernible elements of consciousness of totality, but they belong together and cannot exist independently of one another. "There is no world-consciousness without self-consciousness, but the converse is also true".⁵⁷ Religion is concerned with the sacred dimensions of both these elements of consciousness, as well as a third, the transcendent element, which we shall examine later.

The question of self-consciousness, however, brings special problems of its own. In terms of an enquiry into the nature of the self there is the danger of trying to grasp or speak of the self as an object looked upon from outside. That is to say, in the attempt to form conceptions of the self, the self inadvertently becomes transposed among the objects of world-consciousness, and in this way the initial question of self-consciousness and its specific mode of knowing is lost sight of. The problem of "objectifying" man, of approaching and looking at him from outside himself, is regarded in the Vedantic tradition as one of the greatest obstacles to the enquiry into the nature of the self. Ramana Maharshi observes that:

The trouble lies with your desire to objectify the Self, in the same way as you objectify your eyes, when you place a mirror before them. You have become so accustomed to objectify that you lost the knowledge of yourself, simply because the Self cannot be objectified.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 171.

⁵⁸*Thus Spake Ramana*, (Madras, 1985), verse 52.

In verse 54 of the same work, Ramana Maharshi draws a distinction between “objective epistemology” and the “subjective epistemology”, which belongs to enquiry into the Self:

Subjective knowledge - knowledge knowing itself is *jnana*. All too easily discussion of the knowledge of the self commences from the unquestioned assumption that all knowledge is objective and so attempts to “know” the self are in reality attempts to “objectify” the self, rather than attempts to find the appropriate means (epistemology) to know the self.

In other words, the attempt to *know* the self turns into an attempt to theoretically conceptualise it, as though it stood outside itself. An effort is made to stand outside the self and grasp it as an object of world consciousness, to apprehend it in the same manner we apprehend sensory objects and form conceptions of them. Knowledge (*jnana*) cannot become an object of itself, but is known by other means. We find a similar distinction needs to be made between Man’s knowledge of the world and his knowledge of God, who likewise cannot become an “object” of knowledge. The mystics of every religious tradition appear to struggle to give adequate expression to their knowledge of God in the same way as everyone struggles to give adequate expression to their self-knowledge or self-presence. Initial knowledge as such is not the problem, since self-presence is already a given mode of knowledge. A problem arises only when an attempt is made to translate or abstract this subjective knowledge of self-presence into the terms of objective knowledge. To attempt to objectify self-presence is to attempt to remove the very thing that characterises it, namely its subjectivity or self-referential character. What I shall call “unitive knowledge”, which is

characteristic of the subjective knowledge just described by Ramana Maharshi, in which the knower and the known are identical, cannot be expressed in terms of objective knowledge, nor need it be. This is not so much due to an inherent limitation of objective knowledge, as to the incompatibility of two epistemologies - the objective and the unitive. Problems arise only when objective knowledge and its epistemology is deemed to be universal or the only means of knowledge.

In suggesting that the problems encountered in knowing Man are parallel with those encountered in knowing God, I am not suggesting that these problems are exactly identical, or that knowledge of Man is in some way synonymous with knowledge of God. I am suggesting only that the mode of knowing the self is connected in some way with the mode of knowing God, and that knowledge of either is not translatable into the conceptual and inferential discourse of objective knowledge. We are dealing here with non-inferential modes of knowing. That is to say, neither the self nor God can be inferred from anything because they are ontologically prior to the realms of reality about which inferences can be made. This is the parallel that concerns us. Both the self and God are, so to speak, instances to themselves alone. Meister Eckhart alludes to this parallel in his Sermon 1:

There is an authority who says that the soul can neither conceive nor admit any idea of itself. Thus it knows about everything else but has no self-knowledge, for ideas always enter through the senses and therefore the soul cannot get any idea of itself. Of nothing does the soul know so little as it knows of itself, for lack of means. And that indicates that within itself the soul is free, innocent of all

instrumentalities and ideas, and that is why God can unite with it, he, too, being pure and without idea or likeness.⁵⁹

We see here that for Eckhart the scope of conceptual knowledge, of “ideas”, lies entirely outside and below the soul, while knowledge of self or knowledge of God lie beyond and above ideation and such cannot properly be called knowledge in the same sense, but rather unity or participation. This parallel between religious or “non-instrumental” knowledge of man and of God has been well elucidated in an article by Thomas Tomasic:

One of the greatest disservices of historians of philosophy has been to claim that medieval thought was God-oriented and, as a result, man was of little or no concern. To insert a dualist wedge between God and man is to betray little understanding of the medieval rationale. It should be noted that *theologia* was not an objective science; there can be no *episteme* about either God or man. *Theologia* is essentially a *logos*, an attempt to disclose meaningful identity through symbol, a celebration of mystery. Entrance into this celebration is initiated by the recognition that language about God and language about the self are functionally identical, that the pivotal point of theocentric language, or *theologia*, is the fact that man is *imago* or *similitudo dei*.⁶⁰

⁵⁹*Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation*, trans. R. B. Blakely, London 1941.

⁶⁰Thomas Tomasic, “Negative Theology and Subjectivity: An Approach to the Tradition of Pseudo-Dionysius”, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 9, (1969), (pp. 406-30), p. 409.

What Tomasic here calls *logos* is essentially the same as what Ramana Maharshi calls *jnana* - knowledge knowing itself, although Ramana Maharshi would not say that knowledge of the self or of Brahman was communicable through symbol. Nevertheless, *Theologia* overcomes the problems of objectifying God and man through employing symbol, which is a language of "disclosure", of making present, rather than a language of objective description or representation.

That man's own self-presence precedes or, more exactly, transcends the grasp of inferential conceptualisation, even for the knowing subject, provides us with a point of entry into the nature of religious modes of knowledge that immediately obviates the limitations over-rationalisation, objectivization or reductionism. Karl Rahner, for example, takes what he calls man's unthematic self-presence as the starting-point of religious enquiry:

Man is a transcendent being insofar as all his knowledge and all his conscious activity is grounded in a pre-apprehension of "being" as such, in an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinity of reality.⁶¹

⁶¹Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, (London 1978), p. 33. In his essay "Experience of Self and Experience of God" Rahner writes "... we have avoided the terms "knowledge of God" or "knowledge of self". This should be enough to indicate from the outset that what we are treating of is that kind of knowledge which is present in every man as belonging essentially to the very roots of cognition in him, and as constituting the starting-point and prior condition for reflexive knowledge, and for all derived human knowledge in its function of combining and classifying. We are assuming, therefore, that there is such a thing as a passive experience of this kind as a matter of transcendental necessity, an experience so inescapable, in other words, that in its ultimate structures its reality is implicitly in the very act of denying it or calling it in question. In accordance with this, it must be emphasised, with regard to man's experience of himself, that we are treating of this here in its initial stages as

This "pre-apprehension of *being* as such" is already a religious mode of knowledge in so far as it transcends ideation. It is the point from which both religion and philosophy, each in their own manner, emerge into human reflection. That is why there cannot be any "philosophical matrix" containing a primary knowledge of Man available to the theologian from outside religion through which he can interpret revelation. There is, according to this view of Rahner, no privileged vantage-point above being as such from which to interpret revelation. Further, any particular religious commitment is ontologically rooted in and springs from the commitment to being as such, the universal ground of all commitment. Thus the element of commitment, even the scholar's commitment to impartial or objective knowledge, is ultimately a commitment to being itself and originates in the unthematic pre-apprehension of being as such and is in this respect wholly subjective.⁶² Commitment in itself, of course, belongs to no particular religious tradition nor to any particular school of thought, but simply to Man as Man.

These reflections indicate that taking man's self-knowledge as a point of entry for an enquiry into sacred anthropology provides us with a

an unconscious factor in human life, one that is prior to any anthropology (at the philosophical level and as a particular department) in its reflexive and classifying functions, through both of which it exercises the further function of objectifying. Man's experience of himself sustains all such objectifying anthropology, and can never fully be grasped in man's findings as he reflects upon his own nature. Thus it would be justifiable to say that man always experiences more of himself at the non-thematic and non-reflexive levels in the ultimate and fundamental living of his life than he knows about himself by reflecting upon himself whether scientifically or (mainly in his private ideas) non-scientifically". *Theological Investigations, Vol. 13*, (London, 1975), p. 123.

⁶² I employ the term "subjective", and therefore the whole meaning of "subjectivity", in its positive philosophical sense, not in its popular pejorative sense.

foundation from which we can examine and compare the various concepts of man and his ultimate destiny from all religious traditions. We may even critically compare those interpretations of human nature offered to us by exponents of the various religious traditions constructively and without offence, in so far as all such interpretations can be tested against the traditions they claim to interpret, as well as against the given pre-apprehension of being as such that belongs to every man. This is an important advantage, for while any particular religious tradition may claim a privileged revelation of God, none can claim a privileged knowledge of Man, or a privileged access to knowledge of Man as such. Man's knowledge of himself is open to him simply because he *is* man, and access to self-knowledge is an integral part of his humanity, of being human. At the same time, however, the major religious traditions, with the special exception of Buddhism,⁶³ unanimously teach that man can neither wholly *be* himself nor fully *know* himself apart from knowledge of, or union with, God. Thus, although no single religion can claim privileged or exclusive knowledge of man, every religion is ultimately *concerned* with the knowledge of man, and this does include Buddhism.

If man's pre-apprehension of being as such transcends or precedes all objective knowledge, then it must also be the ground in some sense of all his questions about existence and truth. Thus, at the moment man asks "What is Ultimate Truth?" that question immediately rebounds back upon Man himself and compels him to reflect upon the nature of his own being,

⁶³ I cite Buddhism as an exception because of its no-self doctrine (*anathema vada*), but even the most radical Buddhist negations of an essential self or essence (*atman*) begin with the demand of man to reflect upon his own self-presence and proceed to deconstruct all "ideation" of a self. But since, as we have already shown, no true *idea* of the self is possible, since it transcends the realm of ideation (and this, paradoxically, holds true whether or not there is a self) there is no real difficulty in including Buddhism here, provided we replace "God" with the Buddhist notion of an Ultimate.

both in itself and in relation to reality as a whole. That reflection may of course take many forms, ranging from the mythical to the empirical. What concerns us here is that it brings Man to self-reflection, and that it is religion, in its most fundamental sense, that has taken up the question of self-reflection as the primary question. It is religion that has focused from the beginning upon the mystery of self-awareness - the fact that it appears to be unstructured, that its depth is infinite and that it cannot be objectified - and found in the depths of self-presence a demand for a higher order of being, for transformation, and a new order of consciousness. This demand for transformation, for a new order of being, which arises with the question of self-presence is a central and distinctive feature of the religious approach to the question of Man, and it will occupy a pivotal place in our study of sacred anthropology. In this sense our study goes beyond the usual scope and aims of philosophical anthropology.

Of course the question of Ultimate Truth may be posed rationally, or intellectually, and therefore may confine itself strictly to the object of the question without bringing the questioner into view. But where that question is posed "religiously", and therefore with a sense of absolute necessity (or "ultimate concern", as Tillich puts it), then it rebounds upon the subject asking the question and makes the subject himself the focus of his own consciousness. The question of the self and the question of God are somehow brought (or bound) together in the act of self-reflection. Man is thus confronted by two conceptual unknowns: on the one hand the ungraspable transcendence of God, and on the other the apparently fathomless depth of his own being. It is this polarity of infinitudes, experienced in their pure subjectivity, that characterises them as religious and which has given birth to the various conceptions of human nature that are characteristically and essentially religious.

Brought to reflection upon his own being through the question of ultimacy characterises the religious approach to the question of Man.⁶⁴ At one level it appears that religion seeks an “explanation” of Man’s being - a view that we have seen Eliade and Cassirer both reject - but at a far deeper level it lights upon the demand for a *transformation* of Man’s being. It is here that the soteriological dimension of sacred anthropology emerges as one of its principal features. Strictly speaking, all religious conceptions of human nature, even where they appear to be objectively descriptive, are meaningful only from the perspective of Man’s possible transformation. If these conceptions are taken out of their soteriological or “transformative” context they can become practically meaningless.

While this may be obvious, it cautions us against making too easy comparisons between religious notions of human nature and other ideas of man framed from different perspectives - political, sociological, ethical or psychological notions for example, even though these may have transformative elements of their own.⁶⁵ At the same time, however, the soteriological element of sacred anthropology provides us with an appropriate perspective for comparing conceptions of man from different religious traditions. Thus, for example, even though they are diametrically opposed, the *Advaita* conception of the Self or *atman* may be constructively compared with the Buddhist no-self or *anatman* doctrine since both conceptions aim at a transformation of being. They are each properly meaningful only within the context of their transformative systems of teachings. If they are taken out of their particular instrumental contexts and

⁶⁴On this point see Karl Rahner’s essay “Theology and Anthropology” in which he argues for an anthropocentric focus for modern theology. *Theological Investigations, Vol. 9*, p. 28-45.

⁶⁵As we shall see in our study of Teilhard de Chardin, the social and political aspirations of man are themselves grounded in man’s sense of the ultimate unity of reality and have an unrealised or unconscious mystical dimension.

called “beliefs”, “truth-claims” or “doctrines”, then their real meaning or significance is obscured or even entirely lost. Soteriology also provides religion itself with a perspective from which to evaluate “secular” conceptions of man, including conceptions of his possible transformation or development.

I shall attempt to demonstrate in this study that there is a distinct group of sacred conceptions of Man that are common to every religious tradition, despite other major differences. This includes ideas about human nature that appear totally opposed to one another, such as the two just cited. In this way I shall endeavour to demonstrate that, fundamentally, there is no uniquely “Christian”, “Hindu” or “Buddhist” view of human nature, but rather a group of “primary” religious concepts or views of Man to which every religious tradition resorts in one context or another. Equally there is a group of “false” conceptions of Man that every religious tradition ultimately refutes or challenges. Here is where careful scholarly comparison may be particularly fruitful, since it is often only through thematically comparing one religious tradition with another that certain latent concepts may be brought clearly into focus. Such comparison can tell each tradition something about itself that the exclusive “insider” can very easily fail to notice.

I suggested a moment ago that the question of ultimate truth, when posed with absolute commitment, rebounds upon Man and brings him to consciousness of his own being, not merely abstractly or conceptually, but directly into his own self-presence. I have also suggested that, brought into self-awareness, Man is confronted by two infinitudes - the infinity of self and the infinity of God. But there is, however, a third point of reality that reflective consciousness also encounters: the world.

The world, or the creation, represents a third infinitude encountered by reflective consciousness. There is, as we saw earlier, a religious or sacred sense of cosmos, and this also must be taken into account in sacred anthropology. As Cassirer observed, sacred anthropology arises simultaneously with a sacred cosmology.

Since it has often been suggested that religion arose (historically) from man's "primitive" attempts to explain or control the world, the question of man's "religious" consciousness of the world requires special treatment. Sacred cosmology is not concerned to explain or understand the world encountered by man in any objective or scientific sense, just as sacred anthropology is not concerned to explain or understand Man in any objective sense. Religiously speaking, the world is not known as an "object", any more than Man is. Religion is concerned, just as it is with the question of the self, with a specific kind of consciousness of the world. It characteristically seeks a knowledge of the *totality of the world* that completely transcends the analytical subject/object perception of the world which all objective conceptualisation is necessarily based upon. Religious cosmology is principally concerned with transforming man's conscious relationship with the world, and it, too, is properly meaningful only in a soteriological context.

From this stand-point, Man's encounter with the world is, once again, similar to his encounter with God: the world confronts him with himself. He finds himself to be a discrete entity that stands aver against the immediate reality and mystery of the world. In its totality and as a totality, the world mirrors Man's consciousness back upon himself and awakens in the depths of his own self-presence the demand for a new order of being in which he may come into relationship with the world *in its totality* and in the fullness of its meaning. The primordial religious question of Man asks,

“What am I before reality as a whole?” and that question inevitably leads to a second question, “What does reality as a whole demand of me?”

It is this soteriological demand which Man’s encounter with the world awakens in him that appears to lie at the heart of all sacred cosmologies or creation myths. These sacred cosmologies, as we have already seen, do not attempt to explain the world in any “scientific” sense (and so do not stand in opposition to scientific cosmologies). Rather, they are symbolic articulations of the underlying ontological sense of the totality of all being.⁶⁶ They express a mode of unitive knowledge, or a demand for such unitive knowledge, as opposed to objective or analytical knowledge, and are intended to lead the hearer (or ritual enactor) towards this unitive mode of knowledge. As Cassirer observes, “If myth did not *perceive* the world in a different way it could not judge or interpret it in its specific manner”.⁶⁷

This raises an important point. Modern scientific method (and all objective methodologies based upon or derived from it), by definition, rules out an understanding of the world through non-conceptual consciousness. It therefore automatically rules out the study of consciousness in itself.⁶⁸ Religion, on the other hand, has always been fundamentally concerned with

⁶⁶Thus Eliade says “Symbolic thinking is not the exclusive privilege of the child, of the poet or the unbalanced mind: it is consubstantial with human existence, it comes before language and discursive reason. The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality - the deepest aspects - which defy other means of knowledge. Images, symbols and myths are not irresponsible creations of the psyche; they respond to a need and fulfil a function, that of bringing to light the most hidden modalities of being. Consequently, the study of them enables us to reach a better understanding of man - man “as he is”, before he has come to terms with the conditions of history”. *Images and Symbols* (New Jersey, 1991), p. 12.

⁶⁷Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, (New Haven & London, 1966), p. 76.

⁶⁸ I am not suggesting here that the sciences cannot study the modalities of consciousness or that they ought not to take account of consciousness in nature, only that they cannot account for consciousness as such.

the problem of consciousness in itself. In the Christian tradition, for example, one way of speaking of the “being” of God is to equate His being with His self-consciousness or self-knowledge. Donceel offers an interesting summary of this tradition:

Traditional philosophy conceives God as an infinite Intelligence which knows itself in an infinitely perfect way. In God too there is active self-identification (God knows himself, God wills himself) - or rather God *is* active self-identity. For an identification supposes a previous stage at which the two elements were not identical (we start our life in a state of unconsciousness). This never occurs in God, there is never any unconsciousness in God. . . . Therefore we can say that to be is to be present to oneself, to be conscious of oneself, to know and to will oneself, to identify oneself actively with oneself, to return to one’s essence. This is a translation into psychological terms of the truth established in ontology, that being is one, is true and good.

But since every being is one, true and good inasmuch as it is being, it would seem that every being should be conscious of itself, should know and will itself. The principle of proportionality or of analogy affirms that there is indeed, even in the lowest beings, in minerals and plants, something which is to their essence what consciousness, knowledge and love are to the essence of spiritual being.⁶⁹

Thus, God has traditionally been conceived as “consciousness present to itself” as a first principle of theological ontology. The question of consciousness “in itself” is therefore the starting-point for the religious examination of the consciousness of any creature and the possibilities of its

⁶⁹J. F. Donceel, *Philosophical Anthropology*, (New York, 1967), p. ?

direct knowledge of its own essence as well as its knowledge of God. If it is asserted that the being of Man is finite, then it is simultaneously asserted that the consciousness of Man is also finite. Hence, so far as religion is concerned with Man's being, or with transforming Man's state of being, it is fundamentally concerned with the nature of consciousness.

Psychology,⁷⁰ in so far as it is the study of the psyche, stands, it would seem, somewhere between the fields of science and religion, and is concerned with the "contents" of human consciousness, with the operations and faculties of the psyche, but not with consciousness as such which, like being, is understood by the religious traditions to be ontologically prior to the psyche.⁷¹ Generally speaking, both science and psychology locate consciousness strictly within the human person, and as a rule they equate consciousness with cognisance or even with conation. Several religious traditions, on the other hand, understand that all existence is permeated by consciousness, conceived variously as its substratum,⁷² or to consist of modified forms of consciousness,⁷³ or as God's omniscience. Teilhard de Chardin, speaking within the Christian tradition, proposes that consciousness is the very "stuff" of the universe.⁷⁴ But this understanding of

⁷⁰I am speaking here of psychology in its broadest sense which includes all the various schools of methodology. In this study the question of the nature of consciousness is a metaphysical question because consciousness has a transcendent dimension, and so consciousness as such, or consciousness in itself, lies ultimately beyond mind, or psyche, and consequently beyond the scope of any empirical investigation, as will become in our study as a whole.

⁷¹In Advaita Vedanta, for example, consciousness (*sat*) belongs to the essential nature of the Self (*atman*), while mind (*manas*) is regarded as illumined by consciousness but in itself inert.

⁷²This is the Vedantic view which will be discussed in detail in Chapter II.

⁷³As for example with *Maya*. However, this view is implicit in the theophany of John Scottus Eriugena, as I shall attempt to elucidate in Chapter III.

⁷⁴I am referring here to Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (London, 1960), in which Teilhard writes "... consciousness, in order to be integrated into a world system, necessitates consideration of the existence of a new aspect or dimension in the stuff of the universe", pp. 55-57.

the creation has been given fullest expression in Eastern religion, especially in Advaita Vedanta in which it is central, but also in Mahayana Buddhism, and is often regarded as distinguishing the “Eastern” approach to reality from the “Western” approach.⁷⁵ In fact this East/West distinction is not strictly accurate, as I will endeavour to demonstrate in studies of John Scottus Eriugena and Teilhard de Chardin. Understanding the universe or creation in terms of consciousness is common to both the East and the West. This is not due to any borrowings or assimilations between religious traditions, but rather because the question of consciousness, and different orders, states and modes of consciousness, would appear to be of primary religious concern, perhaps antecedent even to the question of being which springs directly from it.⁷⁶ From the religious perspective the question of consciousness comes first and the question of the nature of the objects of consciousness comes second.

Man’s reflective encounter with the world, then, as with his encounter with the transcendence of God (or with the question of God posed with total commitment), reflects his awareness back upon himself, and in some primary way reveals Man to himself. Does this reflection of his self-presence have a structure? That is to say, is there some pre-interpretive level of this self-awareness, followed only afterwards by an act of interpretation? From whence arises the structure of the initial act of

⁷⁵In the Christian tradition we find two conflicting views of the nature of the world have long been held, that of *creation ex nihilo* on the one hand, which preserves an absolute ontological distinction between God and the world, and *emanation* or *theophany* on the other, which understands creation as the self-manifestation or articulation of the One in plurality. In our studies of Eriugena and Bonaventure we shall see how these opposing views may be reconciled. As a generalisation we may say that the “creationist” view follows the Aristotelian tradition while the “emenationist” view follows the Platonic tradition.

⁷⁶It is perhaps more accurate to say that while philosophy starts with the intellectual question of being, religion starts with the experiential question of consciousness. Ultimately the two questions are inseparable.

interpretation? And what of the world itself? In what sense, if any, is the world something more than a mirror in which man sees himself reflected? What does man know initially over and above the simple “thereness” of the world? Is there an “Edenic” or innocent state of consciousness of Self, God, and World that is at once total yet differentiated, and yet prior to the intellectual acts of analysing, inferring or naming?⁷⁷ These are the kind of ultimate questions that sacred anthropology confronts us with. Can all these questions be brought into some kind of general scheme, derived from a study of religion itself, that will provide us with a comprehensive overview of our subject and a coherent way of discussing it? In the following section I shall attempt to formulate a set of premises upon which such a scheme may be built.

⁷⁷Related to this, but not exactly the same thing, is what Donceel considers to be the basis of phenomenology: “Phenomenology points out that underlying all knowledge, previous to all scientific investigation and to all philosophical reflection, there is a direct, original, spontaneous, prereflective, knowledge of or contact with reality, based ultimately on the fact that each one of us is man-in-the-world. We know that knowledge is, what reality is, what the world is, even before we start to investigate these problems. That primitive, unthematic knowledge is always taken for granted, rarely adverted to. Phenomenology tries to make it thematic, to make us aware of it”. *Philosophical Anthropology*, (New York, 1967), p. 283f.

3. *The premises and scope of sacred anthropology*

So long as you “have” yourself, have yourself as an object, your experience of man is only of a thing among things, the wholeness which is to be grasped is not “there”; only when you are, and nothing else but that, is the wholeness there, and able to be grasped.

Martin Buber

In attempting to formulate the premises and delineate the scope of sacred anthropology we are immediately confronted with the problem of having no established methodology with which to work. So far as I am aware, no methodical study has been made of sacred anthropology setting out its overall scope or place, either within Christian systematic theology or that is inclusive of all religious traditions.

The lack of such a methodology and a clear conception of the scope and concerns of sacred anthropology is plainly evident in the few but generally unsystematic studies that may be consulted.⁷⁸ In the Christian

⁷⁸I include here such works as *A Christian Anthropology* edited by Edward Malatesta (Hertfordshire, 1974), translated from the French *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite* (Paris, 1969), which, although claiming to speak of man within the terms of Christian revelation and arguing that the “theological study of man” contributes to spirituality (p. vii), nevertheless narrows its field of enquiry to man’s relationship with Christ. We discussed Faricy’s remarks earlier from this work. Although this collection of essays offers some interesting specific insights into theological anthropology, it provides no basis for its systematic study.

Similar problems arise with Edmund Hill’s *Being Human: A Biblical Perspective* (London, 1984), also discussed earlier, who sees Christian anthropology as the study of Biblical notions of man and his relation to God. He believes that man has access to adequate knowledge of himself through the academic disciplines (archaeology, psychology, human biology, social anthropology, etc.), but lacks only knowledge of his relation to God, which is accessible only through revelation. Thus for him theological anthropology

tradition, for example, the elaboration of doctrines of human nature appears to have developed only slowly and without uniformity of approach. Thus Vladimir Lossky observes, "For my part, I must admit that until now I have not found what one might call an elaborated doctrine of the human person in patristic theology, alongside its very precise teaching on the divine persons or hypostases".⁷⁹ This deficiency may in part be due to the preoccupation with the divinity of Christ in early Christology in which the nature of the "human" side of Christ is more or less taken as known. Several valuable studies have been made of the anthropology of particular individuals within the Christian tradition,⁸⁰ yet in these no clear line of demarcation has been drawn between the philosophical, sociological, psychological or other anthropological elements and the specifically sacred elements of their anthropological thought.

is not strictly the theological knowledge of man, but rather God revealing Himself to man. Again, Hill offers no basis for a systematic theological anthropology.

Perhaps the real problem with these and similar studies is that they regard, or unconsciously assume, that knowledge of man is objective knowledge, or "objectified" knowledge, whether that knowledge comes from the humanities, the sciences or from revelation.

The fullest outline of a comprehensive Christian anthropology, from a modern perspective and embracing Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox insights, is to be found in Jurgen Moltmann's *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London, 1985), Chapter VIIIff. But even this valuable contribution does not include or come into contact with other religious traditions.

⁷⁹V. Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, (Oxford, 1974), p. 112.

⁸⁰For example, Anna-Stina Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Gregory of Nazianzus*, (Stockholm, 1981); Bernard McGinn, *The Golden Chain: A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Isaac Stella*, (Washington, 1972); Wellemien Otten, *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, (Leiden, 1991); Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, (Copenhagen, 1965); Anton Pegis, *At the Origins of the Thomistic Notion of Man*, (New York, 1963); Robert Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology: A Philosophic Analysis of the Nature of Man*, (New York, 1941).

This lack of a definite demarcation between sacred and other anthropological views of Man is further reflected in a general imprecision of terminology. Thus, one writer will simply use the term anthropology, another psychology, another theological anthropology, another philosophical anthropology. A further difficulty arises from what Christian theology separately calls the “doctrine of man”, which generally concentrates on the ethical condition of man rather than the being of man. It is this confusion that has persuaded me to adopt the term “sacred anthropology” for the present study. The term “theological anthropology”, which at first might seem the most appropriate one to have adopted, is itself somewhat loosely employed and has the further disadvantage of generally being used to designate Christian anthropology alone. Alternative terms that could be applied equally to every religious tradition, such as “religious anthropology” or “spiritual anthropology”, bring other disadvantages of their own. Since I have elected to use “sacred anthropology” to designate strictly the religious understanding of Man, inclusive of every religious tradition, it should be clear that its premises, its scope and its meaning must necessarily be derived from within religion itself. In this study I shall use it to mean the religious interpretation of Man or, better still, the sacred interpretation of Man, as distinct from the anthropological interpretation of religion, with which it should not in any way be confused. This distinction is most important. As I have earlier indicated, the notion of an “anthropological interpretation of religion” is in fact an impossibility, since there is no *given* anthropology with which to interpret religion, and since an anthropology arises with the emergence of religion itself, because it is religion that first calls Man into question, it is the anthropology to which we must resort.

Given this lack of a generally agreed conception of the scope of sacred anthropology, I will here outline the interpretive scheme that informs

the present study. I should emphasise at the outset that this scheme does not amount to a “doctrine” of Man, but is constructed as an interpretive framework that has arisen from reflection on the materials examined in detail in the following chapters of this study. Yet since this scheme has been derived from the study of religious texts, it offers itself simultaneously as an interpretive tool and as an interpretation. It therefore embodies in schematic outline the central thesis I wish to elaborate in this study and the methodology through which I shall attempt to demonstrate that thesis.

This scheme falls under three main headings: (a) Self-knowledge and Being; (b) Self-knowledge and Self-transcendence; (c) Self-knowledge and Nonduality. Let us examine each of these in turn.

A. Self-knowledge and Being

All religions postulate the three fundamentals, the world, the soul and God. The one Reality alone manifests Itself as the three. One can say “the three are indeed three” only while the ego lasts. Therefore to inhere in one’s own Being, where the ‘I’, the ego, is dead, is the perfect state.

Sri Ramana Maharshi

Taking Man’s self-knowledge as our starting-point, we may discern three premises that underlie religious speculation about Man. Put tersely, these may be formulated as: 1. *In order to know God Man must know himself.* 2. *In order to know himself Man must know the world.* 3. *In order to know the world Man must know the unity of God, world and self.*

From the first premise we may discern the soteriological necessity of self-knowledge. From the second premise we discern the soteriological necessity of participation in creation. From the third premises we may discern the soteriological necessity of union.

To clarify these. We may say that Man experiences himself in three primary ways: (a) as a self (using this word broadly in the sense of “autonomous person” for the moment), (b) as a participant in the creation, and (c) as grounded in, or open to, God. Religion, I propose, is ultimately concerned with the full actualisation and unification of these three modes of self-experience. Let us examine each of these propositions in turn and draw out their meaning and implications.

(a) The necessity of self-knowledge. Man’s experience of himself as an autonomous person arises through his power of self-reflection, as we have already observed. Man knows he is a being, yet he is also a being endowed with the capacity to examine the mystery of his being, to pose the ontological question. Through this capacity of self-reflection he may reflect upon the universal question of being. As a “centred” being, a being aware of being, he is open to the being of other beings and able to reflect upon the relationships of being. As an individual he knows, however, that his own being has a hidden depth that has yet to be actualised and brought into full self-consciousness. Self-reflection is at once the capacity to know himself as well as the capacity to know that he does not know himself. Initial self-awareness, the immediate sense of the proximity of being, contains within itself the seed of a demand for fuller self-knowledge. The actualisation of this fuller self-knowledge is possible only through participation.

(b) The necessity of participation. The characteristic of participation is the capacity to engage in that which man, as an autonomous or self-conscious

being, stands distinct from and over against, that is, all that is other than or beside himself. Man's participation in the creation manifests itself on three broad yet quite distinct levels or realms: (1) environment, (2) world, (3) totality. Within each of these realms specific demands are made upon his actualisation of himself.

(1) In the first and most rudimentary realm, that of environment or the given physical conditions that sustain man as a species, participation in the creation is the least conscious or least "reflective" and least demanding of the three realms in which man may engage. Environment demands only that man acts and interacts with reality simply in order to survive. He shares this rudimentary level of participation with every living creature, even though man has his own particular environment just as every other creature does. Hence at this level the "demand to be" manifests primarily as or through instinct, which exhibits itself positively as the desire to live, and negatively as the threat of death. The knowledge of the threat of physical death does not belong to man's religious consciousness, as has often been claimed, but is shared by him with all other animals. Hence, at this level man is obliged to encounter himself, in common with the animal kingdom generally, through the barest necessity and the least reflectively. He must *respond* to his environment in order to be. On this point I am following Tillich:

All beings have an environment which is their environment. Not everything that can be found-in the space in which an animal lives belongs to its environment. Its environment consists in those things with which it has an active interrelation. Different beings within the same limited space have different environments. Each being has an environment, although it belongs to its environment. The mistake of all theories which explain the behaviour of a being in terms of

environment alone is that they fail to explain the special character of the environment in terms of the special character of the being which has such an environment. Self and environment determine each other. Because man has an ego-self, he transcends every possible environment.⁸¹

(2) In the second or social realm, the realm in which man emerges as a self-reflective being (as distinct from an instinctual being at the level of environment), participation in the creation demands that man acts within and on behalf of the community of man, as a self-conscious being among other self-conscious beings, so that through conscious interdependence there opens to him the possibility of nurturing his own individual potentialities as well as the collective potentialities of mankind as a whole. Here man is disclosed to himself through the actualisation of his talents and the realisation of his interdependent functions. While at the level of environment self and environment determine each other, the social realm opens man to his potentialities, and so with interdependence (as opposed to dependence on the environmental level) comes a measure of the freedom to be. It is at this level that we may properly speak of man as participating in a “world”,⁸² (as distinct from an environment), that is, in a coherently

⁸¹Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, (London, 1988), Vol. 1, p. 170.

⁸² Again I am following Tillich in this use of the term “world”: “As the Greek *kosmos* and the Latin *universum* indicate, ‘world’ is a structure or unity of manifoldness. If we say that man has a world at which he looks, from which he is separated and to which he belongs, we think of a structured whole even though we may describe this world in pluralistic terms. The whole opposite man is *one* at least in this respect, that it is related to us perspectively, however discontinuous it may be in itself. . . The world is the structured whole which includes and transcends all environments, not only those of beings which lack a fully developed self, but also the environments in which man partially lives. . . Language, as the power of universals, is the basic expression of man’s transcending his environment, of having a world.” *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 170.

structured realm in which he *psychically* participates and co-operates. It is therefore quite wrong to call this social realm man's environment. Environment and community are both natural to man, but whereas his environment is given, community is determined by him and may be reshaped by him. Again, it is only at the level of society that we make speak of the "individual", as a centred "unity of being", and it is only as a unified particular being that he seeks communion with every other centred being. As Josef Pieper observes:

...in the tradition of Western philosophy, the capacity for spiritual knowledge has always been understood to mean the power of establishing relations with the whole of reality, with all things existing.⁸³

With community comes the demand to "be with", and with this demand to be with also comes the threat of psychological isolation. That is to say, through a possible failure of community to fully actualise itself and embrace and integrate all its members, or through a possible failure of the individual to extend himself and fully embrace and integrate with community, there arises the threat of psychological death. To participate in

These concepts have been more fully worked out by Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, New York, 1958, and *The Knowledge of Man*, New York, 1960. For a careful study of these see Robert E. Wood, *Martin Buber's Ontology*, Evanston, 1969, and also Michael Theunissen, *The Other: Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber*, London, 1986.

⁸³ Josef Pieper, *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, London, *mcmlii*, p. 114. In the same essay he also writes: "The spiritual soul, Aquinas says, in his consideration of truth, is meant to fit in with all being . . . 'Every other being takes only a limited part in being', whereas the spiritual being is 'capable of grasping the whole of being'. And 'because there is spirit, it is possible for the perfection of the whole of being to exist in one being'. p. 115

society does not mean, however, to be absorbed into it. Properly speaking, a society is composed of individuals sufficiently centred or “whole” in themselves as to be able to engage in that which is outside themselves without losing themselves in it. That is to say, man is individuated or “centred” in himself *through* all the processes of shared labour, socialisation and of culture. There is a natural proportion between the capacity for self-reflection and the capacity for participation. This again distinguishes the social realm from the environmental realm. This is most clearly evidenced by society being characterised by speech or language, and it may properly be called the level of discourse or dialogue, in which man is disclosed to himself through interdependent individuation through speech and thought. Speech is fundamentally an expression of self-reflection raised to the capacity for participation. It follows, then, that at this level he must *communicate* in order to be.

These observations, at least up to this point, may be seen in philosophical terms as Dasein as Heidegger presents it:

World exists - that is, it is - only if Dasein exists, only if there is Dasein. Only if world is there, if Dasein exists as being-in-the-world, is there understanding of being, and only if this understanding exists are intraworldly beings unveiled as extant and handy. World-understanding as Dasein-understanding is self-understanding. Self and world belong together in the single entity, the Dasein. Self and world are not two beings, like subject and object, or like I and thou, but self and world are the basic determination of the Dasein itself in the unity of the structure of being-in-the-world. Only because the "subject" is determined by being-in-the-world can it become, as this self, a thou for another. Only because I am an existent self am I a possible thou for another as self. The basic condition for the possibility of the self's

being a possible thou in being-with others is based on the circumstance that the Dasein as the self that it is, is such that it exists as being-in-the-world. For "thou" means "you who are with me in a world." If the I-thou relationship represents a distinctive existence relationship, this cannot be recognised existentially, hence philosophically, as long as it is not asked what existence in general means. But being-in-the-world belongs to existence. That the being which exists in this way is occupied in its being with its ability to be - this selfhood is the ontological presupposition for the selflessness in which every Dasein comports itself toward the other in the existent I-thou relationship. Self and world belong together in the unity of the basic constitution of the Dasein, the unity of being-in-the-world. This is the condition of possibility for understanding the other Dasein and intraworldly beings in particular. The possibility of understanding the being of intraworldly beings, as well as the possibility of understanding the Dasein itself, is possible only on the basis of being-in-the-world.⁸⁴

(c) *The necessity of union.* (3) Third, at the spiritual level, participation in the creation demands that man knows the Ground of Being as it is common to all beings. That is to say, he must participate in the universal Being that is uniquely articulated in every particular being, including himself. This spiritual demand is experienced initially through man's awareness of his existential finitude over against the universality of being throughout creation. Hence, with this initial consciousness of universal Being comes the threat of nonbeing, which is overcome by self-knowledge through conscious unity with the Ground of Being. Put another way and on a higher level,

⁸⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Indianapolis, 1988, p. 297 - 298.

through his existential situation man meets God through his immanence, as the universal ground of all being, and from this arises the soteriological demand made upon him as a being in existence to transcend his individual finitude - his "mortality" - and know the source and "totality" of all being. Hence, at this level, he must *unite* in order to be. That is, he must unite with Absolute Being in order to fully know his own particular being. This, in parenthesis, is the ontological basis of religious ethics, as distinct from the collective and juridical basis of civil or philosophical ethics.⁸⁵

Man's consciousness of existence, therefore, extends in three distinct and precisely discernible directions: *inwardly*, potentially embracing the self in its totality; *outwardly*, potentially embracing the creation in its totality; and *vertically* towards God, potentially embracing Being Itself in its totality. These three directions of consciousness belong together, are embraced in self-reflection and, fully extended, they encompass the realm of the sacred. Hence we may say that religion is primarily and characteristically concerned with, or arises out of, the essential and existential relationships between

⁸⁵ See Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, London, 1974. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur also draws a distinction between the spheres of moral philosophy and religious ethics: "For example," he says, "the problem of conscience, of guilt and so on: its quite different to speak of guilt in philosophical terms, in relation to the law and so on, and to speak of oneself as a sinner. That belongs to a different way not only of speaking but of living, which belongs to an economy of gift - a religion of existence and action and thinking and speaking where the basic notion is a logic of superabundance. I receive more than I give under this logic, the gift of love. I never use the term 'love' in philosophy. Love belongs, for me, to another region of experience.

I should add a word on that. The highest concept in moral philosophy is justice. And justice relies on reciprocity. It is a law of equivalence. In penal law, the equivalence is between crime and punishment. All civil laws are finally related to exchanges and then we have to find an equivalence in exchanges. But love does not follow the law of equivalence, but this asymmetry of superabundance. And we should not mix the two things. And in this way, Heidegger is right, because it is not part of philosophy to speak of love. It's the poetry of life." *Talking Liberties*, Channel 4 Television, 1992.

God, Creation, and Man. More exactly and fundamentally, from the soteriological perspective, it is concerned with resolving the ontological problem posed by these three realms of being appearing, once self-reflection dawns, separate or to stand over against one another as discrete and mutually exclusive realms of being.

Taken together, then, these three premises of sacred anthropology indicate that man cannot *be* himself while remaining in ignorance of himself. Being and self-knowledge are mutual and reciprocal. They disclose and articulate one another. And if the ground of man's particular being is ultimately Absolute Being, it follows that in order to know himself man must know God. Yet the individual's self-consciousness as a particular being cannot be wholly realised without participation in the dialogue of community, since participation in community demands that the self-conscious self becomes able to participate with other self-conscious selves in a mutually conceived world. Hence participation in community mutually individuates. The simple everyday fact of the division of labour in any community demonstrates this principle. If there is no community, then there is no division of labour and vice versa. This principle holds at every level of communal endeavour, extending from the level of unskilled labour to the highest flowering of culture. We may say, then, that community exists through integrated differentiation of human functions. "Unity differentiates", as Teilhard de Chardin observes,⁸⁶ hence community individuates. Yet the fullness with which an individual participates in the totality of community depends, in turn, upon the depth of his self-knowledge. To be Man in the fullest human sense means participation in the

⁸⁶ On this principle of nature see Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, where it is foundation to his whole thesis of evolution towards complexity and higher orders of consciousness.

totality of humanity.⁸⁷ Yet participation in the totality of humanity demands, in its turn, participation in the creation in its totality. Full participation in the creation means, finally and at its full term, participation in Being Itself. According to Karl Rahner this tripartite relation of Self, World, and Absolute as the ground of a metaphysics of being is to be found at the core of Aquinas's metaphysics:

Insofar as we ask about the world known by man, the world and the man asking are already placed in question all the way back to their absolute ground, to a ground which always lies beyond the boundaries within man's grasp, beyond the world. Thus every venture into the world shows itself to be borne by the ultimate desire of the spirit for absolute being; every entrance into sensibility, into the world and its destiny, shows itself to be only the coming to be of a spirit which is striving towards the absolute.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ This conception runs counter to the "individualistic" understanding of the religious quest, in which salvation or liberation or enlightenment is seen in terms of the isolated person's attainment. It is an idea we shall return to in our discussion of Teilhard de Chardin.

⁸⁸ Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, London, 1989, p. 407.

4. Self-knowledge and Self-transcendence

When the free spirit has attained true detachment, it compels God to its being; and if the free spirit could attain formlessness, and be without all accidents, it would take on God's properties. But this God can give to none but to himself; therefore God cannot do more for the spirit that has attained detachment than to give himself to it.

Meister Eckhart

In the analysis so far I have emphasised the primacy of being. Yet it is clear that this structure of self-knowledge through participation also has its own epistemology and its own teleology, as well as an ontological structure. Being, knowing, and telos belong together.

I have already suggested that being and self-knowledge mutually articulate one another, yet the simple fact that, in ordinary human experience, full self-knowledge and full actualisation of being are not given, yet that every being resists nonbeing absolutely, indicates that they have an innate tendency or telos to actualisation. The root of this tendency is as inaccessible to objective analysis as is self-awareness itself. In religious literature it is described in many different ways. Two fundamental ways of looking at the teleological or dynamic property of being will concern us in this study: the impetus to self-transcendence, and the inclination to unity.

The being of the self is not static but is simultaneous with the act of knowing itself. Yet through the act of self-knowing being remains itself. It fulfils itself in knowing itself, and knows itself in fulfilling itself. This circular motion of being and self-knowledge is the dynamic property of

being even while it is at rest with itself. It is discernible in the transcendent or “original” state of being that Eckhart speaks of when he says: “the only truth in which I rejoiced was in the knowledge of myself. Then it was myself I wanted and nothing else. What I wanted I was, and what I was I wanted”.⁸⁹

Yet as a being in relation to the world and in communion with other beings, man is impelled to be himself in overcoming his finite existence, through “being towards” as Heidegger describes it,⁹⁰ and this he does through self-transcendence. Thus, prior even to every external constraint, every human being desires to be free from any inner constraint or limitations to his interaction with the world. He conserves his being through actualising its potential. As an example of self-transcendence which conserves being Tillich cites the ordinary process of individual growth: “Inhibition of growth ultimately destroys the being which does not grow”.⁹¹ Every process of growth, development or actualisation involves an act of becoming, and becoming belongs to the teleological or dynamic structure of being and cannot be separated from being in itself, and so, Tillich says:

... it is impossible to speak of being without also speaking of becoming. Becoming is just as genuine in the structure of being as is that which remains unchanged in the process of becoming.⁹²

Growth and becoming are therefore the dynamic aspects of individuation through self-transcendence. The impetus to individuation through self-

⁸⁹ *Sermon 52*, trans. Edmund Colledge & Bernard McGinn, London, 1981.

⁹⁰ *Being and Time*, pp. 83-84 (H. 57-58).

⁹¹ *Systematic Theology 1*, p. 181.

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 181.

transcendence is complimented by the inclination to unite all being in the self, or to unite the self in the totality of all being. This inclination is, so to speak, the opposite pole to personal individuation, in which the centred self seeks universalisation. The tension between the polarities of individuation and universalisation represents a further expression of the dynamic or teleological aspect of being. At its highest, this is union with the ground of Being Itself. It is the coincidence of Self, World, and God. This coincidence of Self, World and God is one of the central themes of the *Upanishads* and is the foundation of Sankara's Advaita Vedanta:

He who has realised and ultimately known the Self . . . is the maker of the universe, for he is the maker of all, all is his Self, and he is indeed the Self of all.⁹³

It is not unique to Hinduism, however. The universalisation of the self is misunderstood if it is not seen in complementarity with self-transcendence. Thus, John of the Cross says, "In order to arrive at being everything, desire to be nothing",⁹⁴ and Eckhart likewise says, "Become pure till you neither are nor have either this or that; then you are omnipresent and, being neither this nor that, are all things".⁹⁵ Nor should this universalisation of the self be comprehended strictly in terms of withdrawal of consciousness from the world, that is, strictly in terms of the *via negativa*. To be "neither this nor that" signifies self-transcendence in any of the three directions of consciousness. Thus, total consciousness of the world, total consciousness of the self, and total consciousness of God

⁹³ *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad, IV. iv. 13*, Calcutta, 1965.

⁹⁴ Quoted from David Loy, *Nonduality*, New Haven and London, 1988, p. 203, source not given.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 103, source not given.

each “arrive at being everything”. Self-transcendence involves going beyond the normal field of consciousness towards a more *inclusive* and *unitive* consciousness.

One way in which we can look at the dynamic property or teleological aspect of being is through its stages of unfoldment through the maturation of self-reflection. We may discern various models or interpretations of the stages of self-reflection or self-consciousness in mystical literature, each of which is characterised by a movement that at once conserves being and yet transcends being. These may be broadly summarised into four types, or modes, or stages of self-reflection in the following way:⁹⁶

4. Supra-self-consciousness
3. Integrated Self-consciousness
2. Ego-consciousness
1. Unreflective Consciousness

At the first level we have what may be described as instinctual pre-self-consciousness, in which the subject acts autonomously from its wants without any reflective or consciously conceptual grasp of the distinction between self and other. Here everything in the field of awareness is identified with indiscriminately, or “reality” is reduced to a one-dimensional

⁹⁶ I would stress that these four stages of self-reflection are types of *self-consciousness*, as distinct from the various typologies of levels of consciousness to be found in studies of mysticism or in transpersonal psychology. I have purposely avoided these usual classifications and their terminologies so as to avoid the confusions I believe they lead to. The four levels of self-reflection offered here are derived from a careful study of the primary texts to be studied in detail in the following chapters and the terms used are deliberately neutral so that they apply equally to Western and Eastern religious traditions as well as to philosophical ontology.

or undifferentiated monism.⁹⁷ This level can, of course, be posited only theoretically since any experience of it would bring it into the realm of reflective consciousness. There is some evidence, however, that autistic persons assume that whatever is in their own field of awareness is in that of any other person. They have no notion of the individual view-point of different people's consciousness. Again, theoretically, this would be a type of solipsism.

At the second level we have what might be described as mediate self-consciousness, in which thoughts and actions are centred in an ego or self-image created from experience. Here there is a conceptual grasp of the distinction between self and other and a conceptual framework of relationship, but these are both egoically centred and structured. They revolve, as it were, around the ego. The "other" is not conceived as existing, at this level, in its own right, but only as instrumental (or obstructive) to the ego or self-image, only as meaningful or not meaningful to the ego. Also it still contains elements of the first level, such as identification with the body⁹⁸ and traces of autism or solipsism. Thus, both the "inner" and the "outer" distinctions between self and organism as well as between self and other are here only partially realised.

At the third level we have integrated self-consciousness, in which the autonomy of the "other" is recognised and an objective structure of reality, as a coherent cosmos in which and with which the subject participates, is discerned. Here thought and action are harmonious with the needs of self and the demands of the world. It is the level of "conscience" in its original non-moral sense. Further, it is the level of self-reflection in which the "self"

⁹⁷ For an explanation of this use of the term "monism" see the following section.

⁹⁸ Identification with the body as the "self" is the most frequent example given by Sankara of ignorance of the real nature of consciousness.

may come into question, and where it is observable that the ego or self-image is constructed through association or identification with acquired characteristics. A particular feature of this level is an awareness of the irresolvable dichotomy or duality between subject and object. The capacity to reflect upon the subject with equanimity and detachment, for oneself and for every self - the capacity to pose the ontological question - opens the way here to the next level.

At the fourth level we have supra-self-consciousness, in which the personal ego or self-image is transcended and undivided self-presence is ultra-centred in God. Here the self does “arrive at being everything” by “being neither this nor that”. The conceptual categories of “self” and “other” that belong to the previous level are here seen to be differentiated forms or expressions of one absolute or universal presence. They are not negated but rather superseded by a wholly different order of consciousness that is centred everywhere simultaneously. This fourth level of reflective consciousness is the one that many mystics have reported. It must, however, be carefully distinguished from the first level in which there is no reflection and a false unity with everything in the field of awareness.⁹⁹

These four stages represent a dynamic movement from unreflective monism, or of indiscriminate identification, through reflective differentiation, to supra-reflective unification. The dynamic telos of being manifest in these stages of self-reflection is an inward and an outward movement of consciousness simultaneously, and this culminates in a movement of self-transcendence and unification. Each level of self-consciousness is correlative with a “world-view” that belongs to it and from which it is

⁹⁹ It would appear that C. G. Jung regarded the unitive experience of the Indian mystics as a “regress” to this first level of consciousness. Teilhard de Chardin, as we shall see later, was also critical of the “Eastern road” to undifferentiated unity, though on quite different grounds.

inseparable. At each level of self-reflection the sense of selfhood is received from the realm it is able to observe and participate in. Thus, although the movement through the stages of self-reflection is a movement into deeper subjectivity, it is also a movement into different orders of relationship with the other - with the Universe and with God. The impetus to self-transcendence and the inclination to unity are two sides of one movement. Thus, the discontinuity between the levels is signified outwardly in different epistemologies of the Universe and God as well as the Self, and so there are, so to speak, different “ontologies”, “cosmologies” and “theologies” corresponding with each level. It is also evident that a lower level cannot comprehend the levels above it, although the higher levels can comprehend those below. If this were not so the mystics and religious teachers could not indicate the way from one level to another. Hence each ascending level, though structurally discontinuous with the level below it - because it has transcended it, not merely extended it - comprehends or contains the lower levels. It would appear that the highest order of consciousness is ontologically prior to the lower levels and that the lower levels are forms of “diminished” consciousness, rather than “foundations” out of which the higher levels develop. This is certainly how Advaita Vedanta sees it.

Since a dichotomy is commonly assumed to exist between the “inward” or extrovertive and “outward” or extrovertive mystical ways, while we have just observed that they are simultaneous, it is worth noting here what Loy says about this:

Western mystical experience is too often classified into two parallel types: the “inward way” of withdrawal from the world and the “outward way” of merging into the One. For example, Rudolph Otto, in his comparative study *Mysticism East and West*, emphasised the

divergence between the mysticism of introspection and that of unifying vision and commented that “to the non-mystic their extreme difference is striking.” Yet he concluded his book on those two types by acknowledging that for the mystic there is no such duality, although Otto himself was unable to go beyond “the contrast between inward and outward.”¹⁰⁰

The notion of a “contrast between the inward and outward” ways arises, I would suggest, through supposing that the mystic is moving towards two static and ontologically discrete or independent realities - the self and the All - while in fact he is moving from one *mode of perceiving being* to another, which itself involves a transformation of being and, as we have just seen, these ways of seeing being each have different epistemological structures, that is to say, different ways of seeing that correspond with different ways of being. The distinction between the inward and outward way is also founded upon the notion of an ultimate distinction between the subject and the object, in that they are considered to be different “objects” of knowledge. Being, as we have already observed, cannot be an object of knowledge.¹⁰¹ Further, since each higher level of self-reflection is correlative with a higher and more unified world-view, and since the impetus towards self-transcendence and the inclination towards unity are two sides of a single act or movement, there is no conflict between the outer and inner ways. They are two sides or aspects of one way. It is because the dynamic or teleological aspect of being is left out of account, because being is considered to be static and “becoming” is regarded as not

¹⁰⁰ David Loy, *Nonduality*, pp. 210-211.

¹⁰¹ That “being” can never be an object of knowledge is one of the foundational premises of Heidegger’s ontology, since being precedes and is the necessarily given prior to objective apprehension. See *Being and Time*, London, 1988.

belonging to the primary structure of being, that this problem of the inner and outer ways arises. As we shall see later in our studies of Bonaventure and Teilhard de Chardin, the mystics do not approach the question of being with a static ontology.

There is in mystical literature generally an anomalous coincidence of complete self-transcendence and “naked” self-presence, and between transcending consciousness of the particular and consciousness of all in its totality. These anomalies bring us to the question of self-knowledge and Nonduality.

C. Self-knowledge and Nonduality

The yogi endowed with complete enlightenment sees, through the eye of knowledge, the entire universe in his own Self and regards everything as the Self and nothing else.

Sri Sankaracharya

It is evident from our analysis so far that the religious question of human nature is concerned with the ultimate ontological, epistemological and teleological relations (or relatedness) between Self, World, and God. A naive interpretation of their coexistence will simply conceive each of them as discrete and autonomous entities. But once the question of their ultimate relationships to one another is raised, then all notions of their separate autonomy come into doubt. And once their separate autonomy comes into doubt, then the question of being is inevitably raised, since being was implicitly presumed to be the full and autonomous possession of each. If

being is regarded as the full possession of each - being as *causa sui* - then how can there be relationships between them? Or in what sense can the same term “being” be applied uniformly to each?

Christian theology says that God creates the world and man. But as Heidegger points out:

The Being which belongs to one of these entities is “infinitely” different from that which belongs to the other; yet we still consider creation and creator alike as entities. We are thus using “Being” in so wide a sense that its meaning embraces an “infinite” difference.¹⁰²

The concepts “creator” and “creature”, although describing a causal relation between God and Creation, throw no light on their ontological relations. All too easily, however, a scheme of causality can be confused with a scheme of ontology, as though the two terms were virtually synonymous. To speak of creation in terms of dependent being, derived being, participated being, or of conditioned origination, as opposed to self-caused being, still throws no light upon the nature of Being itself. This is of course Heidegger’s point. Can we rightly speak of “degrees” of being at all? Are there “shades” of being between Being and Nonbeing? Is not Being an

¹⁰² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 125 (H. 92).

“either or”?¹⁰³ Or does the Buddhist criticism of the naive conception of the polarity Being/Nonbeing offer a way forward?¹⁰⁴

A clue to the answer to these questions lies, I suggest, not in the question of the polarity of being and nonbeing, but in the dual manner in which being itself is commonly conceived. It is, as Heidegger suggests, the initial supposition that Being is “self-evident” that needs to be examined.

... it is held that ‘Being’ is of all concepts the one that is self-evident. Whenever one cognizes anything or makes an assertion, whenever one comports oneself towards entities, even towards oneself, some use is made of ‘Being’; and this expression is held to be intelligible ‘without further ado’.¹⁰⁵

For being appears to be wholly possessed by each being and wholly possessed by the totality of all, and is in both cases fully autonomous. Thus,

¹⁰³ For an excellent critical discussion of the traditional distinction between God as “Absolute being” and the problems this raises for regarding the creation in terms of “finite being” see Langdon Gilkey “Creation, Being, and Nonbeing” in *God and Creation*, edited by D. B. Burrell and Bernard McGinn. Indiana, 1990.

¹⁰⁴ The four extremes, or *koti*, are expounded by Nagarjuna in his *The Maha-Prajnaparamati-Sastras*, an excellent study of which has been made by K. Venkata Ramanan in *Nagarjuna’s Philosophy*, Delhi, 1987, in which he gives the following summary: “It may be noted that there are two or three ways of formulating the four *kotis*: (A) existence (*asti, bhava, sat*), non-existence (*nasti, abhava, asat*), both (*sadasat, bhavabhava*), neither-nor (*naisti, na ca nasti*); (B) self (*sva*), other (*para*), both (*ubhaya*) and neither-nor (*anubhaya*); one (*eka*) many (*nana*), both (*ubhaya*) and neither-nor (*anubhaya*); identical (*tat*) different (*anyat*), both (*ubhaya*) and neither-nor (*anubhaya*); and (C) self (*sva*), other (*para*), both (*ubhaya*), and chance or devoid of reason (*ahetuka*). What these *kotis* deny and what their rejection reveals in the conditioned origination of things.” p. 155.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 23 (H. 4).

the apparent dual nature of reality as a whole (and therefore of being as such since it “embraces an infinite difference”) is a primary concern of religion. The realm of being, even when taken as a whole, is characteristically divided - and intellectually is necessarily so divided - into three spheres of being which appear whole in themselves: God, the Universe, and the Self. This plural appearance of reality or of being may be formulated into what I shall term in this study the Three Primary Dualities:

THE THREE PRIMARY DUALITIES

1. Universe/God (It/Thou duality)
2. God/Self (Thou/I duality)
3. Self/Universe (I/It duality)

Each of these pairs, or dualities, represents a primary field of religious (or philosophical) enquiry into which all fundamental questions of essential or existential relations may be reduced. Thus from the first pair arise the various doctrines of creation, from the second pair the various doctrines of salvation, and from the third pair the various doctrines of right action. All these different doctrines, no matter how they are formulated or what their variations in the different religious traditions, are founded upon some notion of ontological relationship (or non-relationship) between each pair which assumes either (a) an absolute discontinuity of being between them, (b) a dependent relationship of being between them, or (c) an ultimate unity or nonduality of being between them. It is worth examining each of these in some detail.

(a) The first of these, which envisages an absolute discontinuity of being between each pair, we might call “distinctionism” or “autonomism” or “atomism”, which in its most radical form would assert absolute autonomy

or self-determination for every entity or being, conceiving each as originating and terminating in itself for itself, and deny any kind of relationship (ontological, epistemological, or teleological) between them. They would not even occupy the same universe, for the very concept “universe” would be alien and unknowable to such autonomism. As far as I am aware, no such philosophy of absolute non-relationship or distinctionism has ever been developed,¹⁰⁶ although any philosophy, sociology or metaphysics that proposes radical individualism tends in this direction and should, if it would remain fully self-consistent, follow the logic of autonomism through to its ultimate theoretical conclusion of absolute isolationism. Such absolute pluralism, although theoretically conceivable, would be very difficult to sustain to its logical conclusion since the absolute autonomy of each being would ultimately impinge upon that of every other being. Some type of relational being would need to be envisaged even in an ontology of absolute isolationism.

(b) Of the second, which conceives being in terms of dependent relationship or causality, there are obviously numerous instances, all of which are dualistic in one way or another. These are perhaps summed up in Aquinas’s “five ways” of inferring that God exists, in which every change, every cause, every necessity, every good, and every goal of things may be traced back to God.¹⁰⁷ Although providing a coherence to the multiplicity

¹⁰⁶ I include atomism here, which is not a theory of autonomous entities but a theory, or group of theories, of the smallest indivisible constituents of entities. For an excellent study of the history of atomism see Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum*, London, 1983, Chapter 22. The only doctrine that seems to come close to the notion of autonomous identity for every being is that found in *Sankhy Yoga*, one of the six orthodox philosophies of Hinduism, according to which “there are as many souls and units of consciousness (purushas) as there are living beings,” as it is described in *The Rider Encyclopaedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion*, London 1968. See also Loy, *Nonduality*, p. 190.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a. 3.

of beings, the inadequacy of the causal model of ontological relationship is that it inevitably reduces every particular being to the status an “effect” and allows no scope for intersubjective relationship between beings whole in themselves, and no mutual reciprocity between either Being and being or between beings with beings. At the same time, the causality model “objectifies” the question of Being and so, in its initial move, places being in the sphere of objects, while in fact it belongs to the sphere of subjectivity. But perhaps the most incisive religious criticism of the concept of the causal model of being is to be found in the *Madhyamakakarika* of Nagarjuna, in which he shows that the concept of causality has no intelligible place in a metaphysics of being. This is not to deny that, at the empirical level, the concept of cause and effect has no place, only that it is entirely misplaced when applied to ontology. Similarly, although perhaps less radically, the Hindu concept of *samsara* accounts for the plane of cause and effect but regards that plane as existing within the creation and as one of the distinguishing properties of creation. But neither God (*Brahman*) nor the Self (*Atman*) are considered as caused in any way, but rather as self-subsistent. Self-subsistence is a primary characteristic of Vedantic ontology. This is why, in the present study, we shall adhere to the “theophanic” model of creation, as a legitimate *sacred* model, in preference to the causal model which has its roots in the empirical investigation of things.

(c) The third, which recognises an ultimate unity or nonduality between Absolute, Universe, and Self, is the one that principally concerns us in the present study. Nonduality, however, is generally considered to be an Eastern concept quite alien to Western philosophy and theology. I wish to call this general assumption into doubt. There is much in Western mystical literature and philosophy that may be fruitfully discussed from a nondual perspective, from Plotinus to Teilhard de Chardin, although nondualism needs to be carefully clarified before this may be done. In the present study,

as suggested earlier, I shall adopt the metaphysical notion of nonduality as a universal religious conception, that is, as a primary religious paradigm which belongs to no one religious tradition exclusively, although it is most fully elaborated in the Advaita Vedanta of Sankara, which attempts to explain or grasp the ultimate unity of all things. But this requires, as I have just said, that we clarify its proper meaning and discard the frequent misinterpretations that are to be found of it.

Here I wish, first, to make a distinction between Nonduality and Monism, since the two terms are often regarded as equivalent. Nonduality, as taught by Sankara and the Advaita school of philosophy generally, is the doctrine that holds that all is ultimately God (*Brahman*), while Monism is the doctrine that holds that all is reducible to a single category of reality. Although, on the face of it, these two concepts appear similar, they are not at all the same thing. Since Vedantic Nonduality (Advaita Vedanta) is often termed Monism, this distinction is important.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ In his paper "Theism and Divine Production in Ancient Realist Theology" (*God and Creation* op. cite) John Kenney draws attention to the often vague use of the terms "theism", "pantheism", and "monism" and calls for a more responsible use of these terms (pp. 58-59). In a footnote (3) he writes "Pantheism might be construed as the thesis that everything is divine; monism as the view that there is only one reality, so that all multiplicity is illusory". Neither of these definitions seem entirely satisfactory. This definition of monism, in particular, does not in my view cover its full range of meaning. For example, materialism is strictly speaking a monism, yet it would not regard the multiple forms of matter as illusory. The definition could, on the other hand, be perfectly applied to solipsism. Nondualism, which is often referred to as monism, does assert that all multiplicity is illusory, but it asserts this only in the sense that there are ultimately no *separate* or *multiple* realities. It denies only that the *appearance* of reality as separate entities is a true view of reality. In Advaita Vedanta *Brahman* is spoken of as taking on the appearance of multiplicity and diversity (*Saguna Brahman*), as the creation, without, however, ceasing to be One (*Nirguna Brahman*). The One and the multiple are therefore regarded as ultimately identical although they actually do appear to the mind as conceptually separate. Nonduality therefore understands that the One and the multiple are really the same as each other, not that the One exists and not the

As I shall make clear exactly what is meant by Nonduality in Chapter 2, I shall here remark only that Nondualism asserts that all multiplicity is illusory only in the sense that there are no ultimately separate or ontologically independent realities. Nonduality denies only the *ultimacy* of the *appearance* of separation. Thus, in Advaita Vedanta it is understood that Brahman takes on the “appearance” of multiplicity (*Saguna Brahman*) without actually ceasing to be the One (*Nirguna Brahman*). Thus, the One and the multiple are conceived to be ultimately identical although they actually do appear as separate. Nonduality therefore understands that the One and the multiple are really the same as each other, not that the One exists and that the multiple does not. The One is deemed to be the real nature of the multiple, while the multiple is deemed to be the detailed self-expression of the One.¹⁰⁹ Neither negates the other.

By contrast with this, Monism may be understood as reduction or conflation of one pole of a duality into the other. In a monism the presumed ultimacy of one pole wholly negates the presumed contingency of the other pole by negating it into itself. Solipsism is an example of such a monism. Nonduality, on the other hand, holds that either pole is equally and essentially real, and that dualism is the assumption of an *unreal difference* or distinction between them, owing to a misconception about the true nature of reality. This false assumption arises, according the Advaita Vedanta, through attributing ultimacy to the distinctions, which are in fact only qualifications in manifestation or in perception. An obvious example of

multiple. It is true, however, that some Vedantists do appear to reduce the multiple into the One. But the real purport of even these texts remains that the multiple *is* the One and the One *is* the multiple. Hence the negative term “nonduality” (*Advaita*) as opposed to the term “monism”. It is in this more complex sense that I shall use the term “nonduality” and distinguish it from the term “monism”.

¹⁰⁹ See for example the *Hymn of Creation* in the *Rig Veda*.

Nonduality from the Christian tradition, although it is not usually spoken of in these terms, is the doctrine of God's transcendence and immanence, which understands that God is at once wholly transcendent and wholly immanent, and that for God in Himself there is no distinction whatsoever between His transcendence and His immanence. Yet many theologians in Christian history, unable to grasp the difficulties of this doctrine and fearing it is in some sense pantheistic, have argued that God's total transcendence, to which they give priority and regard as alone ultimate, makes His total immanence unfeasible. This difficulty lies at the heart of the problem of Docetism. Later, in our study of Bonaventure, we shall examine the concept of Nonduality in relation to the more familiar Western conception of *coincidentia oppositorum*, while in our study of John Scottus Eriugena we shall see how nonduality is expressed in his understanding of theophany. I hope to show that Nonduality is a far subtler concept than is usually supposed when it is called Monism.

Returning to the three Primary Dualities, we may observe that each of these may be falsely "resolved" by reducing them into either one of their polarities. These false reductions create a total of six possible monisms:

THE SIX FALSE REDUCTIONS

1. Reduction of Universe into Absolute (Theistic Idealism)
2. Reduction of Absolute into Universe (Pantheism)
3. Reduction of Absolute into Self (Radical Existentialism)
4. Reduction of Self into Absolute (Radical Essentialism)
5. Reduction of Self into Universe (Materialism)
6. Reduction of Universe into Self (Solipsism)

The bracketed designations that accompany each of these reductions, such as “Theistic Idealism”, “Pantheism” etc., are offered only as approximate terms for the resultant Monism in each case and are appropriate only in their most extreme or radical forms, although Materialism and Solipsism actually do imply radical conflation and are obvious instances of genuine monisms that have currency. The salient feature to be observed of each monism is that it attempts to conceptually embrace all reality within a single category and explain everything inductively from that single category. They each appear to unify reality, by designating one pole of a duality as its unifying principle, while in fact these monisms do not explicate the “unity” of reality at all, but rather propose that a single factor which is presumed to be common to all reality were its unifying principle. Thus, a common substance is mistaken for a unifying principle, or a category is mistaken for an all-embracing totality, or a conflation is taken for a totalisation. Monisms are false universals. The root problem in trying to locate unity, according to the Sankara, is that the intellect cannot grasp or embrace actual unity or nonduality since unity transcends mind. Therefore, in attempting to form a conception of nonduality, the mind, which is dualistic by nature, mistakes an aspect of reality for its principle. But from the Nondualist perspective, it is *reality itself* that is One, not some element or aspect of it or within it. Thus,

the resultant six monisms, rather than embracing reality as a totality, produce only new sets of dualities. For example, “idealism” is opposed to “materialism”, or “essentialism” is opposed to “existentialism”, and so a series of secondary dualities is produced. Conflation of the Primary Dualities leads, then, contrary to their intention to embrace and unify reality, to a greater multiplicity of views, to fresh conceptual polarisations, and so to a recurrence of the original problem they set out to solve.

It may also be noted that none of these conflations can be experienced. They have conceptual status only. It may of course be firmly believed by the materialist that all is matter, for example, yet no one actually experiences materialism. The existential result of materialism is to estrange the human person from the world, or at least from those dimensions of the world that the materialist cannot explain or embrace, despite his intellectual belief in the ultimacy and universality of matter. Monisms would appear to create an unbridgeable divide between theoretical belief and experience. As we shall see later in our study of Teilhard Chardin, actual “communion” with matter reveals that it is an expression or embodiment of spirit, and yet still “real” in its own right and as itself.

Returning again to the three Primary Dualities, it is evident from mystical literature of all religious traditions that nondual experience can be described in terms of the union of any of the three pairs of dualities. I have already referred to the classification of mystical experience as introvertive and extrovertive. But our discussion of the three directions of consciousness indicates that this classification is too narrow and originates in the subject/object dichotomy, which is itself a fundamental type of duality.¹¹⁰ Zaehner offers a threefold classification which is more helpful:¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Ramana Maharshi was once asked “Can we not proceed from the external to the internal?” Ramana replies “Is there any difference like that?”

(1) Nature mysticism, which is “panenhenic”, in which the soul expands to include nature, or dissolves into nature, eradicating the ordinary ego; (2) Soul or Monistic mysticism, in which the individual spirit is isolated from the physical or psychological world; (3) Theistic mysticism, which is union with God.¹¹² However, I do not propose to adopt this classification of the types of mysticism either since they, too, are conflationary, but also because Zaehner regards theistic mysticism as higher or more authentic than the other two. Strictly speaking, Zaehner’s approach to mysticism does not aim to unite the totality of reality, but instead it conceives of three distinct *objects* of mystical experience, nature, the self, and God, and regards only God as the object of true mysticism. His classification therefore remains within the realm of the three Primary Dualities, and his conceptions of both nature mysticism and soul mysticism amount to monisms. Instead I propose to adopt a single mysticism that embraces all reality but which generally appears under three aspects, and which expresses itself through three distinct approaches. These are as follows:

- (1) Immanence mysticism, which sees the unity of God and the Universe, but leaves out the Self.
- (2) Cosmic mysticism, which sees the unity of the Self and the Universe, but leaves out God.
- (3) Transcendence mysticism, which sees the unity of God and the Self, but leaves out the Universe.

Do you feel the difference - external and internal - in your sleep? This difference is only with reference to the body and arises with body-consciousness (“I”-thought). The so-called waking state is itself an illusion. (*Talks with Ramana Maharshi*).

¹¹¹ R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane*, New York, 1981.

¹¹² This summary is taken from the excellent study by William Wainwright, *Mysticism*, Brighton, 1981, p. 12.

These three approaches to ultimate unity or nonduality may be regarded as dispositional. That is to say, they each spring from three quite distinct ways in which duality or separation itself appears to be experienced by certain types of individuals, or from different ways in which religious traditions, or certain mystics at certain times within any given religious tradition, tend to formulate the problem of duality or disunity. These may always be traced back to one of the three Primary Dualities. For example, Spinoza might be regarded as an “Immanence mystic”, Eriugena as a “Cosmic mystic”, or Meister Eckhart as a “Transcendence mystic” because of the predominant features of their of their particular approaches to unity. Hence they have variously been regarded as pantheist or idealist.

However, if we look carefully at the characteristics of each of these mystical approaches, we begin to see that they contain elements of one another and that no decisive division exists between them. Immanence mysticism, in which the whole universe is seen as the manifestation of God, or as a theophany, finds expression in emanationist theologies, such as in Platonism, yet in their most elaborated forms they also declare a wholly transcendent One that is completely uninvolved in the Creation. Cosmic mysticism, in which the Self and the Universe are seen as entirely integrated, as holistic, such as we find in the evolutionary vision of Teilhard de Chardin, rests ultimately in the transcendence of God as the unifying principle of creation. Transcendence mysticism, in which the only true Reality is seen to be the unqualified One, as *Nirguna Brahman*, and the universe as merely an appearance (*Maya*), or which, in the Christian tradition, sees the soul as truly “real” only when completely transformed into God, is not a negation of the universe as such, but a removal of the false conception (or false perceiver) of it as essentially *other than* the One. Each of these three approaches, then, takes, predominantly, one of the three directions of consciousness as its starting-point, and by extending that to its full term

brings all three into play and finally unites them in pure consciousness beyond the duality of subject and object, Creator and created.

That these differences are really only differences in approach, but not in their ultimate object of union with the whole of reality, may be illustrated from a pertinent passage in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*:

After the mind has beheld God *outside itself* through and in vestiges of Him, *within itself* through and in His image, and *above itself* through the divine similitudes shining upon us, and in the divine Light itself in so far as it is possible in our state as wayfarer and by exercise of our minds, and when at length the mind has reached the sixth step, when it can behold in the first and highest Principle and in the Mediator of God and men, Jesus Christ, things the like of which cannot possibly be found among creatures, and which transcend all acuteness of the human intellect - when the mind has done all this it must still, in beholding these things, transcend and pass over, not only this visible world, but even itself.¹¹³ (emphasis added.)

Bonaventure here brings all three approaches together, although he places them in a particular hierarchical order. The mind has first beheld God outside itself (*extra se*) in "vestiges of Him" in the created order, then inside itself (*intra se*) in "His image" in the structure and powers of the soul, and finally above itself (*supra se*) "through the divine similitudes shining upon us". In this way he brings to a summit what he has laid down at the beginning of the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*:

¹¹³ Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, VII, 1, trans. P. Boehner, New York, 1956, p. 95.

...our mind has three principle ways of perceiving. In the first way it looks at the corporeal things outside itself, and so acting, it is called animality or sensitivity. In the second, it looks within itself, and is then called spirit. In the third, it looks above itself, and is then called mind. All three ways should be employed to ascend to God, so that He may be *loved with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.*¹¹⁴

But these three approaches to God that bring the mind to a state where it “can behold the first and highest Principle . . . and which transcend all acuteness of the human intellect” must finally be transcended and the mind must “pass over” the visible world, and itself, and be “transformed” into God.¹¹⁵

This transformation of the mind into God is at once true knowledge of God, true knowledge of Self, and true knowledge of the Universe. It is where *to know* and *to be known* converge and become one, and so Bonaventure says “I will see myself better in God than in my very self”.¹¹⁶ So, although Bonaventure says that the mind is transformed into God, he does not mean that it loses its identity in God. Only then does it find it. This transformation means mutually reciprocal self-knowledge, which is the very nature of self-knowledge. Meister Eckhart expresses the same notion

¹¹⁴ Ibid. I. 3., (p. 41).

¹¹⁵ Ibid. VII. 4.

¹¹⁶ Bonaventure, *Collations on the Six Days* XII. n. 9.

in his seventh Sermon: "You must know that this is in reality one and the same thing - to know God and to be known by God."¹¹⁷

This ultimate identity of "knowing" and "being known", in which self-knowledge, knowledge of God, and God's knowledge of the self converge and unite, has its root in what Thomas Tomasic calls the communicability of God's subjectivity or self-presence, which is the foundation of Bonaventure's understanding of the Divine Trinity, which he conceives as absolute self-presence and therefore the true or ultimate self-presence of every being. This mutual self-presence of Man in God, founded in the communicability of God's subjectivity, is described by Thomas Tomasic in the following way:



Communicability is the essence of subjectivity. Thus man, connate in the Word, deriving the structure of subjectivity in and from the Word, can become himself only through intersubjectivity, through the disclosure of identity in mutual presence.¹¹⁸

According to this view, it is only through becoming wholly present to God that man becomes wholly present to himself and so arrive at full self-knowledge, and this full self-knowledge is connate with God's self-knowledge, which is His self-presence. The self-presence of God is the foundation of all presence.

¹¹⁷ *Meister Eckhart: Sermons and Treatises* Vol. 1, translated by M. O'C. Walshe, Shaftsbury, 1989. p. 63.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Tomasic, "Negative Theology and Subjectivity: An Approach to the Tradition of the Pseudo-Dionysius", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 9 (1969), (pp. 406-30) p. 409.

It is true that Bonaventure does not speak explicitly in terms of a union of the Self, the Universe, and God, although I shall later try to show that this is implicit in his notion of transcending mind. All I wish to emphasise here is that Bonaventure speaks of extending the three directions of consciousness - without, within, and above - to their maximum terms, where they each arrive at knowledge of God. In no sense whatsoever does he speak of withdrawing consciousness from the world or the self, but rather of moving through them to their foundations. Bonaventure's mysticism is not introvertive. Rather, he speaks of penetrating the world and discerning the presence of God, through His vestiges, expressed within it. His initial step is through the outward direction of consciousness. Likewise with the mind's inward gaze, in which consciousness penetrates to the very structure of mind made in the Image of God. Only then, when the mind discerns within itself the Image of God, may it "pass over" or transcend itself and be transformed into God. Far from being a negation of world and self, Bonaventure's mysticism suggests a penetration into their essence and a discernment of their fullest reality. His expression "I will see myself better in God than in my very self" has the implicit corollary "I will see the world better in God than in the world". For Bonaventure, self and world are themselves fully known only when consciousness penetrates to the presence or immanence of God within them and to the transcendence of God above or beyond them. Thus, the self and the world are properly perceived and known only by virtue of God being perceived and known within and through them.

These three mystical approaches are even more closely combined in the mysticism of Teilhard de Chardin. Speaking of the process of human "personalization" or self-actualisation Teilhard says:

When we examine the process of our inner unification, that is to say our personalization, we may distinguish three allied and successive stages, or steps, or movements. If man is to be fully himself and fully living, he must, (1) be centred upon himself; (2) be 'de-centred' upon 'the other'; (3) be super-centred upon a being greater than himself.¹¹⁹

Starting from the self, Teilhard suggests that man must first be self-reflective, or centred upon himself, and take responsibility for his own actualisation, and from this self-reflective position go out of himself towards "the other" and live and act for and on behalf of those with whom he walks in life, and finally he must centre his being upon God. Teilhard conceives the three steps in a different manner and order to Bonaventure, replacing the three ways of perceiving with three ways of "centring", although these are still based upon the three directions of consciousness, but placing the "within" first in the sequence: Elaborating this further he says "Being is in the first place making and finding one's own self".¹²⁰ But man cannot fully make or find himself by withdrawing "into the isolation of his own self, and egoistically pursue in himself alone the work, peculiar to him, of his own fulfilment".¹²¹ It follows that "we cannot reach our own ultimate without emerging from ourselves by uniting ourselves with others, in such a way as to develop through this union an added measure of consciousness".¹²² But this union with humanity, with "the other" or with what is "beside us", must extend yet further to embrace the "organic totality" of the universe and, ultimately, to what is "not simply beside us, but *beyond* and *above* us".¹²³ Although Teilhard commences from the ontological perspective of

¹¹⁹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "Reflections on Happiness" in *Toward The Future*, London, 1975, p. 117.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 117.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* p. 118.

¹²² *Ibid.* p. 118.

¹²³ *Ibid.* p. 120.

personalization, while Bonaventure commences from perception of God in creation, the end -self-knowledge in God - is the same in either approach.

We may further observe that Bonaventure's mysticism commences from the duality of self and God, while Teilhard's, taking his overall vision, commences from the duality of universe and God. Bonaventure's exemplarism, derived from the Platonic strand in Christianity, resolves for him the duality of God and the universe and leaves him with only the duality of the self and God, which is resolved through the ascent and transformation of the mind into God, while for Teilhard the duality of self and God is resolved through the inner presence of Christ, and this leaves him with only the duality of the self and universe, which is resolved through total participation in its ultimate destiny, which is divinisation through the evolutionary process of becoming fully conscious of itself through the agency and development of mankind.

Teilhard, consequently, is highly critical of the traditional forms of mysticism that seek union of the soul with God through the negation of the world. Negation, as a step towards unity, may be considered as the opposite error to conflation, although it actually comes to the same thing.¹²⁴ For Teilhard mysticism is the unification of the totality of reality through its differentiation or complexification. "Centration", or centred differentiation (which is matter becoming self-conscious), and "totalisation" are for him the two necessary and complimentary components of a single process of convergence and divinisation in which the "suppression of the multiple"¹²⁵ has no part. In Teilhard's view, the conception that the "one" and the

¹²⁴ We may here draw a distinction between "negation" and what is traditionally called the *via negativa*. In the latter it is negations of created attributes in God that is at issue, so as to clarify the infinite transcendence of God, not to negate the creation as such.

¹²⁵ Teilhard de Chardin, "Some Notes on the Mystical Sense" in *Toward the Future*, p. 211.

“many” are mutually exclusive is based upon a confused or simplistic understanding of either term.

It is worth observing in parenthesis here that there is a tendency, discernible in both Eastern and Western thought, to conceive of the unity of the “One” as a kind of simple homogeneity, or as a mere “exclusion” of plurality. But this conception does not express the idea of “unity”, a synonymous term for the “one”. The term “unity” does not itself exclude number as such, but rather separation. This is clearly expressed, for example, in the Christian doctrine of the Divine Trinity, in which it is described as “three in one”. When the creation is contrasted with the Creator in terms of the “multiple” coming forth from the “One”, this does not itself imply that the principle of unity is not expressed in the creation, only that the creation is not in itself or by itself the “One”. Thus, in a theophanic view of creation, such as that of Eriugena, the “unity” of the “One” finds expression in “unified diversity”, the notion embodied in the word “universe” itself. In Teilhard’s view this unified complexity finds its most obvious and remarkable expression in the human person, and most especially in the process of “personalization” in which consciousness is the uniting principle of the complex physical organism. Thus, highly organised or “centred” complexity, as is found in the human person as well as in human society, forms a perfect coincidence of “plurality” and “unity”. The human person is therefore an *indivisible complexity*. This unity in diversity, according to the theophanic model of creation, must reflect in some way the ineffable singularity and unity of the “One”.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ For a Platonic handling of this issue - one that undoubtedly influenced Medieval Christian speculation - see Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, trans. E. R. Dodds, Oxford, 1992, pp. 2-7.

Teilhard is concerned to bring together what he discerns to be two historical currents of mysticism: *vertical* soul- or God mysticism, and *horizontal* pantheistic or nature mysticism into a *via tertia* of inclusivity and unification. Ursula King, in her *Towards a New Mysticism*, represents Teilhard's analysis of these two currents and Teilhard's "new mysticism" in terms of three types or "ways" of mysticism: *via prima*, *via secunda* and *via tertia*.¹²⁷ The *via prima* represents man's natural unreserved commitment to the full reality of the world, to full knowledge of its totality and to the perfection of human socialisation. This world-affirming way finds modern expression in what Teilhard calls "neo-humanism" and in political idealism, such as in found in Marxism, although he stresses that its full mystical dimension remains largely unconscious in these forms. The *via secunda* represents the more traditional forms of mysticism, which seek union of the self with God through the negation of the world, or through the suppression of plurality. The *via prima* and the *via secunda* are traditionally regarded as opposed to one another. The *via tertia* or "new mysticism" represents the way of "unification" of God, the self and the universe through a synthesis of what Teilhard believes to be the genuinely positive elements of the *via prima* and the *via secunda*. In Teilhard's view the *via tertia* has always been latent in both God-mysticism and nature mysticism, but the two tendencies towards unity, rooted in man's "*cosmic sense* of the one and all",¹²⁸ have traditionally become polarised and made mutually exclusive, as

¹²⁷ Ursula King, *Towards a New Mysticism: Teilhard de Chardin and Eastern Religions*, London, 1980, p. 200.

¹²⁸ Teilhard de Chardin, "Two Converse Forms of Spirit" in *Activation of Energy*, London, 1970, p. 218. In this important essay Teilhard explores what he considers to be the "two possible solutions, and *only two*", that "have since all time suggested themselves to men" (p. 219), in their yearning for unity, "relaxation and expansion" and "tension and centration". The first of these aligns both the *via prima* and the *via secunda* in an attempt to "try immediately to embrace all - and, in order to do that, *to become all things and all persons*" (p. 220). This bold and "youthful" form of mysticism cannot, according to Teilhard, overcome the problem of multiplicity, and so it moves into an attempt to find union in the "general substratum" or

is exemplified in the polarity or opposition assumed to exist between introvertive and extrovertive mysticism mentioned earlier. According to Teilhard, matter and spirit, God and creation, self and God, world and soul have not only come to be regarded as mutually exclusive realms of being in much mystical literature, but also as mutually negating and morally opposed. Teilhard does see certain of the great Christian mystics - Eckhart, St. Francis of Assisi and St. John of the Cross for example - as exceptions, and therefore as true representatives of the way of unification or the *via tertia*,¹²⁹ which he regards as the true Christian way in that it exemplifies the authentic "cosmic sense" that lies at the heart of all great religious traditions, East and West.

undifferentiated "prime Stuff" of all existence. It is this move that leads to either the *via prima* or the *via secunda*, nature mysticism or God- soul-mysticism. In either case this is attempted through "the elimination of all opposition between things" where "everything is identified with everything in a foundation that is common to all things" (p. 220). This is, of course, precisely what I have termed monism. The second way seeks not to find union "below everything" in a common substratum of "spirit" or "matter" but rather through the super-centration of Self by developing it to its potential and thereby seeking "the single essence of all things . . . not in the form of a common foundation with which we may make one by de-centration, but rather in the form of a universal peak of concentration, which is arrived at through a super-centration of human consciousness" (p. 221). Thus, for Teilhard the apparent opposition between the One and multiplicity is, if looked at from a great enough distance, a process of union through differentiation. "True union does not fuse: it differentiates and personalises" (p. 222).

¹²⁹ Teilhard de Chardin, "Some Notes on the Mystical Sense" in *Towards the Future*, p. 211. See also "My Fundamental Vision" (ibid.) pp. 200-201, where Teilhard remarks on the confused identification of the "Eastern road" with the "Western road" by interpreters of St. John of the Cross. Teilhard admits, however, that men such as St. John of the Cross "carried along by, and kept on a straight course by, the general movement of Christianity, have undoubtedly lived in practice a mysticism which can be reduced to the sublimation of creatures and their convergence in God. But the way they interpreted themselves - or others have interpreted them - is still distinctly 'Eastern'; and we should have the honesty to admit that, in this respect of their sanctity, they are now alien to us", cited from "The Road of the East", ibid. p. 52.

Self-knowledge and being, self-knowledge and self-transcendence, and self-knowledge and nonduality may, therefore, be discerned as three constituent *elements* of mysticism, but not as three opposing types or varieties of mysticism. Each element has its roots in one of the three directions of consciousness, and although any one of these three directions of consciousness may predominate in different kinds of mystical literature, that predominance indicates only the particular approach taken towards the same end - the unity of all - and will incorporate the other elements at different stages, implicitly if not explicitly.

We find in Dionysius the Areopagite, for example, the notion that every being strives to actualise itself through participation in the being of every being and in the ineffable unity of Being Itself. Thus, Dionysius discerns three modes of perception natural to the soul, all of which arrive at the Good or the Beautiful. He calls these three modes of perception “motions” or “movements” of the soul. They are essentially, I would suggest, equivalent to what I have called the three directions of consciousness. He describes these three movements in the *Divine Names* in the following way:

First the soul has a circular movement, that is, it turns within itself and away from the things without and there is a unified concentration of spiritual powers. This gives it a kind of fixed revolution which causes it to return from the multiplicity of external things and gather upon itself and then, in this unified condition, unites to those powers that are in perfect Unity and leads it to the Beautiful and Good which is beyond all things, ever the same and One, and without beginning or end. The second movement of the soul is a spiral motion, which

occurs when the soul, in accordance with its capacity, is enlightened with truths of Divine Knowledge, not from the special unity of its own being, but by the process of discursive reasoning, in mixed and changeable activities. The soul's third movement is in a straight line forward, when, instead of circling upon its own spiritual unity, as in its first: motion, it proceeds to the things around it and feels an influence coming to it from the outward world, as from certain variegated and pluralized symbols, which draws it upward into simple and united contemplations.¹³⁰

Each of these three motions leads to the One, though in its own manner. Dionysius observes that it is the Good itself that calls forth these three motions of the soul:

The Good and the Beautiful is the cause of these three movements, as also the movements of the realm of what is perceived, and of the prior remaining, standing, and foundation of each. This is what preserves them. This is their goal, itself transcending all rest and all motion . . . To put the matter briefly, all being derives from, exists in, and is returned toward the Beautiful and Good. All things look to it. All things are moved by it . . . “For from Him and through Him and in Him and to Him are all things” says the holy scripture.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*, Ch. 4. 9., translation modified from the versions by C. E. Rolt, *Dionysius the Areopagite*, London, 1979, and C. Luibheid, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, London, 1987.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

Since it is the Good and the Beautiful that calls forth all three movements and is their goal, all three movements are directed towards unity and arrive at unity, and each movement transcends multiplicity in its own manner. Clearly Dionysius, as a Christian Platonist, is echoing Plotinus in his description of the three motions of the soul, as we see in *Ennead VI*:

Self-knowledge reveals to the soul that her natural motion is not in a straight line, unless it is deflected. On the contrary, her natural motion is like a circular motion around some interior object, around a centre. The centre is that from which proceeds that which is around it That is the secret of their divinity. For divinity consists in being attached to the centre. Anyone who withdraws much from it becomes an ordinary man or an animal.

Is the “centre” of the soul then the principle we are seeking? No, we must look for some other principle towards which all “centres” converge and to which, only by analogy of the visible circle, the word “centre” is applied We are, by our own centre, attaching ourselves to the “centre” of all things; and so we rest, just as we make the centres of the great circles coincide with that of the sphere that surrounds them. If these circles were corporeal, not “circles” described by the soul, the centre and the circumference would have to occupy certain places. But since the souls are of the order of intelligible beings and the One is still above Intelligence, we shall have to assert that the union of the thinking being with its object proceeds by different means. The thinking being is in the presence of its object by virtue of its similarity and identity, and it is united with its kindred without anything to separate them.¹³²

¹³² Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. S. MacKenna, London, 1969.

Thus, the three approaches that I have termed Immanence mysticism, Cosmic mysticism, and Transcendence mysticism may be regarded as three aspects of, or initial ways of intuiting, the primary religious sense of “totality” which may initiate the mystical ascent. This sense of totality has within itself, as we have seen, two existential demands. On the one side it demands an unbounded “going out” or “over to” that totality of all and thus a complete surrender of personal finitude. This is its self-transcendent element. On the other side it demands a complete *receptivity* of that totality and thus an act of being “wholly present” to oneself in acknowledgement of totality. This is the self-reflective element. Thus, the self-transcendent element of consciousness of totality, although it wholly embraces totality, is not subsumed into totality. It does not negate individuality. On the contrary, the outward act of embracing totality demands a fuller self-presence in which to receive and embrace it. Total perception requires a total perceiver. Only a total being, only a fully “personalised” being - or a total act of being - can embrace being totally.

Each approach to unity, as we find them described by the mystics, commences, as we have already noted, from the perception of disunity, or from a sense of discontinuity of being, in terms of one of the Primary Dualities, leaving the other two to be resolved at a later stage. Yet this sense of disunity or duality itself seems to spring from an intuitive sense of total unity, from a “cosmic sense” as Teilhard calls it. It is this primary sense of totality, integral to being itself, which awakens man to perception of duality and calls him to seek to resolve it. Thus, mysticism, in its fundamental sense, is concerned with the unification of all three realms of reality that present themselves to consciousness: God, Self, and Universe. Man is that being for whom this unification is necessary in order that he may

be fully himself, fully a participant in the universe, and fully redeemed or actualised in God. It is our thesis that religion, in its most characteristic and authentic forms, is concerned with the actualisation of all three of these ends together, and that it is the possibility of this goal that lies at the basis of sacred anthropology.

3. Recapitulation and Implications

When this Wisdom is united with the soul, all doubt, all error and all darkness are entirely removed, she is set in a bright pure light which is God Himself . . . Then God is known by God in the soul; with this Wisdom she knows herself and all things, and this same Wisdom knows her with itself, and with the same Wisdom she knows the power of the Father in fruitful travail, and essential Being in simple unity void of all distinctions.

Meister Eckhart

The foregoing outline is offered as the hermeneutical perspective from which I shall examine the religious understanding of Man in the following chapters - so is in this sense an interpretive tool - and a religious thesis of human nature - so is in this sense itself an interpretation. In this way it brings together three specific aims: (a) to explicate a coherent and unified sacred anthropology that is implicit in diverse religious materials and traditions, (b) to elucidate the religious character of man's desire to know himself and show that the human quest for self-knowledge is itself ultimately inseparable from the quest for God, and (c) to demonstrate the implications

of that anthropology for our understanding of religion generally. From the wider perspective, I would suggest that the study of sacred anthropology provides us with a discipline simultaneously open to academic study as well as to religious commitment.

The three premises of sacred anthropology discussed above, although simple in their formulation, offer a very direct way of bringing together the full implications of a variety of religious conceptions of Man that may at first sight seem exclusive or even as mutually opposed. For example, the predominantly individualistic conceptions of man which conceive human nature in terms of psychological subjectivity (e.g. Augustine and Aquinas), the social conceptions of man that conceive human nature in terms of collectivity or relationship (e.g. Buber and Moltmann), and the mystical conceptions of man that conceive human nature in terms of transcendence (e.g. Sankara and Bonaventure).

I believe that each of these views has a necessary contribution to make to sacred anthropology once they are seen in their soteriological contexts. Thus, from a soteriological perspective, man may be understood as at once (a) a self-reflective subject whole in himself, (b) as a participatory being in communion with all that is beside him, and (c) as a transcendent being rooted in the ground of Being Itself. Yet he is all these in actuality only when fully individuated, fully integrated with the universe, and fully united with God. The symbol of fallen Man is precisely a symbol of man for whom this threefold actualisation may be understood as either yet to be, or to be regained, or which simply calls him immediately to himself.

It may be observed that within each of the major religious traditions there are tensions between turning consciousness wholly within and residing wholly in the subject, turning consciousness wholly without and residing

wholly in the oneness of the universe, and turning consciousness wholly above and residing wholly in the ineffable. Each of the three directions of consciousness, and their corresponding mystical dispositions, has within itself a positive and negative element. The first affirms the interiority of being and negates the outward as mere appearance. The second affirms the glory, love and creativity of the manifest and negates the subject as an end in himself. The third affirms the One that is prior to all existence and negates the manifest as bondage and multiplicity. Each way gives rise to its own characteristic kind of mystical emphasis, or rather, mystical approach, - which I have termed Immanence mysticism, Cosmic mysticism and Transcendence mysticism - and their consequent philosophical currents: Pantheism, Individualism and Idealism with their respective philosophical anthropologies.

A basic premise of this study is that religion is primarily the quest to unify these three mystical tendencies into one. Religion begins, as Eliade and Cassirer observe, with the intuition that all is unified in some essential but conceptually ungraspable sense and it seeks to actualise this intuition in direct experience. This quest for unification brings with it the demand for a total transformation of Man, a transformation that may be spoken of either in terms of a “return” to an original state of perfection, or as a “realisation” of perfection presently veiled by ignorance, or as an “actualisation” of potential perfection. However conceived, it is this demand for transformation that characterises the religious apprehension of human nature and distinguishes the perspective of sacred anthropology from that of philosophical anthropology, or from any other types of anthropology. This needs to be emphasised. If the transformative or soteriological element is omitted from the consideration of religious conceptions of human nature, then they become distorted and dissociated from their proper context and meaning.

This is why I have emphasised the mystical aim or telos inherent in the three directions of consciousness, and hence in the threefold relation of Self, Universe and God, because nothing less than mystical union extends them to their full term and ultimately unites them.

Finally, it is this demand for the transformation of human consciousness that enables us to cross the boundaries of the diverse religious traditions and focus upon human nature as the universal issue of religious concern, despite all other divergencies.

4. Selection of materials

‘The whole of reality’ and ‘spirit’ are corresponding conceptions. One cannot have one without the other. The power or capacity to relate oneself to ‘the’ world *is* spirit. And essentially speaking, spirit is the power to relate oneself to ‘the’ world.

Josef Pieper

Two general considerations have determined the procedure and structure of this study. The first consideration has been to bring maximum coherence to a study that is very broad in its scope. The second consideration has been to present my thesis with maximum depth. Taken together these two considerations have led me to select only a few representative materials from the great religious traditions and to study these in some detail. The advantage of this procedure is that it allows us scope for some elaborate

interpretation. And since this study is essentially a work of interpretation of primary texts, this permits us to examine some familiar materials in an unfamiliar way. And since the anthropology of most religious texts is usually only implicit and only rarely explicit, the examination of familiar texts from an anthropological perspective not only enables us to read them with fresh eyes but also to demonstrate that a fundamental aspect of their purport has passed largely unnoticed, or that they have sometimes been studied from the stand-point of anthropological presuppositions which they do not share.

Three main considerations have determined the selection of materials for this study. The first and most obvious is that they focus on the question of Man, that they each have a clear sacred anthropology. The second is that their initial perspectives are sufficiently contrasted to bear fruitful comparison without the danger of falling into seeking too naive or arbitrary equivalences between them. The third is that they enable us to make a coherent and progressive exposition.

The selection could well have been different and certainly could have been very much wider. It would have enriched our study enormously to have included Nagarjuna from the Buddhist tradition or Cusanus from the Christian tradition, but space has precluded them, just as it has precluded us from including representatives from the Judaic and Islamic traditions. Nevertheless, they are implicitly included.

I have chosen to study Sankara first because he poses the question of the Self as the primary question. His exposition of Nonduality - of the ultimate identity of Self, Brahman, and Universe - presents us with a paradigm of absolute unity at the most transcendent level which will serve throughout our study as a metaphysical background against which all

plurality can stand in relief and remain continuously in question. At the same time, our approach to Sankara and Advaita Vedanta will suggest some fundamental revisions of the ways scholars have generally understood his exposition of Nonduality.

This will immediately set our study of John Scottus Eriugena into a fruitful light, since he is perhaps the most explicitly nondual of Christian theologians because of his understanding of creation as theophany, which has often been mistaken for pantheism.

Eriugena's rich reconciliation of Christianity and Platonism helps, in turn, to set the scene for our study of Bonaventure, whose notion of exemplarism serves to illuminate his understanding of the unity of God, Man, and Creation.

Bonaventure's conception of the dynamic nature of the Divine Trinity, and his understanding of history as a progressive movement towards spirit, opens the way to our study of Teilhard de Chardin, who confronts the problems of the "reality" of matter from the perspective of an unfolding process of "conscious evolution", and thus to the question of the ultimate destiny of Man, in a manner that brings us back full-circle to the question of the Self in the context of the totality of everything.

The centrality of consciousness in Teilhard's anthropology, and the perception of the need for "spiritual effort" if Man is to fulfil his place in creation, brings us back full circle to the soteriological question of man, both within and beyond the world.

In a final chapter I will attempt to draw together the various strands of our study and show how the perennial question of Man, in its sacred

sense, still lives in and pervades the work of certain modern philosophers. Finally, I will attempt to show that current notions of the “secularisation” of modern society or civilisation are based upon defective interpretations of the present state of the world. On the contrary, I will try to demonstrate that the quest for self-knowledge and self-actualisation, the persistent search for meaning, along with the inexhaustible quest for knowledge of the universe, remain, no matter how strange or aberrant their forms or expressions may appear to be, primarily sacred and belong to the realm of the sacred, and that every real expression the human person, of society, of community of being, is at root an attempt to give birth to a sacred society - to a “city of God” - within a sacred universe. These may indeed be bold assertions, yet I hope that our study of sacred anthropology will illustrate that any other conceptions of Man, any alternative “secular” anthropology, can spring only from a more limited, diminished or fragmented view of Man than that expressed in the world’s religious traditions.

CHAPTER 3

Śankara and Nondualism

1. *The Problem of the Ground for Comparison between Christian and Vedantic Anthropology*

Śankara's nondual philosophy provides us with several advantages as a starting-point for a study of religious approaches to understanding man. The first and most obvious reason is that Śankara's nondual teaching is founded on self-knowledge as the direct path to realisation or liberation. For Śankara, self-knowledge is soteriological. In Advaita Vedānta knowledge of the Self, or *ātman*, is both the means and the object of realisation.

But also Śankara's teaching on the Self is so radically different to the Christian or Western approach to self that it provides us with an alternative perspective from which to examine Western conceptions of the self, bringing into sharp relief the differences and underlying assumptions. In many ways the Christian and Vedantic understandings of man are at opposite poles and, at first glance, wholly irreconcilable. Just as the Buddhist no-self doctrine (*anātman vāda*) is completely irreconcilable with the Christian notion of essential personhood and possible wholeness, so Śankara's doctrine of the essential divinity and uncreated nature of the Self is completely at variance with the Christian doctrine of created human nature.

There is no immediate or obvious meeting-point between Christianity and Advaita Vedānta, especially in what is foundational to either. And what is foundational to either are quite different ontologies out

of which spring quite different soteriologies. What man *is* and his ultimate *destiny* are conceived in entirely different ways. It appears that any careful comparison between them can only expose their radical differences and total irreconcilability.

If such comparison is made between the respective doctrinal formulations, then this appearance of irreconcilability is sustainable. However, if these doctrines are themselves brought into close scrutiny, then the sharpness of their boundaries begins to fade. We begin to see that, at the very least, they spring from certain common fundamental concerns which share common ground. We begin to see that the *manner* in which the different traditions have addressed these more fundamental common concerns is where the differences arise. That is to say, the *problem* of selfhood and the question of the ultimate destiny of the self is the primary concern of either tradition. And the way in which they are concerned with this primary question is essentially religious, and the answer that each offers is also essentially religious. The difference, however, lies in how they initially grasp or address this concern.

In the Christian tradition the concern for man and his destiny commences from the idea that human nature has become flawed, that man as we know him is a fallen being, a being that needs to be restored to his unfallen state, but who has no power within himself sufficient to achieve this restoration. He can only be restored by God, through a direct act of God which does not belong within the economy of cause and effect - the economy of justice - but within the mysterious economy of love, grace and mercy. In the Christian tradition man does not and cannot *merit* this restoration. It is given out of the pure gift of the creator, not because man calls for it but because God acts wholly out of infinite compassion and boundless goodness.

The Vedantic understanding of the problem of the human condition commences from quite different grounds. For Śankara, man is not a fallen or a flawed being. He has not committed any deed which changed his nature, for which he has no remedy within himself. For Śankara the problem of man lies in his *perception of himself* and of the world, or rather in his misperception of himself and the world. This state is not in any sense a corruption of his nature but simply an ignorance (*avidya*) of that true nature. This ignorance manifests in the form of man taking for the real what is not real. It is a deluded condition, but not in any sense an ontological condition. The remedy is to find again the knowledge that has become concealed in this misperception, and this knowledge lies within man himself, in his self. For Śankara, the Self *is* the knowledge that has been lost or concealed by delusion.

So the root of the difference between the Christian and Vedantic conceptions of man's condition lies in quite distinct notions of selfhood. They have quite different ontologies. And it follows from this that the relationships between the self and the world are also conceived differently. They have quite different cosmologies. In the Christian tradition both man and the world are created realities which stand distinct from God their creator. In Vedānta man and the world are not created realities that stand distinct from their creator.

Thus, from the Vedantic perspective the Christian tradition is dualistic. It conceives of God and the world as independent realities. For the Vedantist this dualism is a fundamental feature of the ignorance into which man has fallen in forgetting his true nature. From the Christian perspective Vedānta is pantheistic and confuses the reality of God the creator with his creation. Once again, these differences lie in the ontological

realm. Either tradition commences its quest to understand man from wholly different metaphysical premises. So it is these distinct metaphysical premises that need to be examined in a comparison between the two religious traditions.

In this chapter I shall try to lay the foundations for such comparison through an examination of the Nondualism of Śankara. I shall endeavour to bring to light aspects of Advaita Vedānta which will open the way to comparison with Christian conceptions of unity and selfhood. This will involve showing that Śankara's nondualism can be quite easily misunderstood, and has often been so misunderstood, if it is simply stated as a religious or metaphysical doctrine. To understand what nonduality means for Śankara involves seeing how it arises in his teaching and what it claims to provide an answer to. This involves trying to understand precisely what *dualism* is his view and why it needs to be overcome.

2. Advaita Vedānta and Typologies of Multiplicity and Unity

My main object in this chapter is to try to clarify the meanings of duality and nonduality as they are found in *Advaita Vedānta*.¹³³ The need for such clarification may not be immediately obvious since, of all the systems of Hinduism, none has been more studied and commented upon than the nondual teachings of Śankara. It is my view, however, that the real meaning

¹³³Although I shall focus primarily on the teachings of Shankara, I take for granted a consistency in the principal teachers in the *Advaita Vedānta* tradition up to and including Ramana Maharshi. I acknowledge that there may be certain variations in this tradition over time, but I regard these variations as matters of emphasis which do not modify the core teaching of nondualism, which is here my main concern. I have therefore felt free to quote from other expounders of nonduality where I feel they throw light on questions that Shankara does not himself fully elaborate but which are nevertheless implicit in his works.

of nonduality has frequently been misunderstood, especially by Western scholars. Its essential sense has often been only partially grasped, or oversimplified, and sometimes even quite distorted. These misunderstandings are reflected in the use of such terms as “impersonal absolute”, “non-theistic” and “monism” when referring to Śankara’s nondualist teachings. We may trace these misunderstandings to two main causes. First, nonduality is taken to be a “doctrine” or a “belief” of Śankara’s and, second, it is usually discussed as a “philosophical” or “metaphysical” theory of reality. In either case it is lifted out of its original religious context where it has a soteriological function. These ways of discussing nonduality have arisen in the main from the methodologies of Western scholars of comparative religion, where the emphasis has been upon classifying and comparing the “belief systems” of the world religions, which tends to be reductive. I wish to show in this study that nonduality is, for Śankara and for later nondualists such as Ramana Maharshi,¹³⁴ neither a “belief” to be taken on faith nor a “philosophical system” to be demonstrated, proven or justified through rational argument.¹³⁵

¹³⁴Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) is regarded as one of the greatest teachers of *Advaita* of modern India. At the age of seventeen he had a profound experience of the true nature of the Self without any guidance from a teacher and remained conscious for the rest of his life of the identity of Atman and Brahman. After some years in seclusion in the holy mountain of Arunachala, he began to receive visitors and to teach through dialogue. He advocated no single system of teaching, or any one religion, but taught from his direct experience of the Self. Although not a follower of Shankara, he wholly accepts Shankara’s teachings and refers to them on many occasions in the records of his dialogues.

¹³⁵This is clearly recognized by Rudolph Otto in his comparative study of Shankara and Meister Eckhart: “That that Being is one, without a second, that it is undivided, without apposition or predicate, without “How” or fashion, these are not merely metaphysical facts but at the same time “saving” actualities. That the soul is eternally one with the Eternal is not a scientifically interesting statement, but is that fact upon which the salvation of the soul depends. All affirmations and arguments in proof of the absolute unity, the complete simplicity, and the perfect identity of the soul with God, all the evidence and declamation against multiplicity, separateness, division

Merely to define the sense of the term *Advaita* will not suffice. To understand what lies in the term, in the context to which it belongs, requires an understanding of the problem it addresses. To suppose that Śankara is answering questions he is not posing will necessarily lead to a misreading of his teachings. Śankara is not a philosopher in the usual Western sense proposing a metaphysical system through which reality is to be interpreted or explained to the satisfaction of reason. Even less is he proposing a scientific theory of the nature of reality. Nonduality is not an objective description of phenomenal existence. Nor is it a refutation of any such objective description. The nondual nature of reality as he discusses it is not demonstrable in the rational sense, and if taken this way it amounts only to one possible theory of reality. Śankara is explicit in saying nondual knowledge transcends the grasp of reason. This is not to deny, of course, that Śankara employs rational or philosophical arguments to support nonduality, but where such arguments are advanced they are usually negative arguments aimed at exposing the defects of false or illusory views or experiences of reality. His ultimate support for nonduality is not reason but the authority of the scriptures, or *śruti*, especially of course the *Upaniṣads* or *Vedānta*. Here he makes no greater claim than that of an exegete. In his commentaries on the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* he is centrally concerned to elucidate what he takes to be the true meaning of these texts and to refute any possible defective interpretations. His aim is to show that these scriptures declare that the highest knowledge is knowledge of the Self and that with knowledge of the Self comes the realization that the Self, *Brahman* and the universe are one. This nondual knowledge alone, he contends, is absolute knowledge (*Brahmajñāna*) and that all other knowledge is, by comparison, only relative

and manifoldness - however much they may sound like rational ontology - are for both of them only ultimately significant because they are “saving” (*Mysticism East and West*, Quest, USA, 1987) p. 21.

knowledge or simply ignorance. This *Brahmajñāna* or absolute knowledge is not “knowledge of” or “knowledge about”, as all rational knowledge is, but knowledge as such, knowledge in which the knower is the known without any division between subject and object. The Self *is* this knowledge.

What problem, then, is this nondual knowledge the answer to? Essentially it is a response to the problem of false or deceptive experience of reality. According to Śankara, the root of all such false experience of reality lies in the mind attributing the notion of reality to what is not real. These projections of the mind take two primary forms. On the one hand what is held to be the personal self with its limiting adjuncts (*upādhi*) is identified with, while on the other hand what is held to be “other” than oneself is thought to be a completely separate and independent reality. From this arises the sense that there are two fundamentally discontinuous realities - self and not-self or subject and object. Neither of these separate realities are secure. What is held to be the personal self is constantly changing and uncertain. Although it is taken to be ontologically independent of all that is other than itself, it is continually affected and overwhelmed by what is regarded as other than and external to itself. Thus, although the personal self is held to exist by itself, it finds itself continuously subject to experience of what it holds to exist separately from itself. It is dependent upon what is not itself. The separate reality of the world, on the other hand, is similarly perpetually changing and unpredictable. With every good it offers, it carries a seed of sorrow. No stable relationship can be established between the personal self and the other. The two realities are experienced as perpetually in conflict. In addition to these two realities is a third reality, *Brahman* or the Creator. But *Brahman* also is conceived of or experienced as yet another wholly separate reality, a reality which further relativises the personal self and the world.

Thus the personal self cannot hold steady in any certain knowledge of itself, but changes with different states and experiences. It cannot settle on any fixed relation with the world, but is agitated by the ever-changing impressions of the senses and the never-ending stream of desires and aversions that arise from this. Nor can it attain rest in the knowledge of *Brahman* because *Brahman* remains ever beyond its grasp. The personal self may embrace any theory or belief about the true nature of reality, but the experience of reality remains divided and continuously in flux.

It is therefore important that we understand that the problem Śankara is addressing is primarily an experiential problem. It is in the subjective experience of separateness, incompleteness and relativity of being that the problem of *duality* arises and comes into view. The notion of duality is not a philosophical or metaphysical notion, but is an experiential fact. Of course, it takes a considerable degree of reflection and discrimination to analyse the problem and articulate it in terms of duality. Śankara is addressing his teachings to those who have already arrived at such an analysis. He fully acknowledges that the indiscriminating mind or that ruled by the passions never arrive at this analysis. They live in the hope that satisfaction of their various desires will eventually bring fulfilment. There is no moral judgement in this. But for those who have reflected sufficiently on their experience, the insight into the fundamental problem of the dual appearance of reality leads them to search for a resolution to that duality. The desire to know the underlying unity of everything awakens. This desire to know the underlying unity of everything is a religious desire. That is to say, it is not a desire that can be satisfied through intellectual speculation, but only in direct experience of unity. It is at this point that the enquiry into the true nature of the Self begins, and this leads to the enquiry into the true nature of the world and of *Brahman*. Experience itself, however, has a metaphysical ground and Śankara necessarily explores this.

These three lines of enquiry - into the nature of the Self, the world and *Brahman* - are connected because they address the question of the ultimate nature of the real. The real appears, in the state of ignorance, as threefold, or as three separate realities: the Self, the World, and *Brahman*, as Ramana Maharshi points out:

All religions postulate the three fundamentals, the world, the soul and God. The one Reality alone manifests Itself as these three. One can say “the three are indeed three” only while the ego lasts. Therefore to inhere in one’s own Being, where the “I”, the ego, is dead, is the perfect state.¹³⁶

Śankara and Ramana Maharshi teach that this multiple perception of reality is the product of the ego (*ahankāra*), the false sense of Self. The pure or unqualified sense of “I” (*aham*) has become associated with the mind, senses and body (*upādhi*) and has attributed to them the sense of reality that belongs to the *ātman* alone. Through this false identification, which is the creation or projection of the ego (*ahankāra*), the mind experiences the world and *Brahman* as “other”, as separate realities. Put another way, by limiting itself by identification with mind, senses and body, the one Reality appears as multiple realities. Consciousness is constrained to see separate entities.

The essential teaching of Śankara is that Reality is one. This is the basis of the term *Advaita*. Yet it is a negative term, intended to deny that there are multiple realities. Brought to its sharpest, it denies an absolute ontological distinction or difference between the subject and object, or between perceiver and perceived, or between Creator and created. It is misleading, however, to call this teaching “monism” or “monistic”, as

¹³⁶ Ramana Maharshi *The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*, ed. Arthur Osborne, Rider & Company, London, 1969, p. 72.

Zaehner does for example in his *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane*.¹³⁷ Although this term is employed in an attempt to translate the negative term “*Advaita*” into a positive Western philosophical equivalent, though the term “monism” really has no precise meaning in Western philosophy, it results in a distortion of the concept. It confuses the *negation of difference* with the *conflation into one*.

To grasp this important distinction clearly, it will be helpful to look at the whole question of *duality* in some detail. There are various kinds of dualities, or dualisms, and these need to be distinguished from each other. The terms “duality” and “dualism” are frequently employed as loosely as “monism” and “monistic”. There are dualities that are ultimately resolvable, or which only *appear* as dualities. These are the dualities with which *Advaita Vedānta* is concerned. There are dualities comprised of complementary pairs. There are mutually exclusive dualities. There are coextensive dualities. There are co-dependent dualities. As far as I am aware, no detailed study has been made of these various types of dualities.¹³⁸ This is unfortunate, since much confusion has arisen in the application of terminologies that unite or resolve certain of these dualities. For example, the term *coincidentia oppositorum* as we find it in Nicholas Cusanus, or of the term *coniunctio oppositorum* as used by the alchemists. These terms belong to very precise systems and contexts and should never be arbitrarily exchanged or regarded as equivalent to one another.

It will be helpful, then, to take a brief look at the various types of dualities and try to broadly classify them. We may begin with two general classifications under which different kinds of pairs or dualities may be

¹³⁷ Zaehner, R. C. 1961 *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane: An Inquiry into Some Varieties of Praeternatural Experience*, Oxford University Press.

¹³⁸ A partial exception is the valuable study of David Loy, *Nonduality* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1988) in which he classifies the various ways in which *nonduality* is employed in Asian philosophic and religious thought in chapter 1.

placed: (a) Vertical dualities, in which opposites stand on different planes, and (b) Parallel dualities, in which opposites stand alongside one another.

The most obvious vertical duality we find in religious thought is that of transcendent Creator and temporal creation. From this fundamental vertical duality arise a whole series, such as immortal/mortal, transcendent/immanent, cause/effect, spirit/matter, mover/moved, potential/actual, unmanifest/manifest, above/below, and at a lower level mind/body, king/subject, master/pupil etc. Vertical dualities are essentially hierarchical and are found in the various religious or metaphysical cosmologies and cosmogonies. In some cosmologies they remain absolutely separate and irreconcilable, as for example in the Judeo-Christian *ex nihilo* doctrine of creation in which an absolute difference or ontological discontinuity is maintained between Creator and creature. In others, such as in the emanationist cosmogony of Neoplatonism or in the theophanic cosmogony of Eriugena - which are perhaps the most akin to vedantic cosmogony - reconciliation is sought between the ineffable One and the many.¹³⁹

Parallel dualities are quite different to these. As the term suggests, they stand side by side in the form of equal pairs. Examples are male/female, left/right, within/without, good/evil, rest/motion, subject/object, hot/cold, light/dark etc. In *Vedānta* these are generally spoken of as the “pairs of opposites” and are regarded as belonging to the way the mind represents perception to itself. Not all parallel dualities are of the same kind, however. They may be subdivided into (a) complementary pairs and (b) mutually exclusive pairs. Complementary pairs, such as male/female or left/right, exist only by virtue of each other. They are reciprocal opposites. Mutually exclusive opposites, on the other hand, exist only by the negation of each

¹³⁹For an excellent study of this question see Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena* (Gersh 1978), and for a fine collection of papers comparing Neoplatonism with Indian philosophy see R. B. Harris, Ed., *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought* (Harris 1982).

other, as for example with monism/pluralism, hot/cold, light/dark. They are antithetical. In *Advaita Vedānta* the good/evil opposites are regarded as complementary or reciprocal opposites, while in Platonism and in Christianity they are understood as mutually exclusive opposites, like being/nonbeing. Not all mutually exclusive opposites are, however, of the same kind. Some are antithetical, while others are only relative opposites in which only one pole is primary. Presence/absence would be an example of this type of opposite. In the Christian tradition “good” is understood as a primary presence and “evil” as the absence or privation of good and not a reality in its own right. From this understanding of the nature of good and evil there developed the Christian doctrine of *privatio boni*, which escapes the Manichean dualism in which good and evil are regarded as two opposing realities or powers.¹⁴⁰ Strictly speaking, this Christian understanding of good and evil belongs to the vertical class of opposites, while in *Vedānta* it belongs to the parallel class. In Christianity good and evil are ontological opposites, while in *Vedānta* they are moral opposites. This is an important distinction because it shows that the understanding of the notions of good and evil are not necessarily the same in different religious or philosophical traditions.

There is a further class of more ambiguous pairs that express a kind of “identity in difference”, such as universal/particular, being/becoming, absolute/relative, macrocosm/microcosm etc. These appear to share in some respects the attributes of reciprocal opposites as well as mutually exclusive opposites, hence their ambiguity. These are the types of opposites to which the notion of *coincidentia oppositorum* has been applied.

It is obvious from this brief survey that not all dualities can be resolved in the same manner, and that there are some - the mutually negating opposites - that cannot be resolved at all. Great care needs to be taken when

¹⁴⁰For a study of the distinctions between Zoroastrian, Platonic and Gnostic dualism see Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis* (Rudolph 1983) p. 59ff.

considering how dualities or opposites occur and the particular types of philosophical or metaphysical problems each type raises. To suppose that there is some general model of resolution that can be applied to all dualities would be quite misguided. Some types of opposites simply belong to the pluralistic nature of creation itself (*Sagamu Brahman*) and rather than being resolved they can only be “transcended” through the knowledge of as the undifferentiated substratum of creation (*Nirguna Brahman*).

Three main types of resolution may be discerned: (a) Unity of Identity, (b) Unity of Reciprocity, and (c) Unity of Mergence. Unity of identity is where all trace of distinction or separateness is entirely removed. It is where “lost” or “forgotten” identity is restored. Unity of reciprocity is where there is identity in distinction, or differentiated unity, as for example in the Christian doctrine of the three Persons of the Divine Trinity. This is what might be termed a “complex” unity, since it is where, to use the term of Teilhard de Chardin, “unity differentiates”. At the mystical level it is where the individual soul knows and becomes most distinctly itself in union with God. It is this type of union that Bonaventure speaks of when he says “I will see myself better in God than in my very self”.¹⁴¹ Here God is understood to be the ground of the subjectivity or self-presence of every being. Unity of mergence is unity through transformation and absorption. In mystical terms this is where the soul is said to be transformed or transfigured into God. It is union through an ontological change.

All three of these types of unity are spoken of in mystical literature describing the ultimate union of the soul with God, although allowance must be made for metaphorical language in many of these descriptions. *Advaita Vedānta* clearly and emphatically speaks of the first, unity of identity. This is why it has often been called monism, although this is a misleading term as I have mentioned already. Nevertheless, it is in the *differences* between these three concepts of mystical union that distinctions are made between

¹⁴¹ *Collations of the Six Days*, 12, n, 9

Advaita Vedānta and other religious traditions. On the other hand, there are passages in the *Upaniṣads* and in the *Bhagavad Gītā* that appear to describe each of these three types of unity and it is from these differences that various schools of interpretation have arisen. The *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* or qualified nondualism of Rāmānuja,¹⁴² for instance, is based upon the second type of unity, unity of reciprocity. Sharma explores some of these differences of interpretation in his comparative study of the *Gītā*¹⁴³ and suggests that on occasions Śankara's nondualist interpretation is forced, although he discusses in his conclusion ways in which these diverse interpretations may be reconciled.

If there are different kinds of resolution to dualities, then obviously the appropriate kind of resolution must be applied to each type of duality, where a resolution is actually possible or necessary. Here is where we may take issue with the term "monism" as applied to Śankara's nondualism. Monism is, I suggest, a false resolution of the dualism that *Advaita Vedānta* is concerned with. To see this as clearly as possible we may discuss the dualities Śankara is concerned with in terms of *three primary dualities*. I have called them three primary dualities because they arise out of a threefold division of Reality into *Brahman*, *jagat*, and *ātman* - God, Universe, and Self. They are: 1. Universe/God (It/Thou duality); 2. God/Self (Thou/I duality); 3. Self/Universe (I/It duality).

These dualities do not fall easily into any of the categories discussed a moment ago. This is partly because each pair is experienced differently and partly because as a class they may be thought of in quite different ways. In general, however, three different ways of conceiving these pairs may be

¹⁴²Ramanuja (1055-1137), Hindu saint and philosopher and founder of the doctrine of qualified nondualism (*Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta*) which holds that God and the world are both real, but that the reality of God is independent while that of the world is dependent. This he expressed in the analogy of Brahman as the Self and the world as body.

¹⁴³ Sharma, Arvind. 1986 *The Hindu Gita: Ancient and classical interpretations of the Bhagavadgita*, Duckworth, London.

distinguished: (a) as entirely separate and autonomous realities in themselves, (b) as cause and effect, (c) as co-relative. It will be useful to examine each of these in turn.

(a) The first of these we may term “monadism”. Although no such scheme of entirely separate existences has been elaborated, as far as I am aware,¹⁴⁴ the *assumption* of absolute independence of being is not uncommon. Attempts to define beings or entities “in themselves”, without accounting for their relations with other beings or entities, or the notion of individualism found in certain kinds of existentialism in which essence is held to be self-created, are examples. But notions of the radical transcendence of God, which deny any ontological relation between God and creation, or between God and the soul - God as “wholly other” - also fall into this class of dualism. Also the doctrine of *ārambha-vāda*, which holds that the universe is a new creation not contained in its cause, is dualistic in this sense and is refuted by Śankara in his *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya* (II. i. 15-20) where he argues that the effect is non-different from the cause.

The assumption underlying such a conception shows itself to be extremely radical once it is considered closely. It attributes absolute autonomy or self-determination to every entity or being, regarding it as originating and terminating in and for itself. This implies an absolute non-relation between all entities or beings. Such an absolute non-relation would even exclude, logically speaking, any ontological or epistemological relations between all things. Even to speak of each possessing “being” or “existence” would not strictly be possible since some nominalist explanation of the apparent common properties of being or existence would be required to justify absolute non-relation. Although such monadism seems wholly

¹⁴⁴I exclude the “Monadology” of Leibniz because although he conceives reality as made of independent and autonomous “souls” that only appear to affect one another, they are all created by God and all act within a pre-established harmony which God has established. Nevertheless, Leibniz’s monadology is an example of a philosophy that denied any single unified substance as the basis of reality.

implausible, it represents, at least conceptually, the most radical form of dualism in the sense that *Advaita Vedānta* conceives dualism - a duality of separately originating and wholly independent realities.

(b) It is perhaps the weaknesses of this first type of dualism that lead to the second, the causal explanation of separate being. If it is implausible to conceive every being or entity as self-originating and self-determining, then a theory of commonly derived being may be posited. There are two such theories of causality, the materialist and the theistic. Materialism posits primal matter as the common substance and cause of all things, while theistic causation posits that the world and the self are created by God. According to *Advaita Vedānta*, the notion of cause and effect belongs strictly to the empirical world, or *Māyā*, even though *Brahman* is held to be both the material and efficient cause of creation. It is a model of the relations between created things, where everything affects everything else. In the empirical world, however, what is a cause in one relation is an effect in another. No object or entity can be found that is solely a cause, nor can any object or entity be found that is solely an effect. Thus, causality is a relativistic notion. It turns out either to be circular or else an infinite regress.¹⁴⁵ In *Vedānta* causality is the characterising feature of *samsara*, or else it belongs to nature or *prakṛti*. Also it posits the existence of *Brahman* only by inference while, according to Śankara, *Brahman* cannot be inferred from creation (*Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, II. i. 14-20). To posit God as first cause, so as to break the infinite regress of causality, may solve the problem in one sense, but it reduces every being to the status of an effect. Consequently, an insurmountable ontological discontinuity is placed between the being of God and the being of the universe and the being of the self. If it is said that the world and the self “have” being, or in some sense “participate” in being, then being itself becomes dual. What type of entity

¹⁴⁵See Shankara’s discussion and refutation of God as efficient cause in *Brahma-Sutra-Bhasya* II. ii. 37-41.

“has” being if the entity itself is not being? Or what type of entity “participates” in being if it is itself not being? It is clear that to attribute Primal Being to God as first cause and some kind of derived being to the world and to the self reduces Being itself to an attribute of some kind, even though an uncreated attribute of God and a created attribute among created things.

(c) A way out of this impasse might seem to be offered by the third type of duality, the duality of co-relativism.¹⁴⁶ As with our first type of dualism, we are dealing here with a concept that has not been given detailed philosophical exposition but which nevertheless lies hidden or is implicit in various notions of reality. At the opposite pole to monadism, co-relativism conceives that all entities and beings exist only by mutual relation to one another. Nothing exists in or by itself as such, but only over against and by virtue of everything else. For example “I” can be posited only in relation to “Thou”. “This” can only be posited in relation to “That”. But neither “I”, “Thou”, “This” nor “That” exist as such because, from another perspective, they are interchangeable. The “I” is a “Thou” to another, “This” is a “That” to another. Therefore everything is what it is only by virtue of the perspective from which it is known or the context or relation in which it appears. All things exist only by virtue of these ever mobile perspectives and contexts. Put in other terms, everything is simply the expression of conditions and is devoid of any real existence in itself. There are no entities or beings, only relations. This conception of reality finds implicit expression in various forms of relativism and deconstruction theory.

According to *Advaita Vedānta* the possibility of interpreting reality in these diverse ways arises out of the fundamentally paradoxical nature of *Māyā* itself:

¹⁴⁶By co-relativism I do not mean the Buddhist conception of conditioned origination (*pratitya-samutpada*) which excludes the existence of *Brahman*, although in other respects it is structurally similar although applied in a specialized sense.

This (*Māyā*) is without the characteristics of Reality or unreality, without beginning and dependent on the Reality that is the Supreme Self. She (*Māyā*), who is of the form of the three *Gunās* (qualities or energies of Nature) brings forth the Universe with movable and immovable (objects).¹⁴⁷

Since it is neither real nor unreal it cannot be comprehended:

All people admit in their experience existence of *Māyā*. From the logical point of view *Māyā* is inexplicable. śruti too declares it to be neither existence nor non-existence. Since the effects of *Māyā* are undeniably manifest, its existence cannot be denied. Being stultified by knowledge, it cannot really be said to exist. From the point of view of (absolute) knowledge (of the *ātman*) it is always inoperative and hence negligible.¹⁴⁸ (Vidyāraṇya Swami 1967, *Pancadaśī*, VI, 128 - 129)¹⁴⁹

It is to be appreciated, however, that although *Advaita* declares that the perception of duality is ultimately false or illusory, it does not deny the rational intelligibility of the world through dualistic or pluralistic models. *Māyā* is by nature manifold. The above types of duality render the world intelligible to high degrees and may be taken as hypotheses that make phenomenal reality explicable and calculable. For example, many of the

¹⁴⁷ Shankara 1987: *Prabodhasudhakara*, 99.

¹⁴⁸ Vidyāraṇya Swami 1967, *Pancadasi*, VI, 128 - 129

¹⁴⁹ Little is known of Vidyāraṇya. Some scholars hold that he was head of the Sringeri Math from 1377 to 1386, one of the four principal Maths founded by Shankara. His *Pancadasi* is a rich exposition of *Advaita Vedānta* and has come to be regarded as a classic in India. It bears interesting comparison with the works of Shankara as a non-polemical manual of instruction.

findings of modern Western science have been made possible upon the implicit assumption of monadism. The foundational notion of “pure objectivity”, although now called into question, assumes that the world is composed of discrete *objects* observable and identifiable “in themselves” independently of the subject who observes them. So likewise has the notion of causality rendered whole areas of phenomena intelligible. And a form of the notion of co-relativism has found recent expression in such theories as holism, chaos theory and ecology, in which reality is conceived as a total interconnected process with no individual self-determining entities or beings. There can be no doubt that each of these views of reality produce genuine knowledge about the phenomenal world.¹⁵⁰ Their value is not disputable at the empirical level, and *Advaita Vedānta* does not dispute them there. It is only when they make a claim to absolute knowledge that they may be called into question, for they yield only relative knowledge and can be in dispute with the claims of one another. The multiplicity of scientific theories of reality and the consequent disputes over scientific methodologies itself displays, from the nondual perspective, the elusive and multiple nature of the phenomenal world or *Māyā*. *Advaita Vedānta* does not propose to replace this field of knowledge with a better or truer version that will render the world more intelligible. It proposes, instead, that another order of knowledge exists which *transcends* the paradoxical nature of all such knowledge by transcending its dualistic basis which lies in the very structure of cognisance and reason itself, upon which it is founded.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰These three modes of conceiving duality have perhaps never been given detailed philosophical exposition because they are held to be self-evident truths by those who hold them. They operate in the mental structure in much the same manner as Kant’s notion of time as a transcendental *a priori* does.

¹⁵¹It will be noticed that the Dualism attributed to Zoroastrianism and to certain forms of Gnosticism, which conceive of existence as a perpetual struggle between opposing principles of good and evil, are not included in our classification. The fact that *Advaita Vedānta* does not discuss this form of dualism is because, firstly, it is not strictly an ontological dualism and,

Thus, although *Advaita Vedānta* declares that *Māyā* is inexplicable, since it is neither real nor unreal, it does not deny workable empirical knowledge of the phenomenal world. Of itself, however, such knowledge does not lead to liberation because it is knowledge of a secondary and relative order. It is conceptual knowledge, not knowledge as such, which is knowledge of the Self alone. Yet the relative nature of all such knowledge points towards absolute knowledge in so far as the desire for knowledge originates in the Self. It is because nondual knowledge is ultimately sought, and because the mind can intuitively discriminate between relative and absolute, that all such knowledge is known to be relative. On the other hand, according to *Advaita Vedānta* it is only when the nondual nature of reality is known that the ephemeral nature of *Māyā* itself is also truly known.

The teaching that the empirical world is unreal does not mean that it is not there, only that it is like a drama in which the actors are real actors but they are not the characters whom they play, in which all sorts of events take place but which do not really happen. For the actors to play their parts convincingly they need great knowledge of the art of drama, yet for this knowledge to work effectively the actors must always know that they only play roles. Thus a drama, by analogy with *Māyā*, is both real and unreal at once. Yet this knowledge of its illusory nature neither impedes the play nor

secondly, good and evil belong to a class of pairs of opposites which belong solely to *Maya*. The problem of duality as *Advaita Vedānta* conceives it is the problem of God, the universe, and the self appearing as separate realities, while in fact they are one. The Gnostic form of dualism does not propose that the principles of good and evil have independent origination, but rather that the principle of evil, as identified in matter, is a secondary and degenerate *addition* to a good original creation. In this cosmology, evil is a product of a fall, not of the first creation. It has features more in common with *Maya*, or of *avidya*, than of the creation as Vedānta conceives it. *Advaita* has a very specific understanding of duality, just as it has of nonduality, which ought not to be confused with other types or other uses of the term. The duality of *Advaita Vedānta* is an essentially illusory duality, a duality that arises through a misperception of reality, not a cosmic duality. As such it can be overcome through the knowledge of the real nature of God, the world, and the self.

makes its performance pointless. But it preserves both the actors and the audience from projecting the notion of absolute reality upon whatever appears or befalls.

Given the types of dualism that we have outlined as ways of conceiving the three primary dualities, how are these to be resolved - if resolution is really the right word? Here is where we need to tread rather cautiously. There are many descriptions of nonduality we might cite from the Vedantic literature (as the analogy of the “wave” and the “ocean” for instance) but, as with the notion of duality, these are easily, and commonly are, misunderstood. We cannot leap, as it were, immediately from duality to nonduality. Any ill-considered leap from duality to nonduality is likely to misconceive nonduality in a number of ways and produce what may be called “naive unities” or monisms. That is to say, either unities conceived merely as at the opposite pole to duality, or else conflations of dualities. The first of these leaps makes a pair of duality and nonduality, and so still belongs to the thought structure of duality. It is because the term nonduality is a negative term that it cannot easily be polarised with an opposite, as the positive term monism can be. The second leap, in which one pole of a duality is conflated into the other, conceives plurality merely as the “dispersion” of unity and so attempts to arrive at nonduality by means of an ingathering of the multiple to the one. This leap is a reduction or conflation based upon the mutually negating conception of duality, yet it represents a common misunderstanding of the teaching of *Advaita Vedānta*.

I propose, therefore, to examine a series of *false nondualities* before coming to a final discussion of what nonduality means in *Advaita Vedānta*. Here it will be helpful to bear in mind the distinction I have alluded to several times between nonduality and monism. Recalling our three primary dualities, we discover that in attempting to resolve their polarities we are liable, through a false move of reduction, to conflate each of them into six possible naive monisms. These are each worth considering since, in their

most radical forms, they produce six views or paradigms of reality, some of which are articulated in received philosophical systems. Those suggested here, such as materialism, essentialism and so forth, present themselves in extreme or radical forms and obviously each of them imply quite different conceptions of God, the universe and the self. More seriously, for our purposes, they also produce several monisms with which *Advaita Vedānta* has often been incorrectly identified. The six false reductions or monisms that emerge from the three primary dualities may be summarised as follows:

THE SIX FALSE REDUCTIONS

1. Reduction of Universe into God (Theistic Idealism)
2. Reduction of God into Universe (Pantheism)
3. Reduction of God into Self (Radical Existentialism)
4. Reduction of Self into God (Radical Essentialism)
5. Reduction of Self into Universe (Materialism)
6. Reduction of Universe into Self (Solipsism)

By “reduction” I mean here a conflation or subsumation of one pole of a duality into the other, and thereby an elimination of the pole that has been conflated into the other, which now alone stands for the “real”. Each such conflation produces what may accurately be called a “monism”. It may be called a monism because the status of reality belongs to it alone. It may be called a *naive* monism because the problem of duality has been overcome through a false unification, a unification in which the identity of one pole of a duality has been relativised and surrendered into the identity of the other, which is taken as an absolute or true identity. Dualism has not been authentically overcome but simply short-circuited, discounted or leapt over.

Yet it is not difficult to understand how these naive monisms can arise, although reflection upon their implications immediately brings them into

question. If it is assumed that reality is in some fundamental sense one, or unified, as *Advaita Vedānta* says it is, then there is an obvious temptation to locate within it some unifying element or principle, some universal factor, to which everything may be reduced. Materialism is perhaps the most obvious instance of such a reduction. If every entity, every process or every disposition of things always involves a material quantity, conjunction or action, then matter itself may be taken as the primal reality and the key with which all things may be made explicable. So runs the thought underlying much scientific theorising. Such a predisposition of thought is tempted to discount or bracket out whatever does not fit this view, or else to say that it will *eventually* be incorporated through the advance of science.

The various names I have given to some of these monisms, such as Theistic Idealism, Materialism, Radical Essentialism and so forth, may strike us as curious at first glance. They are offered only as approximations, but deliberately given in extreme forms. Yet a little consideration of each one throws an interesting light upon them, and it is particularly illuminating to consider each position as a monism. Pantheism, for example, is obviously an identification of God with the universe. As a monism it suggests a particular type of Pantheism, of course. But it is significant here because *Advaita Vedānta* is occasionally called a form of pantheism, and this shows one way in which nondualism can be, and has been, misinterpreted as a type of monism. Again, the reduction of the Self into God, from an essentialist perspective, produces a certain type of Essentialism. And likewise with each reduction. Each monism conceives of God, the universe or the self quite differently.¹⁵² What is more significant and interesting, however, is

¹⁵²The radical Existentialism of Sartre, for example, altogether denies the reality of God as well as a given essence of the self, which is to be created by the individual. Sartre conceives both God the creator and the self as essence as denying man ultimate freedom, which he locates in the potentiality of existence. Thus for Sartre God is conceived as determinist and created essence as fatalist. From a monistic viewpoint, Sartre would confer upon man those qualities of God, such as self-determination and

that these monisms themselves make up a fresh set of dualities between them, dualities that might be termed “mutually exclusive” dualities or pairs of opposites, the principal ones being: 1. Theistic Idealism/Pantheism; 2. Radical Existentialism/Radical Essentialism; 3. Materialism/Solipsism, and a secondary set being: 1. Theistic Idealism/Solipsism; 2. Pantheism/Radical Existentialism; 3. Radical Existentialism/Materialism. Other permutations are possible but the three principal ones are the most significant here since they represent genuine opposites as well as genuinely irreconcilable schools of thought. But, again, they are significant because Śankara could be taken to be a “radical essentialist” or a “theistic idealist”, as well as a pantheist as we have noted already.

It is the danger of misconceiving nondualism in terms of these kinds of monisms that opens the way to false or inadequate comparisons between *Advaita Vedānta* and other philosophical or religious positions, particularly with “types” or “typologies” of mysticism. The fact that one interpreter sees *Advaita* as “non-theistic” while another sees it as “theistic idealism”, or one as “pantheistic” and another as subjective “essentialism” shows us, at the very least, that all these terms are inadequate ways of classifying *Advaita*.

How then may we approach a more adequate way of elucidating, without reduction or distortion, the genuine purport of Śankara’s nondualism - and without, of course, assuming that Śankara has not himself adequately elucidated it? The best approach, which is the one we have followed so far in our discussion, would seem to be to tackle the misunderstandings that are common or most likely to occur. This implies a negative approach rather than a positive one. But it is those attempts at translating Śankara’s thought into positive language that have generally led to misunderstandings. This approach, from which arises the term “monism”, has tended to leave aside, as we noted at the beginning, the real problem that Śankara is addressing,

freedom to create, which in the West are traditionally attributes of God alone. Sartre’s existentialism is, of course, only one type of existentialism.

which is that of nescience or ignorance of the true nature of reality. This in turn tends to pass over the experiential dimension that lies at the heart of his teaching. From the perspective of the tradition to which Śankara belongs, his teachings are those of a fully enlightened man. This means that, far from being a philosophical system of the speculative kind to which the West has grown accustomed over the last three hundred years or so, Śankara is attempting to communicate, with the aid of the scriptures and all the philosophical tools at his disposal, his own direct experience of ultimate Reality, disciplined by the authority of the Vedas. Seen from this perspective, Śankara is trying to expose to our view the obstructions to that direct experience of ultimate Reality. These obstructions lie, he says repeatedly, not in our rational powers of apprehending the phenomenal world, but in the conditioned underlying sense of personal selfhood. The problem lies in the realm of subjectivity rather than in the reasoning powers or in the nature of the phenomenal world. The way human selfhood is experienced determines the way the world is experienced, and the way the world is experienced reinforces (in the state of ignorance) the way the self is experienced. It is a perpetual circle. According to Śankara that circle can only be broken by exposing to view the false structure of the sense of personal selfhood. I propose, then, to conclude with a brief examination of the nondual approach to the subject/object relation.

The question of the real nature of the relation between the subject and the object, between the perceiver and the perceived, the knower and the known, is not confined to Eastern thought. It is perhaps a universal question of all philosophy, returning in different ways in each age. Until recently the West has confined itself predominantly to only one side of the question, to the epistemological problem of true knowledge of the object, or the “objective world”. In its quest for such “objective” knowledge, particularly in the sciences, it has taken as axiomatic the real existence of the phenomenal world, and in doing this it has assumed that the epistemological

difficulties encountered in this quest arise not from the nature of the world itself, but from the *subjectivity* of the observer or knower. Thus the word “subjectivity” has taken on pejorative connotations. The subject, it is believed, needs to be removed from perception because it colours objective perception with its personal idiosyncrasies, predispositions and conditioning. Consequently it is held that ideal perception is objective perception - perception free from any blemish of subjectivity. The fact that philosophers, such as Kant, have demonstrated that perception of the phenomenal world (including thought) is by nature a structuring process of impressions, which therefore precludes absolutely direct knowledge of any object as it is in itself, has not altered this view in common practice. The ideal of objective perception is still pursued, as though the only inhibiting factor to it were acquired opinion or emotional bias.

What is significant in this is the consequent notion that, when it comes to the question of knowledge of the human subject, the fact of the subject *being a subject* is set aside and every effort is made to know it as an object. This is the case with the various schools of psychology too, which claim, rightly or wrongly, to proceed by empirical methodology. The assumption behind this view, apart from the authority vested in the notion of objective knowledge, is that human subjectivity is already known and understood, as though it were a given knowledge and presented no difficulties.¹⁵³

From the point of view of *Advaita Vedānta* the aspiration for such objective knowledge, whether of the phenomenal world or of the human subject, is founded upon the false notion that objects exist at all in any real sense. All attempts are doomed to fail since the very notion that objects exist is itself a projection of the mind upon sense impressions. The subject/object appearance of reality arises only in the mind. This is not the

¹⁵³Recent philosophers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Buber and Ricoeur have opened up the question of “subjectivity” in various ways and shown that the “givenness” or transparency of the Cartesian self is illusory.

same thing as Kant is saying. Although he says, just as Śankara does, that there cannot be knowledge of things in themselves because perception is a structuring process, Śankara goes further and says that there are no things in themselves to be known and that perception of discrete objects is in fact misperception. It is from this stand-point that *Advaita Vedānta* proposes the notion of *Māyā* within Brahman:

Māyā which has this double of projection and concealment is in Brahman. It limits the indivisible nature of Brahman and makes It (Brahman) appear as the world and the embodied being.¹⁵⁴ (Śankara, *Dr̥gdr̥śyaviveka* XXXV. 35.)

Or again in his commentary on the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*:

Alas, how unfathomable, inscrutable, and variegated is this *Māyā*, that every creature, though in reality identical with the supreme Entity, and is instructed as such, does not grasp the fact, “I am the supreme Self”, while even without being told, he accepts as his Self the non-selves, viz. the aggregate of body and senses, under the idea, “I am the son of such a one”, though these (latter) are objects of perception (and are hence not his selves) like pots etc.! (Śankara, commentary on *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I. iii. 12.)

Śankara does not mean by *Māyā* that the phenomenal world is not actually present, but that its presence is an appearance only - though a “real” appearance. Appearance is, by definition, real and unreal at once. This, however, is not an “objective fact” about the phenomenal world in the same sense as a scientific fact claims to be. When Śankara states that the phenomenal world is unreal he is speaking not of the phenomenal world “in

¹⁵⁴ Shankara 1976, *Dr̥g-Dr̥śya-Viveka* XXXV. 35.

itself” but of the act of perceiving it, which arises from the notion of an independent observer looking upon an independent reality.

All the various forms exist in the imagination of the perceiver, the substratum being the eternal and all-pervading Viṣṇu, whose nature is Existence and Intelligence. Names and forms are like bangles and bracelets, and Viṣṇu is like gold. (Śankara, *Ātmabodha*, 8.)

In other words, he is claiming that the phenomenal world appears by virtue of the subject/object concept of the mind. Again, unlike Kant, he is not saying that the phenomenal world cannot be directly accessed as it really is because of the nature of the mind, but rather that it can be known directly through the realization that it is non-different to the Self.

All that is perceived, all that is heard, is Brahman, and nothing else. Attaining the Knowledge of Reality, one sees the universe as the nondual Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. (*Ātmabodha*, 64.)

Thus Śankara is really speaking of the subject, or rather of the notion of an “I” that conceives itself as a subject. This “I” (*ahankāra* as distinct from *ātman*) is the product of *upādhis* or limiting adjuncts imposed upon the pure, limitless and self-illuminating consciousness. It is in this process of qualifying pure consciousness that the duality of subject and object arises. It is therefore quite wrong to say that in nondual perception the subject unites with the object. This would be an instance of monism rather than of nonduality. For Śankara perception is dual by nature. It requires and consists of a subject and object and is therefore a product of *Māyā*. What Śankara is not saying, as the Buddhists do in their doctrine of *anatmavāda*, is that there is no self. On the contrary, he is saying that the Self or *ātman*

always remains the undeluded supreme Witness of the illusion of subject and object as well as of the removal of that illusion.

This objective universe is absolutely unreal; neither is egoism a reality, for it is observed to be momentary. How can the perception, “I know all,” be true of egoism etc., which are momentary? But the real “I” is that which witnesses the ego and the rest. It exists always, even in the state of profound sleep The knower of all changes in things subject to change should necessarily be eternal and changeless. The unreality of the gross and subtle bodies is again and again clearly observed in imagination, dream, and profound sleep.¹⁵⁵ (Śankara, *Vivekacūdāmaṇi* verses 293-295.)

Notice here that Śankara says it is the *objective* universe that is absolutely unreal. It is in the experience of reality as objective that its unreality lies. Reality Itself, which is *Brahman*, cannot be known as an object by a subject. Thus, the notion of objectivity necessitates a subject. The subject is its logical complement. Therefore, the ideal of absolutely objective knowledge is self-contradictory from the nondual position. The vantage-point of real knowledge, as the passage quoted from the *Vivekacūdāmaṇi* shows, is that of the real “I” which witnesses the duality of subject and object as unreal. That is to say, the *ātman* knows of itself the reality of the Real and the unreality of the unreal, and so the use of the word “witness” here does not imply a perceiver seeing anything separate from itself. The resolution of the duality of subject and object lies, then, not in a union of subject with object - which would necessitate either a conflation of the subject into the object or of the object into the subject - but in a knowledge of the unreality of the separation of perceiver and perceived, knower and known etc., through seeing the process through which the mind creates the notion of itself as a

¹⁵⁵ Shankara 1978 *Vivekacudamani* verses 293-295.

perceiver separate from the all-pervading *ātman* through qualifying infinite, self-luminous consciousness.

But for delusion there can be no connection of the Self - which is unattached, beyond activity, and formless - with the objective world, as in the case of blueness etc. with reference to the sky. The Jivahood of the *ātman*, the Witness, which is beyond qualities and beyond activities, and which is realized within as Knowledge and Bliss Absolute - has been superimposed by the delusion of *buddhi*, and is not real. And because it is by nature an unreality, it ceases to exist when delusion is gone. (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 195-196.)

The negation of the duality of subject and object is, however, only one aspect of nondual knowledge. The difficulties or misconceptions that arise when trying to understand nonduality simply in terms of the removal of dualities, which is impossible to conceive since conception is itself dualistic, can only be resolved through direct knowledge of the Self that is by nature nondual. There is an interesting passage in the *Pancadaśī* of Śrī Vidyāraṇya that makes this clear. A question is put to the teacher in the form of an objection:

If the mind causes bondage by giving rise to the phenomenal world, the world could be made to disappear by controlling the mind. So only Yoga needs to be practiced; what is the necessity of knowledge of *Brahman*?

(Reply): Though by controlling the mind duality can be made to disappear temporarily the complete and final destruction of the mental creation is not possible without a direct knowledge of *Brahman*. This is proclaimed by the *Vedānta*. The duality of īśvara's creation may continue, but the nondualist, when convinced of its illusoriness, can

nonetheless know the secondless *Brahman*. When all duality disappears at the time of the dissolution of the universe, the secondless *ātman* still remains unknown, because then, as in deep sleep, there is no teacher and no scripture, though there may be absence of duality. The world of duality created by *īśvara* is rather a help than an obstacle to a direct knowledge of the nonduality. Moreover, we cannot destroy the creation, so let it be. Why are you so opposed to it? (*Vidyāraṇya* 1980: IV, 38-42.)

What this passage seems to imply is that the mere suspension or suppression of the dualistic projection of the mind through control by practice of yoga is not sufficient for knowledge of Reality. The knowledge of nonduality is not merely some kind of reversion of the mind to a non-distinguishing or non-cognizant state, a cessation of the projecting activity of the *buddhi*, as happens temporarily in deep sleep for instance, which would be a state of ignorance of duality rather than a knowledge of nondual Reality, but instead it is full knowledge of the identity of *ātman* and *Brahman*. Thus Śankara says:

The cessation of that superimposition takes place through perfect knowledge, and by no other means. Perfect knowledge, according to the śrutis, consists in the realization of the identity of the individual soul and *Brahman*. (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 202.)

This perfect knowledge involves full discrimination between the characteristics of existence, cognizability and attraction as they belong to *Brahman*, there corresponding to *sat*, *chit*, and *ananda*, and the way the phenomenal world appears to be endowed with these characteristics by the further imposition of the qualities of name and form. Name and form qualify the unqualified characteristics of *Brahman* and make them appear to belong

to the phenomenal world in discrete objects.¹⁵⁶ This of course includes the ego.

It is significant that Vidyāranya says that if the Self is not known when all duality disappears at the moment of dissolution of the universe, then it will remain unknown, as it is in deep sleep. This implies that true realization of the Self involves the accomplishment of realization within the creation. This in turn implies that realization involves knowledge of the true nature of the universe as *Brahman*, and therefore a direct and continuous discrimination between the real and the unreal. It is in this sense that the various analogies of illusion, such as the snake and the rope or the wave and the ocean, are illustrative of nondual knowledge. The universe as the “phenomenal” world or as an “object” of perception by a subject is known as an appearance only, and so is still apprehended, but not taken to be Reality itself. If, by abiding in perfect knowledge of the Self, the universe still appears, but now as appearance only, then whatever befalls will not affect the Self in any way. Nor will the movements of the mind or the emotions perturb the Self because there will be no attachment to them through the attribution of reality to them. This would indicate a change in the mind itself, even though the mind is part of *Māyā*. Thus a distinction is made in *Advaita Vedānta* between illusion (*Māyā*) and delusion, which is to mistake *Māyā* for Reality. A question is put to Ramana Maharshi touching on this problem and it is worth considering his reply:

A visitor: “The Supreme Spirit (*Brahman*) is Real. The world (*jagat*) is illusion,” is the stock phrase of Śrī Sankaracharya. Yet others say, “The world is reality”. Which is true?

¹⁵⁶See the explanatory notes of Swami Nikhilananda to verse 8 of his translation of Shankara’s *Atmabodha* (Madras, 1947) for a fuller explanation of this.

M.: Both statements are true. They refer to different stages of development and are spoken from different points of view. The aspirant (*abhyasi*) starts with the definition, that which is real exists always; then he eliminates the world as unreal because it is changing. It cannot be real; “not this, not this!” The seeker ultimately reaches the Self and there finds unity as the prevailing note. Then, that which was originally rejected as being unreal is found to be a part of the unity. Being absorbed in the Reality, the world also is Real. There is only being in Self-Realisation, and nothing but being. Again Reality is used in a different sense and is applied loosely by some thinkers to objects. They say that the reflected (*adhyasika*) Reality admits of degrees which are named:

(1) *Vyavaharika satya* (everyday life) - this chair is seen by me and is real.

(2) *Pratibhasika satya* (illusory) - Illusion of serpent in a coiled rope. The appearance is real to the man who thinks so. This phenomenon appears at a point of time and under certain circumstances.

(3) *Paramarthika satya* (ultimate) - Reality is that which remains the same always and without change.

If Reality be used in the wider sense the world may be said to have the everyday life and illusory degrees (*vyavaharika* and *pratibhasika satya*). Some, however, deny even the reality of practical life - *vyavaharika satya* and consider it to be only projection of the mind. According to them it is only *pratibhasika satya*, i.e., an illusion.¹⁵⁷
(Śri Ramana Maharshi: 41-42)

¹⁵⁷ Maharshi, Sri Ramana. 1989 *Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Ed. Sri Munagala S. Venkataramiah, Sri Ramanashram, Tiruvannamalai.

This implies that in realization of the Self as the same Reality as *Brahman* the universe is known also as that same Reality, but that with the dissolution of ignorance in the mind the projection or imposition of the notion that the universe is a *separate* reality ceases. What has dissolved in the mind is the delusion that Reality is multiple, and with this comes the knowledge that *Māyā* and *Brahman* are ultimately identical (*paramarthika satya*), although there is a knowledge of the distinction between *Brahman* and *Māyā*. This suggests that, although the Self alone knows nondual Reality, the mind also acts differently under that knowledge - even though mind, from the ultimate stand-point, is illusory. Under the direct light of the Self the mind no longer makes mistakes about reality. What appear to be two contradictory statements by Śankara, on the one hand that the universe is unreal, and on the other hand that the universe is Brahman, really amount to saying the same thing but on different levels. The first statement denies the separate reality of the universe, while the second affirms its true nature. The two statements are addressed to different stages of knowledge in the subject, and therefore have a soteriological function, and so cannot be taken simply as "objective" statements about reality itself in a scientific sense. This implies, finally, that there is no *real* distinction between appearance of Brahman as the universe (*Saguna Brahman*) and Brahman as the eternal and unchanging Reality (*Nirguna Brahman*), just as there is no real distinction between the ocean and the wave. All such distinctions, even though they have a didactic function in *Advaita Vedānta*, lie solely in the mind of the perceiving subject.

CHAPTER 4

John Scottus Eriugena

1. *Conceiving the World*

One of the most obvious facts that we take for granted is that man lives in the world. As human beings, we regard ourselves as both autonomous selves and as participants in a universe greater than ourselves. Yet as soon as we begin to reflect upon these obvious facts all sorts of difficulties arise. We ask “What is the nature of the world?”; “What is man?”; “What is the relation between man and the world?”; “How should man act in the world?”. Philosophy, religion, science, art, politics have always posed these questions. Yet I would like to suggest that these questions do not belong to any one of these disciplines, but simply to our humanity itself. Man is man because he reflects upon the nature of existence, his own existence and the existence of every other being. As Tillich says, “Every being participates in the structure of being, but man alone is immediately aware of this structure” (*Systematic Theology* Vol. 1, p. 168). To put it another way: man is not only aware of being, he is aware *that* he is aware of being. In this reflective awareness of being lies man’s uniqueness among beings, his freedom and his potential, but also his sense of existential estrangement. For while man may experience being directly within himself, he cannot normally experience the being of other beings, or the total being of the Creation. To quote Tillich again, “It belongs to the character of existence that man is estranged from nature, that he is unable to understand it in the way that he can understand man” (Ibid. p. 168).

And yet man conceives of a world. Man *alone* conceives of a world. Precisely because he is a reflective being, he cannot help but find himself in a world to which he mysteriously belongs, in which he must act to be himself, and towards which he must act responsibly for the sake of the world. This is the same for man anywhere and at any time. And in the interaction between man and the world lies all the glory and all the tragedy of the human story.

Yet the question remains; Whence does man's sense of world arise in the first place? Every human individual lives and acts according to how they conceive the world to be. Every society lives and acts according to a common notion of a shared world. But more than this, our sense of self arises through our relatedness to a structured world. There is no human personhood without a sense of world to which the human person is related. The autonomy of self, the basis of our sense of freedom and our potential, arises only through a sense of world in which we can meaningfully act. Self and world are the two poles of being that mutually articulate one another. Without a structured world over against which our sense of self stands, our sense of self would be void of any content or form. Similarly, without our sense of self the world would be void of any content or form. No affirmation of being would be possible. For man, as a self-reflective being, there is an exact correlation between self-consciousness and world-consciousness, a correlation based at once upon man's sense of *differentiation from* the world and his *relatedness to* the world. Every human act presupposes this relatedness and affirms a quality of self and a quality of world. Every human act therefore expresses a concept of self and a concept of world, and every such concept carries a value-judgement of self and world, either affirming being or denying it, or either realising the potentiality of being or negating it. Any action that affirms both the being of the self and the being of the world deepens the relatedness of man to the

world, while any action that negates either the being of the self or the being of the world isolates man from the world and from himself.

Man's sense of world may be described broadly on three levels. The first and most rudimentary level, the level which man shares with all other living beings, is the environment, the given conditions that sustain man as a species. Here man interacts with his surroundings through the necessity to survive. At this level man encounters himself, in common with every animal species, through necessity. To this level belong all environmental, biological and behaviouristic concepts of man's existence in the world. The second level, which is peculiar to man alone, we may broadly call the social level. On this level man interacts conceptually and dialogically with the world. It is only at this level that we may properly speak of man as participating in a "world" as distinct from environment. "World" is not merely the conditions in which man finds himself placed by nature, it is the structured realm that man conceives of as the totality made up of all beings and which he in part creates for himself. For example he creates a human culture at this level. It is at this level that man emerges specifically as a reflective being, as a being that shapes his own conception of being and existence, and who creates his own relatedness to his surroundings and so transforms them from environment to world, or from conditions to cosmos. The third level is the sacred, in which the world is seen as exemplifying or intimating transcendent Being, the Ground of Being that is the origin of all beings. This is the level of religion, in which "world" becomes "creation" in the theological sense of that word.

We may observe that these levels may not be inferred from one another. "World" may not be inferred from "environment", and "creation" may not be inferred from "world". Likewise, reflective man may not be inferred from instinctual man, nor religious man from reflective man. This is

because each level has its own ontological structure and therefore exerts its own demands upon beings at that level. Environment, for instance, demands of no creature that it becomes a self-conscious reflective being. Similarly the world of human community demands of no man that he seek the Ground of Being in his Creator. Each level is a self-sufficient expression of a mode of being and cannot be properly interpreted in terms of one of the other levels. For instance, if mankind is interpreted in terms of environment alone we end up with a dehumanised humanity. Such interpretations were common until quite recently, but that is now changing. Yet we must always be on guard against reductive views of man. To say the least, these hinder our understanding of man's relatedness to the world and how he conceives being in the world.

These three broad levels must not be confused. Yet we may also observe that they interact. The "world" of humanity clearly interacts with the environment in very complex ways. Indeed, man lives in both the environment and his world. But we may go further and say that all three modes or levels of being exist in or are accessible to man. To quote Tillich once again: "Man occupies a pre-eminent position in ontology, not as an outstanding object among other objects, but as that being who asks the ontological question and in whose self-awareness the ontological answer can be found" (Ibid. 168). But as we observed earlier, man's self-consciousness itself arises through his sense of relatedness to other beings and objects. The greater his sense of relatedness to the modes of being that stand over against his own being, the greater is his self-consciousness, and *vice versa*. To put that another way, the more deeply he engages in the totality of reality the more deeply he engages in his own being.

Because he is "that being who asks the ontological question" man's consciousness of existence extends in three directions: (a) outwardly,

potentially embracing the universe in its totality; (b) inwardly, potentially embracing the self in its totality; and (c) “vertically” (metaphorically speaking) towards transcendence, potentially embracing Transcendent Being Itself. In religious language these are the acts of total self-giving, total self-recollection, and total self-transcendence. These three modes of conscious being may be found exemplified in the life of Christ, who *gave* himself to the world in total service, who *recollected* himself in the Father, and who *transcended* himself through the Passion.

Obviously, we are not equating these three directions of consciousness with the three levels of man’s experience of being. The three levels are a broad hierarchy of the modes of being, while the three directions of man’s reflective consciousness signify the non-hierarchical threefold structure of human consciousness. What is clear, however, is that there is a correspondence between the three levels and the possible *extension* or depth of the three directions of consciousness. At the level of environment the reach of consciousness is limited wholly to contingent conditions. Here relatedness is confined solely to dependency. At the level of world the reach and depth of consciousness is immensely expanded, but yet it is confined finally within the manifest world of name and form, or is circumscribed by the limit of what is perceivable or conceivable. Even at its most subtle, consciousness is here still in the realm of differentiated being. This would include the Platonic Ideas. Only at the third level is consciousness open to the infinite or transcendent, or to the Ground of Being Itself in Itself, the Absolute.

What I wish us to note at this point is that, drawing upon various strands of the long tradition of ontological thought that extends from Plato to Heidegger, we have been engaged in conceiving notions of world, of making a map of our being in the world. This may be a good map or a bad

map. The point, however, is that making such maps and reflecting on them is itself a peculiarly human thing to do. How we conceive being in the world determines how we act in the world. It determines the values we live by and the ideals we aspire to. At best modern man has a very fragmentary map. Essentially it is a map that excludes or disregards the sanctity of all Being. Yet it is a map, and although a bad one it tells us about the present state of being of man. If we look at modern society's conception of being in the world from a theological perspective we find one thing missing that is integral to all traditional conceptions of being in the world. It lacks a soteriological perspective. That is, it leaves out any notion of salvation or liberation.

In the Christian tradition we find two different kinds of soteriological orientation converge in its world-view: an eschatology or history as a process of revelation, and an ontology or a hierarchy of being. The eschatological orientation has its roots in Judaism, while the ontological orientation has its roots in Platonism. This means that, from the eschatological perspective, the unfolding story of creation has a meaning, a divine intentionality, an ultimate purpose beyond itself, while from the ontological perspective it means that the creation is grounded in God and exemplifies God throughout its hierarchy of being. Thus the creation is at once an exodus and return, and a theophany. There are complex tensions between these two orientations, but these tensions have always served to press Christian theology into deeper exploration and prevented it from becoming static. In the life of man this tension between meaningful history and hierarchical ontology manifests itself in the double demand upon the individual to fulfil his whole potential in the world and yet also to fully transcend the world. As a *participant* in the creation man creatively contributes to its completion, and as a *sojourner* in the creation man seeks

to return to the Ground of Being in God. Thus in the Gospels man is enjoined both to fulfil the law *and* to seek the kingdom of heaven.

For contemporary man, being in the world has no clear soteriological orientation, and so he has no universal framework through which to interpret the depth of his being in the world. He has no paradigm that expresses the essential or existential relationships between God, Creation, and Man. For contemporary man God, Creation, and Man are separate and autonomous realities. At best the relationship between them is only a tenuous ethical one, and usually proscriptive. But no moral code can bridge the estrangement between modes of being. This is the one great insight of the modern existentialists. Any morality not grounded in ontology, or in a knowledge or intuition of the ultimate unity of all being, only reinforces separateness. All the modern talk of rights, although well intentioned, falls into this category. Such talk itself reflects the absence of a soteriological perspective.

The inadequacy of his view reflects his own estrangement from the Ground of Being, and hence his estrangement from himself and from nature. At the very heart of his inadequate sense of cosmos lies, I would suggest, not a moral failing, nor even a failure to reflect on the nature of God, but a failure in self-knowledge. It is significant that since the clash between Christianity and Darwinism that Christianity has never responded with an adequate theological anthropology. Any discussion between science and Christianity usually centres either upon cosmology or upon the existence of God. But the question of theological anthropology never arises. This is usually the case also in discussions between ecology and Christianity. Modern man seems unable to turn his gaze within to himself, and even modern theology has very little of real substance to say about the interior life, the subjectivity or the essence of man, and how this determines his

relatedness to the world and to God. With no coherent theological anthropology, modern man lacks the central axis for a soteriological orientation of being in the world. Even those disciplines that do study man confine themselves to externals and take man be an object to be measured among other objects. Largely these disciplines only reinforce man's self-estrangement. How does the individual study his own self-presence? Many thinkers would find this question was either absurd or a waste of time. I propose therefore to make the question of theological anthropology the point of entry into my discussion of the ninth century theologian John Scottus.

2. The Anthropology of John Scottus

Central to the theological consideration of human nature is the *Genesis* description of Man as created in the image of God. Two other concepts follow close upon this: creation out of nothing, and the nature of Man in Paradise. John Scottus makes very bold interpretations of each of these. Following in the tradition of allegorical interpretation of the biblical stories of creation, John Scottus reads these stories ontologically rather than historically. Here is something modern scientists should note when discussing any religious creation myths. For Scottus key words such as "creation", "image", "nothing", and "Paradise" all have special theological status and meaning. The divine act of "creation" signifies for Scottus the "manifesting" or "revealing" of the unified and undifferentiated nature of God into multiplicity and differentiation. Creation is a revelation of the hidden nature of God. The world, the entire universe in descending order, is a theophany, a manifold articulation of the One. The nothing, or the "nonbeing" to use Scottus' word, from which all creation arises is the wholly transcendent nature of God Himself. This special conception of nonbeing as God's superessentiality has its roots in the Platonic conception

of the One as lying wholly above all being, which we will return to later. This means that “being” is itself a primary articulation of God, an unveiling or disclosing of His essential and ineffable nonbeing.

The description of Man created in the image of God is parallel to this. God in Himself is beyond being and therefore beyond image. Image is already an unfolding of God, and so Man who is made in the image of God *is* in his perfect nature that image. Scottus describes it thus:

“For how would man be an image if he differed in some respect from that of which he is the image, except for the reason of the subject, i.e., the archetypal example and its image - saying that God Himself is the Archetypal Example by Himself, from Himself, in Himself, and that he subsists not created, formed, or changed by anything; that His image, man, was created by Him and does not subsist through, from, or in himself, but has received being according to nature from Him whose image he is, and has received deification by grace? Everything else predicated of God can be predicated also of His image, but predicated of God essentially and of His image by participation. (*On the Division of Nature* p. 252) 1

Scottus goes on to enumerate the qualities and powers of God in which human nature participates, such as eternity, perfect goodness, omnipotence and of course perfect self-knowledge. The only real difference between God in Himself and Man as His image lies in what Scottus calls “subject”. By this he means that God and Man are not the identical subject, which is to say they differ in number though not in identity. Man is identified by God. An analogy to this would be the difference between the word “tree” in itself and all the many uses of that word. The word tree is the archetype of every tree and its ultimate identity.

Man as the image of God, however, is man in perfection, or perfect human nature before sin, or potential human nature for redeemed man. Scottus regards the biblical description of Paradise as a description not of a place in time - here differing from St. Augustine whom he otherwise closely follows - but as an analogy of perfect human nature, or of potential man. He doubts that man was for any time in a historical Paradise because if he was he would never have fallen. Paradise, then, is a symbol of the realisation of potential human nature in Scottus' view. Original sin is not so much the fall from perfection, as Augustine argued, but a deviation from potential perfection. Sin, in this sense, is not so much a departure from man's divinely *given* perfection, but rather a failure to willingly realise his inherent possibility. Paradise falls within the divine economy of gift, not of justice, and therefore can only be willingly received by man, not imposed.

Man, as the image of God, has perfect self-knowledge and perfect knowledge of God. But he also has perfect knowledge of all natures, as Scottus says:

. . . if perfect knowledge of self and Creator was inherent in human nature before sin, why is it strange, if we consider it reasonably, that it had the fullest knowledge of natures like itself, such as celestial essences, and of those inferior to itself, such as this world with its reason subject to intellect; and that it still has such knowledge potentially only, but even actually in the case of the best men. (Ibid. p. 253)

Notice that such knowledge is founded upon an ontological epistemology. Man knows created things through their essences and through their reasons, or through their correspondences with human nature itself, which is essence

and reason. These essences and reasons are, in Scottus' view, the true being of things:

As the creative Wisdom, God's Word, saw all things that were made in It before they were made, and the vision itself of the things seen before they were made is their true, changeless, and eternal essence, so created wisdom, which is human nature, knew all things in it before they were made; and the knowledge itself of the things known before they were made is their true and abiding essence. Thus the very knowledge of creative Wisdom is correctly understood to be the first and causal Essence of all creation; and the knowledge of created wisdom is the second essence and the effect of the higher knowledge. (Ibid. p. 253)

Perfect human nature, or Paradisal Man, is the manifestation of created knowledge. Scottus has taken Platonic Idealism and divided it into two levels: creative Wisdom, which belongs to God, and created wisdom which belongs to human nature. Yet creative Wisdom and created wisdom are not two grades of wisdom, but rather *two views* of the same eternal Wisdom. God knows the essence of all things as their first cause, while man knows the same essence of all things through their effects.

. . . just as Divine Intellect precedes everything and is everything, so the knowledge of the intellectual soul precedes everything which it knows and is everything of which it has foreknowledge. Thus everything subsists causally in Divine Intellect and in effect in human knowledge. Not, as we have often said, that the Essence of all is one thing in the Word and something else in man, but that the mind views one and the same Essence one way in eternal causes and another in their effects. (Ibid. p. 254)

As we shall see later, Scottus understands cause and effect to be ultimately resolvable into one another. The distinction between cause and effect is only a distinction of view-point, or of a different mode of perceiving what is the same, and to Perfect human nature *all* view-points are possible. Similarly, the real distinction between Paradisal man and fallen man is a distinction in point of view only. Scottus wholly rejects any idea that fallen man is ontologically different from Paradisal man. The fall does not represent a corruption of human nature as God created it, for that would mean that God's own work was imperfect. According to Scottus the only actual difference between Paradisal man and fallen man lies in their respective view-points of reality, or the level from which they perceive reality. Paradisal man perceives essences directly through pure intellect, which is where created essences exist, while fallen man perceives essences only through the mediation of reason and the temporal processes of inference. To put that another way, Paradisal man perceives reality in eternity and non-spatially, while fallen man perceives reality only through the medium of time and locality. For fallen man the divine viewpoint is obscured by sin, but perfect human nature itself is not corrupted by sin in any way. The fall therefore represents the loss of self-knowledge and with the loss of self-knowledge the loss of the unitary knowledge of all essences. Scottus stands out as one of the great Christian thinkers who saw in man the supreme perfection of God's creation and who would not allow that human nature was diminished in dignity through the fall. Fallen man has forgotten his true nature, but in no sense lost it or suffered any ontological change.

No creature (he says), visible or invisible, precedes the creation of man in place, time, dignity, origin, eternity, or, to put it simply, in any kind of priority. In knowledge and dignity, though not in place or time, it precedes what was created with it, in it, and below it; and it

was created together with the celestial essences, with which it is equal in dignity and nature. (Ibid. p. 254)

From this we see that the essential act of being human is knowing. This act of being human is parallel to God's act of creation, in which He knows all things into being. Thus Paradisal man, in the act of knowing, is in a certain sense self-causing or self-creating. For Scottus knowledge precedes being. Being, strictly speaking, is the manifestation of Divine Wisdom. It is theophanic. God in Himself is above being, as we shall see later.

The unity of human nature, then, is the unity of all knowledge. As Scottus puts it, "Whenever, in fact, the pure intellect knows something perfectly, it is made in that thing and becomes one with it". (Ibid. p. 255) Or again, "whoever clearly understands is made in what he understands". (Ibid. p. 255) The unitary nature of knowledge, and its power to bring forth being, is therefore the basis of the unity of mankind. The separateness of human individuals, as experienced by fallen man, has its root in limited knowledge, or through lack of participation in the Divine Knowledge which is the essence of all things. This separateness can be overcome only through common understanding, for the act of understanding is, for man, an act of being. In the human dialogue that arises through the pursuit of knowledge we are made in each other. Thus Scottus says:

Nor is it strange, for we too, while debating, are made in each other. When I understand what you understand, I become your understanding (*intellectus*), and in some ineffable way I am made in you. Similarly when you plainly understand what I plainly understand, you become my understanding and from two understandings there is made one, formed from what we both understand wholly and unhesitatingly. ... For we are not one thing and our understanding

something else. Our true and highest essence is understanding given specific form by contemplation of the truth. That understanding can conform itself not only to natures of the same essence but also to lower ones when it understands or perceives them by love, we are taught by the words of the Apostle, who forbids the intellectual part of us to love visible forms when he says, "Do not conform yourselves to this world." (Ibid. p. 255)

The key sentence here is "Our true and highest essence is understanding given specific form by contemplation of the truth". Understanding is human nature itself, above being. As we said before, for Scottus knowledge is prior to being. But knowledge itself is not knowledge *of* things or *about* things, but rather is their true and eternal essence. That is why human knowledge is identical to the things known. Human nature participates in the epistemology of all things. His knowing them is their existence. But the epistemological existence of all things is their existence as divine Wisdom in the Word or Christ, not their visible existence in time and space. That is why Scottus warns against the love of "visible forms", since to love the visible forms of things is to mistake their contingent existence for their eternal and essential existence in the Divine Intellect. The love of visible things is not an immoral act so much as epistemologically divisive. That is to say, it is a move into multiplicity, whereas the natural human act of being is to contemplate the unity of things in their eternal essence. To understand this more fully we need to look at Scottus' conception of nature.

3. *The Division of Nature*

Scottus employs the word "nature" to mean the totality of all things that are and that are not, the *universitas rerum*. This includes the ineffable nature of

God, the creative nature of God, the realm of incorporeals, the order of the cosmic hierarchies, the individual things of the spatiotemporal world, natural law, and finally nonbeing. Scottus understands nonbeing in a special sense which we will examine shortly. What is important to see in Scottus' all-encompassing conception of nature is that it includes everything that is and is not in a total unity. The entire spectrum of reality, although partitioned into numerous categories and four distinct levels, is essentially one. Hence it includes God as well as creation.

Scottus' understanding of nature is interesting in two important ways. First because of its all-inclusiveness, and second because it fuses in a quite unique and powerful way the Christian understanding of creation "out of nothing" (*ex nihilo*), or nonbeing, and the Neoplatonic understanding of emanation from the One. The "creationist" and "emanationist" cosmologies both have their own complex histories and problematics in Christian theology. The concept of creation out of nothing has the advantage of preserving the ontological distinction between Creator and creature and so upholds the idea of God's total transcendence and otherness. Yet it has the disadvantage of establishing an unbridgeable gulf between creature and Creator. Actually it excludes the possibility of God's immanence. Also it is dualistic in that it implies two distinct realities, that of God and that of creation, because it precludes an ontological continuity between Creator and created. Emanation, on the other hand, has the advantage of maintaining the hierarchical ontological continuity between the One and the many, yet has the danger of implying pantheism. The Christian creationists have attempted to overcome their difficulties in various ways, and the Neoplatonic emanationists have attempted to overcome theirs in various ways. Scottus is unique in that he has tried to overcome the difficulties of either cosmology by modifying them both and combining them together in a special way. The

key to this is his fourfold division of nature. In his *Periphyseon* he explains this fourfold division thus:

The division of nature seems to me to admit of four species through four differentiae. The first is the division into what creates and is not created; the second is into what is created and creates; the third, into that which is created and does not create; the fourth, into what neither creates nor is created. (Ibid. p. 2)

Scottus names the four divisions thus:

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Uncreated and creating | God |
| Created and creating | Primary causes |
| Created and not creating | Created effects (this world) |
| Uncreated and not creating | Non-being 2 |

Clearly this is a fourfold descending hierarchy structurally derived mainly from Neoplatonism, in which that which is produced is inferior to that which produces. In this obvious sense it is an ontological hierarchy proceeding downwards from the highest mode of being to mediate modes of being and terminating in nonbeing. But Scottus sees it also as an outward expansion or radiation from the One which remains always within the One. In this sense it is not a descent but rather an articulation of and from the One in which the One remains wholly present throughout. It is an epistemological structure rather than an ontological hierarchy, since it maintains ontological equality throughout. Scottus brings the ontological and the epistemological frameworks together through his understanding of creation as theophany, that is, as revelation or self-manifestation of God. Ontologically creation is God's self-manifestation, and this is why it maintains ontological equality. Epistemologically creation is God's self-knowing, and for this reason every

part of creation fully expresses God. If the One is to express Itself and not remain, as it were, wholly absorbed in Its ineffability, then It must articulate Its ultimate unity through diversity. It must move wholly out of Itself while yet remaining wholly in Itself. Its expression of Itself must be at once epistemologically descriptive, and therefore structured, and ontologically integral, and therefore expressive of every mode of being and nonbeing. Hence It presents Itself to “view”, that is, to contemplation, through unity in diversity. To convey this idea of unity in diversity Scottus coined the word “universe”. It was he who introduced that word into our vocabulary, although we use it with far less richness than he did, confining it to the physical world.

Scottus finds full support for this integral conception of nature from an exegesis of *Romans* 11:36:

From Himself, then, God receives the occasions for His theophanies, i.e., His divine appearances, since “all things are from Him, through Him, in Him, and directed toward Him.” (Ibid. p. 197)

Careless interpreters have taken his theophanic understanding of creation to be pantheistic, but a careful reading shows this is not so and that his meaning is far more subtle. For example he says:

We should not therefore understand God and creation as two different things, but as one and the same. For creation subsists in God, and God is created in creation in a remarkable and ineffable way, manifesting Himself and, though invisible, making Himself visible, and though incomprehensible, making Himself comprehensible, and although hidden, revealing Himself, and, though unknown, making Himself known; though lacking form and species, endowing Himself

with form and species; though superessential, making Himself essential ... though creating everything, making Himself created in everything. The Maker of all, made in all, begins to be eternal and, though motionless, moves into everything and becomes all things in all things. (Ibid. p. 197)

The creationist view that would argue for the dependence of creation upon God as its First cause but would otherwise wholly separate creation from God is forced into a dualistic ontology, and in fact limits the Being of God solely to His transcendence. But Scottus conceives of God's being far more profoundly, and consequently he conceives of the being of creation far more profoundly, saying:

In regard to the simplicity of the Divine Nature, anything alien and not coessential with It is not truly and properly understood in It, and everything is understood to be within it; for nothing subsists outside It. It alone truly and properly has being in everything, and nothing except Itself truly and properly has being. (Ibid. 196)

Scottus in fact understands God to be at once wholly transcendent and wholly immanent:

God is both above everything and in everything, since He, who alone truly is, is the Essence of everything; and although He is whole in everything, He does not cease being whole outside of everything. (*Periphyseon* IV. 759a ff., trans. Sheldon-Williams)³

The key to Scottus' understanding of creation as theophany lies in a dialectic of God's hiddenness and self-revelation. The creation is nothing without God, who is its essence, and yet God's own essence lies wholly

beyond essence or being. If we are to speak of God in Himself, in His ineffable transcendence, then, says Scottus, we must speak of Him in a special sense of “nonbeing”

Scottus employs the term “nonbeing” or “nothing” in a variety of ways. In the obvious sense of “privation of being” he has inherited it from the Platonic tradition through St. Augustine. Thus, as we saw, the fourth division of nature was Nonbeing, which is here “uncreated and not creating”. However, for Scottus the creation is made of what is and what is not, or of the things that are and the things that are not. In this way nonbeing has a kind of ontological status, for what “is not” may not be either because it has been deprived of being or because it has potential being. That which has been deprived of being is, in Scottus’ view, still a “thing”. Likewise that which has potential being is also a “thing”. We might consider the zero in mathematics in either of these ways, for example. But then Scottus employs the concept nonbeing in a further sense as that which wholly transcends and is prior to being, and is in fact the cause of being. Nonbeing in this sense refers to God. Using the concept of nonbeing in this sense Scottus offers an original interpretation of the doctrine of creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). This is a complex conception and we can deal with it only briefly here.

The problem for Scottus with the doctrine of creation out of nothing in the sense of creation from privation is that it implies that there is a “primordial nothing” outside God. Even if this primordial nothing is thought of as potential being, rather than as privation of being, that “potential being” must exist somewhere or in some manner outside God. For Scottus this is to assert that creation has two origins: one, the “primordial nothing” out of which creation arose, and two, God who causes being to arise out of that primordial nothing. To resolve this difficulty (or

absurdity) Scottus argues that the “nothing” out of which creation is made is in fact God. God, in this primordial sense, is wholly above or prior to the category of being, and His act of creation is the act of manifesting Himself *as* being. Creation is made out of God. Here we observe Scottus’ Platonic influence, since for Plato and, later, Plotinus the One is prior to being. By the time of Aquinas “Being” is equated with God. Indeed, in the radical language of Scottus, it is God creating Himself, in the sense of taking on the status of “creature” and being, while at the same time remaining wholly nonbeing in His superessential essence. Scottus’ use of the word “nature” includes God in both these aspects. Thus the *ex nihilo* doctrine of creation becomes for Scottus *ex Deo*. This is the basis of his conception of creation as theophany, as the self-manifestation of God.

There is another aspect of Scottus’ conception of God as nonbeing we must also take into account. Just as God wholly transcends the ontological category of being, so also He wholly transcends the epistemological category of knowledge. God is “nonknowing” of Himself, although, of course, His nonknowing is “divine ignorance”. God does not know what He is. This is not because God is incomprehensible to Himself, but because knowledge is itself something created and structured. To know “what” a thing is means that the thing to be known must have a form and consist of parts. This would apply even to the primordial “notions” of all things. But God wholly transcends form and consists of no differentiated parts and has no notions prior to Himself. He is not a “what” or a “thing” of any kind or order. Scottus poses the question of God’s knowledge of Himself in this way:

How, therefore, can the divine nature understand of itself what it is, seeing that it is nothing? For it surpasses everything that is, since it is not even being but all being derives from it, and by virtue of its

excellence it is supereminent over every essence and every substance. ...So God does not know of Himself what he is because He is not a “what” (*quid*), being in everything incomprehensible both to Himself and to every intellect. ...He does not recognise Himself as being something. (*Periphyseon* 2, 143-145, Sheldon-Williams trans.)

These conceptions of God’s nonbeing and nonknowing provide Scottus with the key with which to understand creation as a total unity in diversity - as “universe”. More important than this, they provide the key to man’s particular function within nature as the contemplator of God in His theophanies. The four divisions of nature now become four “views” of God, and these four views may themselves be “reduced” or unified into One in the deepest contemplation or *theoria*.

Scottus commences to resolve the four divisions of nature into one with taking the second and third divisions, that is, the “created and not created” which is the primary causes, and the “created and not creating” which is the created effects. He explains that, although cause and effect are separate things, at the same time the effect must participate in the cause, for the cause is the creature hidden, while the effect is the creature manifest. Cause and effect are, therefore, two modalities of the one existence. As he says: “I do not see why what is predicated of the cause cannot be predicated of what participates in the cause”. (*Periphyseon* III. 646c) Next, Scottus takes the first and the fourth divisions, that is the “uncreated and creating” which is God, and the “uncreated and not creating” which is nonbeing, and resolves them into unity. Of this *reductio* he says:

The first [division], then, [and] the fourth [division] are one since they are understood of God [alone]. For He is the Principle of all things which have been created by Him and the end of all things which seek

Him so that in Him they may find their eternal immutable rest. (Ibid. II. 526c; trans. Sheldon-Williams)

Here the nonbeing of God meets with the nonbeing of the things that are not, or the uncreatedness of God meets in the uncreatedness of things not created. Thus even the privation of being which lies at the lowest ontological level of creation finds its true term in the principle of being which is God, so that even the nothingness of things that are not are not in any way outside God. They are, one might say, theophanies of God's nonbeing.

There remains only the resolution of these two unities into one, in which unity and plurality hold both their distinctions and their unity simultaneously. That is to say, the infinity of nonbeing and the finitude of beings become one. But this unity, in which non-distinction and distinction are united, can be known only in the very highest contemplation or *theoria*. Such contemplation is the possibility of man. Indeed, according to Scottus, it is the true and proper end of man, his function in creation and in the Divine Intellect of God. This contemplation brings together in man full knowledge of the creation, full knowledge of himself, and full knowledge of God. It brings together the two apparent opposites of full participation in creation and full withdrawal into the transcendence of God, even as God does the same in remaining wholly in Himself and wholly in every created being.

This, in brief outline, is John Scottus' conception of Nature. It is a vast, all-comprehending view, daring in its totality and radical in its unity. It has implications at every level of existence.

NOTES

1. John the Scot, *Periphyseon: On the Division of Nature*, trans. M. L. Uhlfelder, (Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis 1976).
2. This summary representation is from D. Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, (C. U. P Cambridge 1989) p. 254.
3. *Periphyseon*, trans. I. P. Sheldon-Williams and J. J. O'Meara (Bellarmin-Vrin, Montreal-Paris 1987).

Primary texts

Sheldon-Williams, I.-P. *Iohannis Scotti Eriugena Periphyseon*. Vols. I-III. Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1968, 1972, 1981.

Uhlfelder, M., and J. Potter. *John the Scot. Periphyseon. On the Division of Nature*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976.

Contributed works

Buber, M. *The Knowledge of Man*, Unwin, London 1965.

Colish, M. "John the Scot's Christology and Soteriology in Relation to His Greek Sources." *Downside Review*, April, 1982, pp. 138-51.

Duclow, D. F. "Divine Nothingness and Self-Creation in John Scottus Eriugena. *Journal of Religion* 57 (April 1977), pp. 109-23.

Gersh, S. *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, E. J. Brill, Leiden 1978.

Gracia, J. "Ontological Characterisation of the Relation Between Man and Created Nature in Eriugena. *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 16 (1978), pp. 155-66.

Moran, D. *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*, C. U. P Cambridge 1989.

O'Meara, J. J. *Eriugena*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1988.

Otten, W. *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*, Brill, Leiden 1991.

Pannenberg, W. *What is Man?*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1977.

Tillich, P. *Systematic Theology*, SCM Press, London 1988.

CHAPTER 5

The Mystical Anthropology of Bonaventure

The style and flavour of Bonaventure's writing is quite different to that of Eriugena, yet there are certain fundamental features they both hold in common and which are determinate in how they understand man. The most obvious of these is their Christian Platonism. Bonaventure thinks entirely within the framework of emanationism, although his emanationism has to be understood in the light of his Trinitarian exemplarism. This is either explicit or implicit in every sentence he writes. And, just as for Eriugena, emanation serves as the unifying principle of all that is. Man, the world, mind, intelligence, knowledge - the whole hierarchy of the creation - derive their reality entirely from God who is the principle of reality itself. Anything is "real" only in so far as it shares in the reality of God, even if it only distantly reflects God.

Thus Bonaventure presents us with an ontological way of thinking which begins and ends in God, which thinks of all things *from* God downwards or outwards. That is to say, God is not some distant wholly transcendent reality standing as an opposite pole to the creation, ultimately inaccessible to man, but rather its centre conferring on all things the reality that they have. To put that another way, Bonaventure thinks of things in the light of the fullness of the absolute being of God. His ontology is grounded in the primacy of God, not merely in the sense of a conceptual metaphysical absolute but as the position in which man must strive to stand himself to rightly apprehend the creation and know himself. Therefore Bonaventure's mystical journey does not involve any strife between "this world" and God, or any conflict between temporal reality and eternal reality, because for Bonaventure there is no double ontology of Creator and creature. On the

contrary, every creature is, for Bonaventure, essentially a *disclosure* of God and “real” only insofar as God is immediately present in it. Indeed, I would suggest that it is precisely Bonaventure’s overcoming of a double ontology that distinguishes his whole mode of thinking and his mystical theology. He begins all his thought from the given truth that all things are immediately grounded in God, and so no reconciliation is required between Creator and creature. Insofar as there is a journey for man to make towards God, that journey consists of coming to a right knowledge of the immediate presence of God everywhere and a removal of any false apprehension of things as ontologically distinct from God. For Bonaventure man is not a being whose finitude or creatureliness distances him from God. And it follows from this that there is no human selfhood to be overcome by man in order that he should ultimately be united with God. On the contrary, man’s selfhood is his own selfhood only insofar as it is seated in the selfhood of God. This is not to say that human selfhood is lost in God or that a human being has no selfhood that is their own. Rather it is to say that the superabundant selfhood of God confers selfhood upon each being as pure gift, as an effortless act of uncircumscribed goodness. Put in ontological terms, the Being of God is so fully possessed by God that He can impart being without diminishment.

For Bonaventure, then, the journey of the mind to God and to mystical union is essentially a journey of recovery, of regaining man’s original condition in which he grasped himself and all things in the light of the absolute Being of God. It is essentially a way of seeing reality from its true view-point and that all things are in truth manifestations of the divine in various degrees. It is a restoration of vision and knowledge. Here Bonaventure’s understanding of the mystical journey as a return to man’s true or original condition of right knowledge of all things through union with God is consonant with Eriugena’s view. And, like Eriugena, his

conception of the Fall of man is that of a forgetting of the supreme Reality and therefore a loss of knowledge and a limitation of vision and understanding.

This orientation is most evident in Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis In Deum*, the Journey of the Mind into God. The *Itinerarium* "is not concerned with a metaphysical approach to God or even with giving proofs of the existence of God, nor is it simply the pious meditation of a philosopher or a theologian" observes Philotheus Boehner in his Introduction to the *Itinerarium*.¹⁵⁸ In this respect Bonaventure's approach to God is profoundly different to that of his great contemporary, Thomas Aquinas. Bonaventure is not concerned to build a bridge between faith and human reason, or to find adequate demonstrations of the existence of God, or to make a metaphysical conception of God as absolute Being rationally intelligible.¹⁵⁹ Rather, he is concerned with the response of the mind to its call or yearning for union and rest in God. Yet this does not make his work devotional by contrast with Aquinas being rational. His angle of approach is rather that of opening the souls powers of perception so that the divine may be directly apprehended. And this involves not so much the acquisition of knowledge of things as a cleansing of the inherent powers of perception of the soul, so that it may become fit to gaze directly upon the various manifestations of the divine through the created order and finally trace these manifestations back to God and contemplate God directly as resident in the souls own inmost being.

However, this direct apprehension of the divine in all things is not simply a matter of direct intuition. Bonaventure is not proposing a kind of vision that

¹⁵⁸ *Works of Saint Bonaventure, II: Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, (New York, 1956), p. 19.

¹⁵⁹ As we shall see, Bonaventure has a great deal to say about Being, but his approach to it is quite distinct from that of Aquinas.

negates the created order. Rather, the created order - which includes both the material world and the highest ideas within the human soul - is understood by Bonaventure as a series of reflections of the divine. The world and all the orders of creatures as well as the supernatural order are mirrors of the divine, or manifestations of God.¹⁶⁰ The created order is, therefore, a ladder which the contemplating soul may climb, moving from things most external to those within and finally to those above. "For we are so created that the material universe itself is a ladder by which we may ascend to God."¹⁶¹ This perception of the created order as graded manifestations of God through which the soul may ascend is called by Bonaventure "contuition". This contuition is neither direct intuition of God nor intellectual inference of God from things. It is rather a perception of what things signify, a capacity to read and understand the "book" of creation. It is more akin to the poets vision than either the metaphysician or the philosopher. The created order is a making present through representations the ineffable qualities of God. The primary qualities thus manifested are, for Bonaventure, being and goodness - qualities that transcend both sensual and intellectual grasp because they are ontologically prior to any perceiving or thinking. They are what make perceiving and thinking possible because being and goodness are already given in that things exist at all.

This "poetic" type of vision has a strong kinship with the *Psalms* in which the world is frequently presented as "proclaiming" or "declaring" God or the glory of God. Yet it also has obvious roots in the Christian Platonism which we find in Origen, Augustine and Eriugena and which frequently comes to the fore in the Christian mystics. It stands in strong contrast to the type of

¹⁶⁰ I shall address the question of the ontological status of created things as "exemplifications" of God at the end of this chapter.

¹⁶¹ *Itinerarium* 1:2.

metaphysics that merely negates the created order or which, more significantly for our theme, regards the created order as ontologically separate from the Creator and is the salient conception underlying all dualistic notions of the reality. It is therefore significant that Bonaventure's starting-point has already overcome this dualism. For Bonaventure the problem of dualism (of the discontinuity between Creator and created) is not an issue. And this is because he takes the presence of God as the principle of reality in all things, not as some metaphysical ultimate that transcends them, but as the very power of presencing itself in all things. Bonaventure's ascent of the mind to God is not so much a making sense of things to the satisfaction of reason as a spiritual response to their very presence itself because their very presence is of itself a spiritual event.

Fallen man, however, has lost this power of intuitive perception of the different orders of created reality:

7. According to the original disposition of nature, man was created fit for the quiet of contemplation and thus *God placed him in the paradise of pleasure*. But turning away from the true light to a changeable good, he and all his descendants were by his fault bent over by original sin, which infected human nature in a twofold manner: the mind with ignorance, and the flesh with concupiscence. The result is that man, blinded and bent over, sits in darkness and does not see the light of heaven, unless grace comes to his aid with justice against concupiscence, and with knowledge and wisdom against ignorance.¹⁶²

We may observe here that for Bonaventure the Fall is not presented in moral terms, as in Augustine. Man turned “from the true light to a changeable

¹⁶² *Itinerarium* 1:7.

good". A "changeable good" is not quite the same as a moral evil. What Bonaventure seems to imply here is that man was in some way attracted by the multiplicity of creation and all its goods and in so doing forgot the true good which is eternal and which alone confers the goodness of created things. The consequence is that man loses the power to distinguish or discern the one true good that manifests in all good things, and so the mind is infected with ignorance and is "blinded and bent over, sits in darkness and does not see the light of heaven." This condition is remedied by grace and a restoration of man's original nature:

8. He, therefore, who wishes to ascend to God must first avoid sin, which deforms nature. He must bring the natural powers of the soul under the influence of grace, which reforms them, and this he does through prayer; under the influence of justice which purifies, and this, in daily acts; under the way of knowledge which enlightens, and this, in meditation; and finally, under the power of wisdom which perfects, and this in contemplation.

Again, it is worth noting here that Bonaventure avoids any moral implications. Man must avoid sin not because it draws retribution from God, not because it burdens man with guilt, but because it "deforms nature". It is implied here that this deformation is of human nature itself but also, as a consequence, it deforms man's perception of nature. Hence the natural powers of the soul must be brought under the influence of grace that they may be reformed. This is accomplished through prayer, which brings man under the influence of justice, manifest in his daily acts. But this justice is found only through enlightening knowledge, which in turn is found in meditation, and this meditation is informed by wisdom which is perfected in contemplation. Thus the ascending steps to contemplation and perfection each depend upon the next step for their particular attainment, and all the

steps really only have their power from the final step, which is contemplation. Thus the final object of man - the contemplation of God - is for Bonaventure the true ground of all the steps. It is this final contemplation, as man's true purpose, that calls all the steps forth, as distinct from a merely moral reformation in which the relation between man and God might be represented as accused and judged. There is no element of compulsion in Bonaventure's understanding of man's reformation from his fallen condition. There is no threat of damnation. And this is because, for Bonaventure, man's fallen condition is a fall from the original perfection of his own nature and his natural place among creatures as the being who lives in the direct presence of God and the infinite goodness and wisdom of God. The fall is itself already the human tragedy from which the grace of God seeks to rescue man. It is not really consonant with this perspective to compound man's loss with a further loss.

Bonaventure is concerned with the working of grace and this is one obvious reason why he does not think of the ascent of the soul to God in moral or retributive terms. This could be explained by his obvious Platonism, which likewise conceives of the ascent of the soul to the One in terms of knowledge or illumination. Yet, even granting this evident Platonic element in his mysticism, it also has obvious roots in St. Francis who's particular vision was of the infinite goodness of God manifest in the visible world. This infinite goodness of God manifests as the principle of grace that wholly supersedes and transcends justice or retribution: "grace is the foundation of righteousness of the will, and of the penetrating enlightenment of reason."¹⁶³

I suggested that the final end of man informs each step of the ascent of the soul, that final end being the contemplation of God. This is evident in how Bonaventure sets out the first step.

¹⁶³ *Itinerarium* 1:8.

. . . let us place our first step in the ascent at the bottom, setting the whole visible world before us as a mirror through which we may pass over to God, the Supreme Creative Artist.¹⁶⁴

More explicitly:

10. The supreme power, wisdom, and benevolence of the Creator shine forth in created things in so far as the bodily senses inform the interior senses. This is done in a threefold way. For the bodily senses serve the intellect when it investigates rationally, or believes faithfully, or contemplates intellectually. He who contemplates considers the actual existence of things; he who believes, the habitual course of things; he who investigates with his reason, the potential excellence of things.¹⁶⁵

To look upon the whole visible world as a mirror through which the supreme power, wisdom and benevolence of the creator is manifested is, obviously, a deliberate spiritual orientation of perception. For the theme of our study it implies a capacity in human nature to penetrate the bare appearances of things and discern their essences and origin in God, and this in turn implies not only a specific “spiritual psychology”, as it might be termed, but also a general anthropology - an understanding of the kind of being that man is who may know the hidden nature and source of all created things.

¹⁶⁴ *Itinerarium* 1:9.

¹⁶⁵ *Itinerarium* 1:10.

Yet this orientation of perception is unlike the “objective” orientation of modern science, which seeks only the knowledge of things in their specific existence and leaves out of account their ontological ground in the creator - which for Bonaventure is their true significance. Bonaventure is concerned to discern universals from particulars, rather than arrive at a full knowledge of any particular in itself. This involves what we commonly call “abstraction”, but for Bonaventure this is threefold. It begins with the “actual existence of things”, proceeds to the “habitual course of things” and arrives at “the potential excellence of things”. These modes of seeing lead to a knowledge of the power, wisdom and goodness of the creator. This initial step opens the way to a perception of the *qualities* of God manifest in the visible world, and these qualities are discerned by what Bonaventure calls the “interior senses”. We shall examine this idea a little later. For the present we will look briefly at the second step. Bonaventure opens the second chapter of the *Itinerarium* with the bold statement:

1. We may behold God in the mirror of visible creation, not only by considering creatures as vestiges of God, but also by seeing Him in them; for He is present in them by His essence, His power, and His presence. And because this is a higher way of considering than the preceding one, it follows as the second level of contemplation, on which we ought to be led to the contemplation of God in every creature that enters our mind through the bodily senses.

The first step led to the contemplation of the power, wisdom and goodness of the creator mirrored in all visible things. That contemplation arose by way of inference from perception of things to universals and here Bonaventure is calling that contemplation the contemplation of *vestiges* of God. In the second step Bonaventure considers how God is present in things by “His essence, His power, and His presence”. After a discussion of

how the five senses perceive visible things first by simple apprehension, then delight and then by judgement, Bonaventure explains:

7. Yet these activities are vestiges in which we can see our God. For the perceived species is a similitude generated in the medium and then impressed on the organ itself, and through this impression it leads us to its starting point, that is, to the object to be known. Hence this process manifestly suggests that the Eternal Light begets of Himself a Likeness or a co-equal, consubstantial, and co-eternal Splendour; that He Who is the image of the invisible God and the brightness of his glory and the image of his substance, Who is everywhere by His first generation like an object that generates its similitude in the entire medium, is united by the grace of union to the individual of rational nature as the species is united with the bodily organ, so that through this union He may lead us back to the Father, as to the Fountain-head and Object. If, therefore, all knowable things must generate a likeness of themselves, they manifestly proclaim that in them, as in mirrors, can be seen the eternal generation of the Word, the Image, and the Son, eternally emanating from God the Father.

Here Bonaventure's exemplarism begins to take specific shape. He understands exemplarism as the principle of generation. Whatever generates does so in its own likeness. Yet this exemplarism is hierarchical. Thus visible things, which the external senses perceive, are likenesses or similitudes of invisible things, which the inner senses perceive, but at a remove from their origin and hence a making visible of that which stands nearer to eternal reality. The subtle and universal takes on visibility and particularity and thus becomes a showing or shining forth of the invisible and eternal.

The principle of exemplarism is discernible in all created things and their generation. Nothing generates something unlike itself or opposite to itself or against itself. Rather, all generation is a type of disclosure of its source and a mirroring of its essence. That this principle of exemplarism is discernible in all created things is itself a mirroring of the process of divine exemplarism: "If, therefore, all knowable things must generate a likeness of themselves, they manifestly proclaim that in them, as in mirrors, can be seen the eternal generation of the Word, the Image, and the Son, eternally emanating from God the Father." Therefore even the universal principle of generation perceived through reason discerning it in visible things is itself an exemplification of the original principle of generation within the Divine Trinity in which the eternal generation of the Word proceeds from the Father.

This exemplarism also manifests in the delight that good and beautiful things bring:

8. Similarly the species which delights as beautiful, as sweet, as wholesome, leads one to realise that there exists a first beauty sweetness, and wholesomeness in that first Species, in which there is the utmost proportionality to and equality with the One generating, and there is power, intimated, not by means of phantasms, but by the truth of apprehension, and also an impression that preserves, satisfies, and completely dispels the needs of the beholder. Therefore, if delight is the union of the suitable with the suitable and if the Likeness of God alone has the character of that which is most beautiful, most sweet, and most wholesome, and if it is united in truth, intimacy, and a plenitude that fills every capacity, it can be seen clearly that in God

alone is the fountain of true delight and that from all other delights we are led on to the seeking of Him.¹⁶⁶

All visible things exemplify higher invisible realities, but also there is a teleological element present in all visible things and this manifests in their attractiveness and in the desire for satisfaction they awaken in the beholder. This shows itself in the beauty, sweetness and wholesomeness of things, and these qualities manifest the original union or oneness towards which all things strive and in which they are fulfilled and so “it can be seen clearly that in God alone is the fountain of true delight and that from all other delights we are led on to the seeking of Him.”

In this way Bonaventure describes the first two steps of the mind in its ascent to God. The first two steps proceed by way of perception through the outer senses of the visible world to a contemplation of the ways in which God is exemplified in them. The third step moves from outer perception to the contemplation of the mind as a yet clearer exemplification of the divine.

Enter into yourself, therefore and observe that your soul loves itself most fervently; that it could not love itself unless it knew itself, nor know itself unless it summoned itself to conscious memory, for we do not grasp a thing with our understanding unless it is present in our memory. Hence you can observe, not with the bodily eye, but with the eye of the mind, 4 that your soul has three powers. Consider, therefore, the activities of these three powers and their relationships, and you will be able to see God through yourself as through an image; and this indeed is to see through a mirror in an obscure manner.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ *Itinerarium* 2:8

¹⁶⁷ *Itinerarium* 3: 1

It is worth drawing out the ontological implications of what Bonaventure is here saying with characteristic terseness. On first glance it seems strange that Bonaventure should observe that, upon entering into oneself, the first reflection should be that the soul loves itself fervently. Bonaventure clearly means this in a wholly positive sense. Bonaventure, as we have already observed, understands love as the unitive principle. It follows from this that the true object of love is the highest unity itself, which is God. Although Bonaventure does not say that God loves Himself, it follows that if love is the principle of unity that unity must hold most closely to itself. A unity which was disposed only to disperse itself would not be ultimate unity. Thus unity is essentially in God, and if all things are ultimately grounded in the unity of God, then love must first exist in God as God wholly belonging to Himself. Just as God's power and wisdom belongs to his essence, so likewise must love, and in God love must already be at rest in its end. That is, it cannot be thought of in terms of any division between a subject and an object of love. It follows naturally from this that all beings must love their own being and belong to themselves in unity without deficiency. So when the soul turns its gaze from the things of the outer senses and reflects upon itself it moves closer to the ground of being itself - its own ground of being and consequently closer to Being Itself. And Being Itself is characterised as belonging entirely to itself and as wholly present to itself, and being wholly present to itself implies that it is in full possession of knowledge of itself. We may ask: What object is there for Being to know other than itself?

Thus Bonaventure says that the soul could not love itself if it did not know itself, and it could not know itself if it was not recollected to itself. And so love, knowledge and memory make an inseparable trinity of self-presence. Clearly, the soul could not be present to itself if it were ignorant of itself, or if it forgot itself, or if it were divided from itself. Nor could it be an image

of God - which is the real point of Bonaventure's observation here - if it were ignorant of itself or forgetful of itself or divided against itself.

From this primary ontological status of love, knowledge and memory Bonaventure proceeds to show how this self-recollection of the soul is the ground of all other operations of knowledge and memory.

In its first activity, the actual retention of all things in time—past, present, and future—the memory is an image of eternity, whose indivisible present extends itself to all times. From the second activity, it is evident that the memory is capable of being informed not only from the outside by phantasms but also from above, by receiving and having in itself simple forms that cannot enter through the doors of the senses, nor through sensible phantasms. From the third activity we hold that the memory has present in itself a changeless light in which it recalls changeless truths. And thus it is clear from the activities of the memory that the soul itself is an image of God and a similitude so present to itself and having Him so present to it that it actually grasps Him and potentially “is capable of possessing Him and of becoming a partaker in Him.”¹⁶⁸

Here Bonaventure describes the ontological ground of memory. It is “an image of eternity” which is the “indivisible present” which extends itself to all times, which is to say that eternity is the measure of the temporal, or the principle that makes the temporality of the temporal apparent. But the memory, by virtue of its self-presence and its grasp of eternal principles, is open in two directions. It is informed not only by the perception of things “outside itself” but also “from above, by receiving and having in itself simple

¹⁶⁸ *Itinerarium* 3:2.

forms that cannot enter through the doors of the senses, nor through sensible phantasms.”

Thus the self-presence of the soul, its capacity to reflect upon itself or recollect itself, is the necessary precondition to its receptivity of that which is ontologically prior to itself. To put that another way, the soul’s capacity to become wholly present to itself is the door to it coming into the presence of God. And since God is the soul’s true ground of being, it comes into full possession of itself only in God.

Once again we observe how for Bonaventure the ascent of the mind is positive and affirmative. There is no suggestion here of an encounter with conscience or guilt as the mind turns its gaze inward upon itself. There is no reformation of the soul, no self-negation. On the contrary the soul returns to itself and rediscovers its original dignity as an image of God and as the direct way to God. For Bonaventure the way to God lies precisely through a recovery of selfhood or self-knowledge, not through any abandonment of self or any diminishment of the human status as a creature. As we saw earlier, sin deforms the human nature and deprives it of its powers and holds it in blindness. The overcoming of this state lies simply in a return to the natural dignity of the soul and in this return sin is simply left behind. Sin belongs to the realm of ignorance and poverty. In no sense is it something substantive for Bonaventure. This is because the journey of the mind into God is for Bonaventure a journey from the unreal to the real or from appearance to the actual. This is further brought out by his notion of the activity of the intellect, which moves from the understanding of the particular to the universal but which can accomplish this only because it already has a direct knowledge of the universal. It has, for example, a knowledge of being *per se*, and only through this knowledge can it have an understanding of particular beings or imperfect beings:

And since being can be understood as diminished or as complete, as imperfect or as perfect, as in potency or in act, as existing in a qualified or in an unqualified manner, as in part or in entirety as transient or permanent, as existing through something else or per se, as mixed with non-being or as pure being, as dependent or as absolute, as posterior or prior, as changeable or unchangeable, as simple or composite; and since “privations and defects can in no way be known except through something positive,” therefore our intellect does not make a full and ultimate analysis of any single created being unless it is aided by a knowledge of the most pure, most actual, most complete and absolute Being, which is Being unqualified and eternal, and in whom are the essences of all things in their purity. For how could the intellect know that a specific being is defective and incomplete if it had no knowledge of the Being that is free from all defect?¹⁶⁹

This last question is very far from a rhetorical question. For Bonaventure the question of Being is not in any sense a problem of metaphysical speculation. A pre-knowledge of being in its perfection is, on the contrary, the necessary and given knowledge which then illuminates all the lesser questions of being. This pre-knowledge of being *per se* exists in the mind by its very nature and is known without any mediation or inference. It is the foundation of all speculation and understanding of particular beings. Thus, for Bonaventure, universals are not ideas to be arrived at through deduction or extrapolation from particulars. Rather, particulars are deduced or extrapolated from immediate knowledge of universals: “our intellect does not make a full and ultimate analysis of any single created being unless it is aided by a knowledge of the most pure, most actual, most complete and

¹⁶⁹ *Itinerarium* 3: 3.

absolute Being, which is Being unqualified and eternal". Perhaps the key word here is "most actual". How could the "less actual" lead to knowledge of the "most actual"?

He considers desire in the same way. Desire springs or originates in what is the highest good:

Finally, desired is concerned principally with what moves it most, but that moves it most which is loved most, and what is loved most is happiness. But happiness is not attained unless the best and final end is possessed. Human desire, therefore, seeks nothing except because of the highest Good, either because it leads to it, or has some likeness to it. So great is the power of the highest Good that nothing can be loved by a creature except through the desire for that Good, so that he who takes the image and the copy for truth errs and goes astray.¹⁷⁰

Desire for anything less than the highest good is really desire falling short of its true object. Seen in this light all the "selfish" desires that appear to rule mankind are in truth nothing else than the failures of desire to reach towards its true end. They fail not because they spring from some ill intent but because they mistake a "lesser good" for the perfect Good.

These three powers of the soul, however, are themselves an image of the Divine Trinity:

5. Moreover, if one considers the order, the origin, and the relationship of these faculties to one another, he is led up to the most blessed Trinity Itself. For from the memory comes forth the intelligence as its offspring, because we understand only when the

¹⁷⁰ *Itinerarium* 3: 4.

likeness which is in the memory emerges at the crest of our understanding and this is the mental word. From the memory and the intelligence is breathed forth love, as the bond of both. These three—the generating mind, the word, and love— exist in the soul as memory, intelligence, and will, which are consubstantial, co-equal and contemporary, and interpenetrating. If God, therefore, is a perfect spirit, then He has memory, intelligence, and will; He has both a Word begotten and a Love breathed forth, which are necessarily distinct, since one is produced by the other—a production, not of an essence, nor of an accident, but of a Person.¹⁷¹

The “order, origin, and relationship” of the three faculties reflects the unity of the Blessed Trinity. The Blessed Trinity is in fact the ground of the order of the faculties, the most actual reality after which they take their existence. This way of looking at the mental faculties is usually attributed to Augustine and it is obvious that Bonaventure has Augustine in mind here in this threefold understanding of the mind. However, it is worth observing that this “faculty psychology”, as it is called, is not simply a medieval prelude to modern psychology. Its simplicity and neatness can make it appear to the modern mind as simply a theoretical systematisation. This is because we can too easily take it as a descriptive explanation and fail to see the ontological insight that informs it but which remains unsaid. Bonaventure, as we observed earlier, thinks *from* what is most actual or absolute, as opposed to inferring *towards* metaphysical realities. His thought follows Aquinas’ understanding of Intellect, or Angelic mind, which is the faculty that directly knows unities and grasps diversities as springing from unities. The reason, on the other hand, is the faculty that *infers* from particulars to universals. This rational or inferential knowledge, although necessary, is understood to be inferior to Intellectual knowledge. This is because the Intellect is

¹⁷¹ *Itinerarium* 3: 5.

understood to *participate* directly in knowledge or in what it knows. Thus it presupposes what we might call a “participatory epistemology”, which is to say a mode of knowing that springs directly from being itself. This is why Bonaventure speaks of memory as innate knowledge. It is not a “knowledge about”, a conceptual redescriptive knowledge, but a knowledge that is a direct participation in the known itself, an abiding in the known in its essence.

This understanding of the nature of knowledge can, of course, be traced back to Plato. But that historical precedent does not explain it. Nor does it throw any light upon why the Christian mystics resort to it. We are compelled to concede that the mystics adopt it because it resonates with the particular orientation of their experience. Their experience is of being which is most actual, most present, and which by virtue of that actuality exposes to view what is more remote from the most actual and present.

We may go yet further and suggest that the Fall involves the loss of this orientation to knowledge. In the fourth chapter of the *Itinerarium* Bonaventure says “It seems strange indeed that after what has been shown of God's closeness to our souls there are so few concerned about perceiving the First Principle within themselves.”¹⁷² He explains this as follows:

Distracted by many cares, the human mind does not enter into itself through the memory; beclouded by sense images, it does not come back to itself through the intelligence; and drawn away by the concupiscences, it does not return to itself through the desire for interior sweetness and spiritual joy. Therefore, completely immersed

¹⁷² *Itinerarium* 4: 1.

in things of sense, the soul cannot re-enter into itself as the image of God.¹⁷³

This type of distraction is common enough in spiritual literature. In its weakness the soul is drawn away from its proper object. Yet there is a distinctive feature in Bonaventure's formulation which is worthy of note. These distractions prevent the soul from entering into itself and at the same time weaken the powers of memory, intelligence and desire. This incapacity is not simply an incapacity to direct the gaze upon a specific object, because it is drawn away by other objects, but an incapacity to enter into the presence of one's own being and dwell in the light of being. As we have seen, the turning of the gaze within to the mind is understood by Bonaventure as an orientation towards what is more actual, and therefore to what is nearer to God, Who is most actual. The mind, unlike any other object, has the peculiar power to turn back upon itself and discern itself or reflect upon itself. This peculiar power is not simply the capacity to observe and reflect upon the contents of the mind - which are sense images - but upon its structure, powers and operations. This point is worth emphasising since it contrasts strongly with our modern understanding of psychology from Freud and Jung. Although there may be great differences between Freud and Jung they share the same orientation to the mind in so far as they are concerned with the contents of the mind rather than with its structure, or with mental events and their causes and consequences, rather than with the architecture of the mind. In this respect the modern approach to the mind is identical to the modern approach to the external world. It is concerned to understand the "events" of the mind just as modern science is concerned to understand the events of the physical world. Bonaventure, and the Middle Ages generally, are not concerned with these events but with the structure or architecture of the mind and its ontological ground. Therefore when

¹⁷³ *Itinerarium* 4: 1.

Bonaventure speaks of turning the gaze inwards to the mind he is not concerned with its contents, with its images, with its personal history or with its various states and their significance. He is concerned with the essential *nature* of the mind and its proximity to Being. Once the mind can turn its gaze upon itself and discern that it is an image or mirror of the Blessed Trinity (of what is above itself), then it can begin to contemplate Being Itself.¹⁷⁴

3. He, therefore, who wishes to contemplate the invisible things of God in relation to the unity of His essence should fix the attention of his soul on Being Itself and see that Being Itself is so absolutely certain that it cannot be thought not to be,¹ because the most pure Being Itself does not come to our mind except in full flight from non-being, as also the absolute nothing does not, except in full flight from being. Just as, therefore, complete nothingness contains nothing of being or of its attributes, so contrariwise, being itself contains nothing of non-being, either in act or in potency, in objective truth or in our estimate of it. But since non-being is the privation of being, it does not come into the intellect except by means of being. Being, however, does not come to us by means of something else, because everything that is grasped by the intellect is grasped either as non-being, or as being in potency, or as being in act. If, therefore, non-being cannot be grasped except through being, and if being in potency cannot be understood except through being in actuality, and if being designates the pure actuality of being, then being is that which first comes into the intellect, and this being is that which is pure act. But this being is not particular being, which is a limited being, since it is mixed with potentiality; nor is it analogous being, for that has the least of act

¹⁷⁴ *Itinerarium* 5: 2.

because it least exists. It remains, therefore, that the being which we are considering is the Divine Being.¹⁷⁵

I will not comment in detail on this passage but draw attention to its salient feature: that Pure being is necessarily known prior to either non-being or to any particular modes of being. To put that another way, Being Itself cannot be inferred from anything but itself by itself. Bonaventure makes in interesting remark with reference to the incapacity to grasp this:

4. Strange, then, is the blindness of the intellect which does not consider that which it sees before all others and without which it can recognise nothing. But just as the eye, intent on the various differences of colour, does not see the light through which it sees other things, or if it does see, does not notice it, so our mind's eye, intent on particular and universal beings, does not notice that being which is beyond all categories, even though it Comes first to the mind, and through it, all other things. Wherefore it appears most true that "as the eye of the bat is disposed towards the light, so the eye of our mind is disposed towards the most evident things of nature." Thus our mind, accustomed as it is to the opaqueness in beings and the phantasms of visible things, appears to be seeing nothing when it gazes upon the light of the highest being. It does not understand that this very darkness is the supreme illumination of our mind, just as when the eye sees pure light, it seems to be seeing nothing.¹⁷⁶

Remarking on this passage Boehner says "This does not mean that our mind in its present state is aware of Being itself. For in our present state we are intent upon particular beings and their abstractions, without noticing that

¹⁷⁵ *Itinerarium* 5: 3.

¹⁷⁶ *Itinerarium* 5: 4.

Being which occurs to us under the surface of all those particular beings, and which is the Being itself transcending all categories.”¹⁷⁷ This qualification does not seem to strictly follow from what Bonaventure is here saying. First, Bonaventure does not say we cannot behold Being because of our “present state”. Rather he remarks on how strange “is the blindness of the intellect which does not consider *that which it sees before all others*, and without which it can recognise nothing.” His point is not that we cannot see Being but that we *fail to consider that we do see Being*, even though all other perception (of beings) is dependent upon this primary perception. The analogy he draws from our perception of light prior to the discernment of colours makes this clear. He does not say we cannot presently see light, but that we do not notice we do so, and must do so, in order to see colours.

Secondly, and more important, it breaks with Bonaventure’s way of thinking ontologically to suggest that we cannot presently see Being. I have already tried to show that for Bonaventure the knowledge of *that which is most actual* is the foundation of his epistemology, which is grounded in a direct *participation* in Being. Therefore the difficulty with the question of the knowledge of Being does not lie any incapacity to know it, but rather with *knowing that it is known*. From what Bonaventure says it is clear that Being cannot be known in the same manner that beings are known. This is of course the same with the knowledge of any universals: they cannot be perceived as distinct objects but rather *illuminate* the character of distinct objects, and they are known precisely through their illuminative power, and in fact known with greater certainty than the particular objects they illuminate because the knowledge of them is innate in the power of memory.

¹⁷⁷ *Itinerarium*, Notes and Commentary, p. 127.

Further, Bonaventure says that the knowledge of Being cannot be inferred from the perception of particular beings. This is not the manner in which the intellect knows. If it cannot be inferred - because it precedes the inferential power of reason - and if it cannot be seen either, then knowledge of it must be entirely precluded. But if all knowledge of it were entirely precluded, then it would only be a metaphysical abstraction, a theory without foundation. To Bonaventure, on the contrary, Being is “first, eternal, most simple, most actual, and most perfect.”¹⁷⁸

Insofar as we cannot behold Being, this is due not to a present incapacity to behold it, but to identifying Being with beings, just as we might identify light with colours. This is a confusion rather than an incapacity in our present state because, even though we might fail to observe it, our capacity to know beings is wholly dependent on a knowledge of Being, since without that knowledge we would not attribute being as a common property of all beings but would think of one thing as a being and another thing as something else. To put that more strongly: our knowledge of beings is dependent upon the knowledge of Being. Therefore to suppose that our inability to see Being is due to the fact that in “our present state we are intent upon particular beings and their abstractions” begs the question “how do we recognise beings to be beings?” The question of Being and the question of beings are really two sides of the same question. It is no lesser knowledge that we should know beings, and the answer to the question “how do we know beings?” is just as difficult as the question of Being Itself. To suppose we have access to knowledge one without the other is as “strange” as the blindness of the intellect to Being Itself. Therefore to suggest that we cannot see Being in our present state really only defers or even evades the question of Being.

¹⁷⁸ *Itinerarium* 5: 6.

I have dwelled on this difficulty not simply because I think Bonaventure is open to misunderstanding on the problem of Being but also because I am concerned to draw out from Bonaventure's ontology its unitive or nondual implications. If, as I have tried to demonstrate, Bonaventure's thought is grounded in what is most actual or ultimate and moves outward from that position to consider created things as images of what is most actual, then we have to be very careful not to slip into a double ontology. By this I mean the notion that God has one ground of being and creatures or the creation another. It is really this type of dualism that has crept into the comments I quoted from Boehner above. If we suppose that man exists presently in a state in which Being cannot be known, then we may ask what kind of state this is. Is he separated from Being? Is there some second realm of being that he dwells in which cannot access Being Itself? Is there one ontology for God and another for creation, or one ontology for man prior to the Fall and another for fallen man? Such questions may seem absurd, yet there are many notions both within the Christian tradition and in modern scientific thought which actually do presuppose such a double ontology, even if only implicitly. The notion, for example, that God wholly transcends the creation, is *absolutely other*, is one such idea in theology.¹⁷⁹ Or the notion that metaphysical realities are absolutely discontinuous with physical realities is one such idea in science. Or the notion in modern psychology which divides the mind and gives independent ontological status to the

¹⁷⁹ E. H. Cousins suggests that traces of a radical "difference tradition is found in the Biblical affirmation of God's transcendence above the world," and that "The Semitic sense of transcendence reaches its high point in Islam, which is the religion of God's transcendence par excellence". He goes on to say that "The sense of the wholly otherness of God and the opposition between God and the world are also part of the Christian heritage from its Semitic roots..." and that "This theme has been strongly stressed at times in Christian history, for example in Calvin and later in Kierkegaard, whose emphasis of the infinite qualitative difference between eternity and time, God and the world, was taken up by Barth in the twentieth century". *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, Chicago, 1978.

conscious and the unconscious. Or the mind-body dualism of analytic philosophy is another such notion.

But the problematic of such absolute difference arises or comes into view only if we look at these ideas ontologically. That is to say, so long as we think of any of these distinctions simply in terms of different entities or different domains of reality each acting in their own sphere, then no problem appears. For example, if we think simply of God as the Creator and ruler of the world, existing prior to it and standing wholly outside it yet directing it, no immediate problem is evident. The question of the status of the ontological distinction is concealed beneath the idea of creator and created and the relationship between them appears to be expressed in the concept of God ruling or directing the world. Under this general conception the radical distinctions between eternal and temporal, perfect and imperfect, sacred and profane etc. all appear to make sense in a kind of symmetry of opposition. The Creator is not “confused” with the created. But once the question of Being is raised, and the question of the ontological status of each of these opposing realities is posed, then their *differences* become problematic and the type of knowing that can respond to these differences also comes into question.

It is precisely at this point that serious philosophy is born and serious theology. And it is here that I believe the mystical theology of Bonaventure is of great significance. This is because Bonaventure has taken on, in his own distinctive way and yet squarely within the Christian tradition, these underlying problems of Being. Or rather, he presents us with a resolution to the problem of Being so gently that we can easily fail to grasp the nature of the problem he resolves. Yet his solution is actually quite radical. It lies, I suggest, in his emanationism and exemplarism which at a single stroke

grants and affirms the absolute transcendence of God *and* His total immanence within all created things as their essential being.

The key lies in his understanding of the unity of the Blessed Trinity. It is to the contemplation of the Trinity that he turns in the sixth and final step of the ascent of the mind into God, for it is only in contemplating the dynamic unity and distinction of the Persons of the Trinity that the question of the ontological relations between God, man and the creation are posed at their ground or in their truly essential form.

1. Having considered the essential attributes of God, we must raise the eyes of our intelligence to the contuition of the most Blessed Trinity, so as to place the second Cherub opposite the first. Now just as being itself is the principal root of the vision of the essential attributes of God as well as the name through which the others become known, so the good itself is the principal foundation of the contemplation of the emanations.¹⁸⁰

This opening statement introduces us to a fundamental theme of all Bonaventure's thought: the unity of Being and the Good. Up until this point in the ascent of the mind into God we have been led to the consideration of Being as the absolute principle of all things. But Being can too easily be considered as a static Absolute and God reduced to an impersonal principle that so transcends creation that no ontological continuity can be found between Him and creation. God is thus reduced to the Unmoving Mover of Aristotle - the position adopted by Aquinas. But Bonaventure draws from another strand of the Christian tradition which goes back to Plato and Plotinus and Eriugena in which the ontological ground of creation or generation is understood as belonging to the essence

¹⁸⁰ *Itinerarium* 6: 1.

of God and not relegated to a secondary position. That is to say, for Bonaventure God is *essentially* creative or productive, not *incidentally* so. This essential creativity of God, which belongs to His very essence, shows itself in the dynamic unity of the Blessed Trinity. And for Bonaventure the understanding of God as the Trinity is a prerequisite to understanding Him as One or as absolute Unity. Thus a notion of God as a mere static absolute Being is still an inferior notion of God. To understand the essentially creative nature of God it is necessary to understand the nature of His absolute Goodness. Thus Bonaventure discusses the absolute nature of the Good:

2. Behold, therefore, and observe that the highest good is unqualifiedly that in comparison with which a greater cannot be thought. And this good is such that it cannot rightly be thought of as non-existing, since to be is absolutely better than not to be. And this good exists in such a way that it cannot rightly be thought of unless it is thought of as triune and one.¹⁸¹

Bonaventure straight away takes Anselm's understanding of God, as that than which no greater can be thought, and applies it to the Good. He now proceeds to his primary consideration of the nature of the Good:

For good is said to be self-diffusive, and therefore the highest good is most self-diffusive. But such highest diffusion cannot be other than actual and intrinsic, substantial and hypostatic, natural and voluntary, free and necessary, unfailing and perfect. Unless there were in the highest good from all eternity an active and consubstantial production, and a hypostasis of equal nobility, such as is found in producing by way of generation and spiration - and this in such a way that what is of

¹⁸¹ Itinerarium 6: 2.

the eternal principle is also eternally of the co-principle - so that there is the loved and the beloved, the generated and the spirated, that is, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that is to say, unless these were present, there would not be found the highest good here, because it would not be supremely self-diffusive. For the diffusion that occurred in time in the creation of the world is no more than a pivot or point in comparison with the immense sweep of the eternal goodness. From this one is led to think of another and a greater diffusion - that in which the diffusing good communicates to another His whole substance and nature. Nor would He be the highest good were He able to be wanting in this, either in reality or even in thought.¹⁸²

First, the highest good is self-diffusive. Self-diffusion must belong to that which is self-sufficient, since it could not be self-diffusive if it were not self-sufficient. But self-sufficiency, if it is absolute self-sufficiency, cannot be, so to speak, trapped or isolated in itself but infinitely communicated to itself, not merely as a property of itself but *as itself*. Thus Bonaventure says "But such highest diffusion cannot be other than actual and intrinsic, substantial and hypostatic, natural and voluntary, free and necessary, unailing and perfect." Self-diffusion must be originary and of the essence of God, not something that arises "later" in God after His being or after His work of creation. Therefore "Unless there were in the highest good from all eternity an active and consubstantial production, and a hypostasis of equal nobility, such as is found in producing by way of generation and spiration - and this in such a way that what is of the eternal principle is also eternally of the co-principle - so that there is the loved and the beloved, the generated and the spirated, that is, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that is to say, unless these were present, there would not be found the highest good here,

¹⁸² *Itinerarium* 6: 2.

because it would not be supremely self-diffusive.” And if this self-diffusive essence were not present in eternity there would be no principle in God for the creation, therefore “the diffusion that occurred in time in the creation of the world is no more than a pivot or point in comparison with the immense sweep of the eternal goodness. From this one is led to think of another and a greater diffusion - that in which the diffusing good communicates to another His whole substance and nature. Nor would He be the highest good were He able to be wanting in this, either in reality or even in thought.”

In this last statement Bonaventure obliges us to consider how the creation of the world must have an essential ground in the very nature of God. It is insufficient merely to think of God as the cause of the creation because we cannot understand through the notion of causality by itself of a *reason or motive* of causation. If we think of causation in terms of an act of God’s will, then it is possible to think of God not willing creation because will, as we normally think of it, involves a decision to act or not to act. There must then be something prior to will which is itself the ground of will. For Bonaventure this is the *eternal goodness*. The eternal goodness of God belongs to His essence and only eternal goodness has an ontological ground for the acts of God, even within Himself.

Bonaventure states this ontological principle in the following formulation “the more primary a thing is, the more fecund it is and the principle of others.”¹⁸³ Thus causality must itself originate in that which is supremely fecund, and so the notion of God as the Unmoved Mover is by itself an inadequate explanation of the *nature* of causality. It places God as first but discloses nothing about the sufficiency of this primacy. Thus for Bonaventure supreme goodness, as the principle of uncircumscribed self-diffusion, illuminates our understanding of causality. Goodness contains

¹⁸³ *I Sentences*, d. 2, a. un., q. 2 (I, 55).

within itself a complete coincidence of freedom and necessity. It is free because it is an act of pure gift and it is necessary because it alone is adequate as a supreme principle of being. Thus Bonaventure says:

When, therefore, you are able to behold with the eyes of your mind the purity of that goodness which is the pure act of the Principle, in charity loving with a love both free and due and a mixture of both, a love which is the fullest diffusion by way of nature and will, which is also a diffusion by way of the Word, in which all things are said, and by way of the Gift, in which all other gifts are given, - if you can do this, then you can see that through the utmost communicability of the Good, there must be the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.¹⁸⁴

This follows because:

By reason of Their supreme goodness, the three Persons must necessarily have supreme communicability; by reason of that, supreme consubstantiality; and by reason of supreme consubstantiality, They must have supreme conformability. Then by reason of all these, They must have supreme coequality, and hence supreme coeternity. Finally, from all the foregoing taken together, They must have supreme mutual intimacy, by which one Person is necessarily in the other by reason of Their supreme interpenetration, and one acts with the other in absolute in-division of the substance, power, and activity of the Most Blessed Trinity Itself.

¹⁸⁴ *Itinerarium* 6: 2.

Yet this absolute union of the Blessed Trinity is also the principle of all distinction:

For here we have supreme communicability side by side with a character proper to each Person, supreme consubstantiality side by side with a plurality of hypostases, supreme conformability side by side with distinct Personality, supreme coequality side by side with order, supreme coeternity side by side with emanation, and supreme mutual intimacy side by side with the out-sending of Persons. Who would not be lifted up in admiration at the sight of such great wonders? But we know with absolute certainty that all these things are in the most blessed Trinity, when we but raise our eyes to the all-excelling Goodness. If, therefore, there is supreme communication and true diffusion, then true origin and true distinction are likewise present. And, since the whole is communicated and not a part merely, then whatever is possessed is given, and given completely. As a result, He who proceeds and He who produces are distinguished by their properties and yet are one and the same in essence. Since, then, they are distinguished by their properties, it follows that they have personal properties and plurality of hypostases, and emanation from their origin, and order, not of posteriority but of origin, and out-sending, consisting not in local change but in freely given inspiration by the authority which the Sender, being the Producer, has over the One Sent. Moreover, since they are really one in substance, they must possess oneness of essence, of form, of dignity, of eternity, of existence, and of uncircumscribability.¹⁸⁵

Bonaventure traces all “distinction” and therefore all difference and diversity back to the Blessed Trinity. It is easy for us to imagine that Oneness or

¹⁸⁵ *Itinerarium* 6: 3.

absolute Unity belongs to God and that all distinction and diversity belongs solely to the created order. This notion is one of the fundamental notions that lies at the root of the Creator/Creation dualism we discussed in Chapter 1. If unity belongs solely to God and plurality solely to creation, then God and creation are essentially unrelated because they have separate ontological grounds. In extreme form this is found expressed in the concept of *creation as plurality*, that is to say that plurality, distinction or diversity is taken as the *essential feature of the created* and Unity, conceived as absolute homogeneity, as the *essential feature of the Creator*. In this way a dualism is set up between God and the world through the idea that unity and plurality are absolutely different and therefore absolutely discontinuous and irreconcilable. But in the way Bonaventure understands the Blessed Trinity it becomes evident that this notion of the difference between unity and plurality fundamentally misconceives them both. That is to say, the conflict between them arises because of a misconception of both. And this misconception arises through a failure to penetrate to the essential ground of both, which is not an abstract principle or a logical definition but the uncircumscribed goodness and communicability of God who cannot be reduced to an abstract principle of static identity standing, so to speak, in total isolation with itself. It is this notion of God that leads us to think of God's transcendence in terms of "wholly other than", or wholly separate from. Such a notion of transcendence actually amounts to a conception of God as "wholly absent", which really comes to a form of unacknowledged atheism.

For Bonaventure it is the supreme co-existence of identity and distinction, of unity and differentiation, of total self-collection and self-diffusion, of absolute sufficiency and infinite superabundance that is revealed in the Blessed Trinity that provides the true originary ground for the problem of duality. The problem of duality is resolved in the very essence of God, and

because it is resolved there it is only by perceiving the essence of God as articulated in all things, as presenting God, that we can overcome the thought structure of dualism. Thus Bonaventure says:

if you . . . contemplate that which is proper to the Persons, and if you are amazed that communicability coexists with personal propriety, consubstantiality with plurality, conformability with personality, coequality with order, coeternity with production, and mutual intimacy with out-sending - for the Son is sent by the Father, and the Holy Spirit by both the Father and the Son, and yet the one sent ever remains with them and never departs from them - if you are this Cherub, face toward the Mercy-Seat and be amazed that in Christ a personal unity coexists with a trinity of substances and a duality of natures; that an entire accord coexists with a plurality of wills; that a mutual predication of God and man coexists with a plurality of proper attributes; that co-adoration coexists with a differentiation of eminence; that co-exaltation over all things coexists with a differentiation of dignities; and finally that co-domination co-exists with a plurality of powers.¹⁸⁶

If this understanding of the nature of the Blessed Trinity is what Bonaventure exhorted us to begin to see at the opening of the *Itinerarium*, then a new light is thrown upon his notion of exemplarism. We were exhorted to look at the things the outward senses behold in such a manner as we might begin to discern “vestiges” of the Trinity in them. We were then exhorted to turn our gaze inward and discern the Trinity mirrored in the faculties and powers of the soul. Yet a doubt as to the “real existence” of these things “in themselves” must inevitably arise. If all created things are, in reality, but reflections or copies or images of God, then the question

¹⁸⁶ *Itinerarium* 6: 6.

must arise about their own ontological status. If our “ordinary” supposition about the substantial reality of the objects of sense and about the inner nature of the mind are negated by a new understanding of them as “merely images” of that which alone is substantially real, namely God, then have we not merely “explained away” the problem of the substantial reality of the world by now regarding it as only a reflection or shadow of reality? In short, does Bonaventure’s exemplarism merely negate the creation by subsuming it to God who alone is truly real?

This is a question that must be posed, not simply because we might wish to “save” the real status of the world as truly existing, but so that we can properly grasp what Bonaventure is himself intending by his exemplarism. The answer, it seems to me, is at once very simple and very elusive. The simplicity of the answer lies in the fact that the Blessed Trinity is *supremely real* and is the principle of reality itself and in itself. Since the Trinity is at once the supremely real and itself the principle of reality, then its presence in things is, by definition, the presence of the real in things - *since there is no second principle of reality that could be their principle*. Seen in this way we overcome the difficulty of thinking of the created order as grounded in a “second ontology” distinct from God. For Bonaventure, seeking God and seeking the reality of the creation are one and the same search. It follows from this that any perception of the world that does not discern the presence of the Trinity fails to discern the actual presence of the world itself, and such perception of the world would inevitably take the “appearances” of things for their substantial reality. To take the appearances of things for their reality (and the senses only present the appearances of things to us) is to confound appearance with knowing or grasping the “being” of things. For example, in Chapter 2 we discussed “materialism” as a type of false unity. The sustaining idea of materialism is the belief that “matter” is directly accessed and known in its essence. It is the delusion that we actually see the

“being” of things in their appearance that causes us to think the creation exists independently from Being Itself and is a being in itself. It is precisely this error of thought that Bonaventure overcomes at the outset of the *Itinerarium* by positing his exemplarism. In this way he is positing “essential being”, which is God, as the actually present in all things, yet by positing this essential being is first grasped as vestiges he is adapting the perception of that essential being to the limited mode of perception which only grasps appearances. Thus it is not really vestiges or similitudes that are actually present, as faint semblances of the Trinity, but our perception which beholds the full presence of the Trinity only faintly because of our weakness and blindness. Thus we might say that, no matter how blind we become in our fallen state the infinite mercy of God grants us the power to find His presence even with the weakest perception or discernment. Or, on the other hand, we might say that since there is only the Eternal Reality to be known anywhere, there is no blindness so great that it can find anything truly “unreal” to perceive, since the unreal is not. In short, there is nothing at all to be known but what truly is. And for Bonaventure, as I have tried to show, the measure of what truly is, is that alone which *is* absolutely.

From all this it follows that for Bonaventure man is that being called to know God and be united in God. It is this calling alone that defines the humanity of man and which illuminates all his activities, knowledge and desires. It is, implicitly, this calling alone which validates his existence and justifies all human aspirations. In no sense whatsoever does Bonaventure’s mystical ascent of the mind into God negate either the world or man. On the contrary, since the journey of the mind into God is at once a coming to know and act rightly in the world, and a coming to true self-knowledge, and a coming to know God, Bonaventure’s mysticism is in all respects totally affirmative of all things that are, but only as they *truly* are.

For Bonaventure all this is finally made intelligible and directly pertinent to our humanity by one contemplation which embodies all these contemplations, the contemplation of Christ who *is* the reconciliation of Creator and creature:

7. In this contemplation consists the perfect illumination of the mind, when, as it were, on the sixth day it sees man made to the image of God. For if an image is an expressed likeness, then when our mind contemplates in Christ the Son of God, Who is by nature the image of the invisible God,⁴ our humanity so wonderfully exalted, so ineffably united, and when at the same time it sees united the first and the last, the highest and the lowest, the circumference and the centre, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the caused and the cause, the Creator and the creature, that is, *the book written within and without*, it has already reached something perfect. Now it arrives at the perfection of its illuminations on the sixth step, as with God on the sixth day. And now nothing further remains but the day of rest on which through transports of mind the penetrating power of the human mind *rests from all the work that it has done*.¹⁸⁷

One wonders if there is a note of hesitancy in Bonaventure's brevity here. If the summit of contemplation "sees man made to the image of God", then this must be man's true selfhood. But Bonaventure holds here to the tradition of the Church and presents us with Christ, the Son of God and "the image of the invisible God", through whom "our humanity [is] so wonderfully exalted". If we hold to Bonaventure's exemplarism even here, then the unity of man and God in Christ must represent the full expression of humanity. Tradition has emphasised the union of man and God through

¹⁸⁷ *Itinerarium* 6: 7.

Christ as occurring *uniquely in Christ*, yet it must follow that Christ's incarnation is the union of God in *humanity as a whole*, not only in one unique human being. That is to say, if Christ is a unique human being, then God became only *a man* but not Man.

Put boldly in this way the thought appears presumptuous. Nevertheless the divinity of Man is the inescapable implication of the Incarnation and of Bonaventure's exemplarism, though we remain in ignorance of it - which is to say we remain as yet in ignorance of our own humanity. I shall confront this question from quite a different perspective in the next chapter on Teilhard de Chardin. But I will close here with the remark that, for all the elaboration of Christology in the Western Church there is a strange assumption that we know "human nature" and that this of itself presents no essential problem to Christology, which is concerned to understand the "divinity" of Christ incarnate. In a curious way the language used to present the incarnation tends to diminish human nature in its effort to stress the astounding fact of the incarnation.¹⁸⁸ Thus Bonaventure says of the Incarnation "the most perfect and immense is joined with the insignificant."¹⁸⁹ And yet "our humanity is wonderfully exalted".

¹⁸⁸ I speak very hesitantly of this problem of the implications of the Incarnation for our understanding of humanity because the ethos of theological discourse of the Middle Ages, in which we are attempting to move within faithfully here, does not allow us to address this question appropriately. On the other hand I am not wishing to imply that "Christ is the Self", as some schools of modern thought assert, because this notion does not belong to the structure or ethos of the Christian revelation taken as a whole. In fact, the notion that Christ is an image of the human self also avoids the question of human nature by projecting it upon the Christian tradition and reducing Christ to a mere symbol. For it is necessary in order to sustain the idea that Christ is a symbol of the self to reduce the Christ event to a myth.

¹⁸⁹ *Itinerarium* 6: 5.

CHAPTER 6

Teilhard de Chardin:

Cosmos and Consciousness and the Spiritualisation of the Universe

1. Cosmos and Consciousness

In our studies of Shankara, Eriugena and Bonaventure we have seen that man's religious sense is compelled to try to grasp not only the nature of God but also human nature and the nature of the cosmos. Even the apparently totally transcendent emphasis of Advaita Vedanta, which at first appears to place the human individual and the phenomenal world into the domain of illusion or Maya, finally finds its true resting-point in the total unity of Self and cosmos in Brahman. Ultimately the religious quest of man embraces the quest for the unity of all things. With Teilhard de Chardin this quest for final and total unity is given expression in a quite different form, yet it is the key to his whole thought.

The leap from Shankara to Teilhard de Chardin is an enormous one. We step not only from the 9th century to the 20th but also from the metaphysical realms of the East to the scientific realms of the modern Christian West. Nevertheless, both religious traditions share in the quest of man to conceive reality in its totality. This quest is to be found in every civilisation and every culture throughout human history. Whatever conception of the totality of reality reigns in any given age, that conception determines the values and the possibilities of mankind. That conception attempts to bridge the mysterious gulf between the bare "givenness" or "facticity" of reality and the "meaning" it bears or holds for mankind. Although there may be many variants within any given culture of its

conception of reality, at a more fundamental level there is also a shared set of presuppositions about reality, and therefore about meaning. These shared presuppositions are not necessarily obvious to everyone who holds them. Very often it is the philosopher, or the artist, or the mystic who finds means to articulate them, and so bring them into the realm of direct human reflection. Where are the roots of this quest to grasp the whole and unite with the whole? Teilhard proposes that one of the fundamental features of human consciousness is what he calls the cosmic sense:

At the psychological root of all mysticism there lies, if I am not mistaken, the more or less ill-defined need or magnetic power which urges each conscious element to become united with the surrounding whole. This *cosmic* sense is undoubtedly akin to and as primordial as the sense of sex; we find it sporadically very much alive in some poets or visionaries, but it has hitherto remained dormant, or at any rate localised (in an elementary and questionable form) in a number of Eastern centres.¹⁹⁰

According to Teilhard the quest of man to grasp reality stems from this original cosmic sense which appears as a given intuition of totality. It belongs to human consciousness to sense an underlying wholeness, purposefulness and meaningfulness to reality. This sense is at once extremely complex and elusive, containing within itself feelings of mystery, of sacredness, of absoluteness. But also it contains an ambivalent sense of belonging and alienation, of closeness and remoteness, of disclosure and hiddenness, of concreteness and infinitude. We are led to the view that this

¹⁹⁰ Teilhard de Chardin, *Toward The Future*, "My Fundamental Vision", (Collins, London, 1973) p. 202.

intuitive sense of totality is at once the distinguishing feature of human consciousness, separating man from all other creatures, and the root of all religion, and thus the root of human culture.¹⁹¹ The sense of totality, of universal coherence, mysteriously permeates every human activity, whether it be social, moral, political, scientific, artistic, philosophical, metaphysical or mythical. In one way or another it validates all these concerns, or else it passes ultimate judgement upon them.

Does not the presence of the Whole in the world assert itself for us with the direct evidence of some source of light? I do indeed believe that that is so. And it is precisely the value of this primordial intuition which seems to me to hold up the whole edifice of my belief. Ultimately, and in order to account for facts which I have met at the deepest level of my consciousness, I am led to the conclusion that man, in virtue of his very condition of 'being in the world', possesses a special *sense* which shows him, in a more or less ill-defined way, the Whole of which he forms a part. There is nothing astonishing, after all, in the existence of this 'cosmic sense'. Because he is endowed with sex, man undoubtedly has intuitions of love. Because he is an element, surely he must in some obscure way feel the attraction of the universe. In fact, nothing in the vast and polymorphous domain of mysticism (religious, poetical, social and scientific) can be explained without the hypothesis of such a faculty, by which we react synthetically to the spatial and temporal ensemble of things in order to apprehend the Whole behind the multiple. You may, if you wish, speak of 'temperament', since the cosmic sense,

¹⁹¹ Grounding human culture in this sense of totality seems at first an odd concept, but we shall elaborate it later in this chapter.

like all the other intellectual qualities, has degrees of liveliness and penetrative power that vary with the individual. But it is an *essential* temperament, in which the structure of our being is as necessarily expressed as it is in the desire to extend one's being and to attain unity. I said earlier that there are two basic categories of mind, pluralist and monist, but I must now correct that statement. Individually, the 'sense of the Whole' may be atrophied, or may well lie dormant. Matter, however, could more easily be immune to gravity than a soul could be to the presence of the universe. By the very fact that they are men, even pluralists could have the power of 'seeing'. They are monists without realising it.¹⁹²

I suggested a moment ago that this sense of totality contains within itself a quality of mystery, as well as qualities of immediacy and hiddenness. At one level this may be due to our incapacity to grasp reality in its totality, but on another level it may be due to the mysterious and paradoxical nature of reality itself. Here I mean mystery in its original religious or mythic sense, the quality of infinite sacredness, the quality of a divine presence as the substratum and cause of all that is. I wish to draw attention to this because I believe it accounts for the great diversity of conceptions of reality, ancient and modern, Eastern or Western. I am not suggesting that all these have equal status, only that there are many approaches to comprehending the wholeness and coherence of reality. These approaches we may regard as different discourses. I say "discourses" because each such approach belongs to a community of thought (a tradition), not merely to private individuals, and because each has its own distinctive language or mode of discourse.

¹⁹² Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, "How I Believe", (Collins, London, 1969) p. 102ff.

We have already mentioned some of these; the discourse of science, the discourse of philosophy, of myth, of religion, of the arts. Each individual is probably at home, so to speak, with a particular one of these discourses - and probably not so at home with another.

It is important to notice, however, that one or another of these discourses prevails in any given culture. By “prevails” I mean it is given special authority and status. Over the last two centuries in the West the discourse of science has prevailed over almost every other discourse, although that is now in some ways changing - not because science has been discredited, but because it has been recognised as only one discourse among many and is itself under revision. Nevertheless, we should recognise that the principal reason science gained such status was due to it being a shared discourse, that is, a discipline which could be checked and criticised by the community of scientists and philosophers of science. Its strength lies in its verifiability or the consensus it makes possible, and in the value it attributes to objectivity. While other discourses have fragmented into different and often opposing schools of thought - literary criticism or political theory for example, not to mention religion - science in general has maintained its integrity.

It is in the light of this sense of wholeness that I shall examine Teilhard’s approach to evolution. We may observe that it moves on three distinct but integrated planes; a scientific plane, a philosophical plane, and a theological plane.

These three discourses need a little clarification. On the scientific plane we need to remember that Teilhard was a geologist and palaeontologist. These two sciences have their own methodology and must not be confused with any general theory of scientific methodology. Teilhard

believed that there is no single scientific methodology that applies to all the sciences.¹⁹³ Even within a single science there are divergencies, as for example in physics where, as Teilhard points out, there is one physics of immense magnitudes and another physics of the infinitesimally minute, and another, as yet not fully grasped by science, of “complexity”.¹⁹⁴ But there is, however, a general rule that whatever any particular science asserts is measurable and verifiable. But this general rule applies most rigidly to such sciences as physics and chemistry, but far less to palaeontology or geology, although certain aspects of these sciences can be undertaken by some of the other sciences. This is the case with carbon dating, for example. But no theory of evolution can be verified or disproved by scientific experiment. Science cannot duplicate geological time in the laboratory. Any theory of evolution is therefore necessarily a conceptual extrapolation from the order

¹⁹³ For a careful study of Teilhard’s understanding of the nature of scientific method and the relation of science to philosophy and theology see Robert J. O’Connell, *Teilhard’s Vision of the Past: The Making of a Method*, (Fordham University Press, New York, 1982). O’Connell argues that Teilhard’s scientific method, as well as his reflections on the nature and aims of science, were founded in the philosophy of science of Pierre Duhem.

¹⁹⁴ Teilhard writes: “In the construction of systems of physics, it has always been the case until now that only a single axis in the world has been taken into consideration: that axis which runs through magnitudes of the middle order (in which we are physically included), rising from the extremely small towards the extremely large, from the infinitesimal to the immense. Physics still confines itself to only two ‘infinities’. And yet this is not enough. If the totality of experience is to be covered scientifically, then it is necessary, I believe, to take into consideration a further ‘infinite’ in the universe, one that is no less real than the other two: the infinite, I mean, of complexity. The bodies among which we move are not only large or small; they are also simple or complex. And, expressed numerically - crude though the approximation must be - simply by the number of elements in combination, the gap between the extreme of simplicity and the extreme of complexity is as astronomically great as that between stellar and atomic magnitudes. It is therefore in a very strict sense, and by no means metaphorically, that the scientist can speak of a ‘third infinite’, which, starting from the infinitesimal, builds up in the immense, at the level of the middle order. And this third, as I said before, is the infinite of complexity.” (*Toward The Future*, “My Fundamental Vision” (Collins, London, 1973) p. 166.

that emerges from an exploration and classification of the pattern of the past. It is a matter of perceiving an overall shape and a general direction or movement in the sequence of the strata of geological and biological time. And this overall shape can be grasped only if the dimension of complexity is accounted for in evolutionary theory:

The effect of introducing the complexities-axis into our fundamental scheme of the universe is not confined simply to including more explicitly, and without distortion, a larger section of the experiential world. The most important result of the change is that it makes it easy to connect the phenomena of life - consciousness, freedom, inventive power - to the phenomena of matter: in other words, to find a natural place for biology as part of physics.¹⁹⁵

It is worth noting at this point that Teilhard was himself deeply interested in scientific method, or the philosophy of science. He criticises Darwin, and other evolutionists, for confining their observations simply to morphology, that is, simply to the formal structure of things. According to Teilhard the earth has three layers which evolution must take into account, the geosphere, the biosphere, and the noosphere, that is, a material layer, a biological layer and a conscious layer - matter, life and mind. Darwin, along with most evolutionists, omitted the sphere of mind or consciousness in his theory of evolution. We shall see shortly how the inclusion of consciousness radically changes how we may look at evolution.

On the philosophical plane Teilhard presents us with a new ontology, or a new dimension to ontology, namely an ontology of development, or

¹⁹⁵ *Toward The Future*, "My Fundamental Vision" (Collins, London, 1973) p.166-167.

what he calls a “dynamic ontology”. With this he calls into question what he calls the “static ontology” of traditional philosophy and metaphysics, Eastern and Western.¹⁹⁶ The universe, and therefore every creature within the universe, is involved in a process of becoming, of unfoldment of being, of actualisation. We do not live in a static universe in which everything is settled and finished as it stands. This has enormous scientific, philosophical and theological implications, as we shall see.

On the theological plane Teilhard presents us with several very challenging ideas. One is his claim to recover a lost or neglected aspect of early Christology, namely the cosmic aspect of Christ as we find it in St. Paul and in the early Alexandrian theologian Origen.¹⁹⁷

Once we see that Teilhard is addressing evolution on these three planes, we see why his thought presents such a challenge to us. By attempting to synthesise these three planes into a single vision he inevitably challenges certain aspects of each of the orthodox paradigms at each level. He lifts the discussion of the nature of the universe, the destiny of man and the ultimate meaning of existence above the level of the conflicts between science, philosophy and theology. And in lifting the discussion above these conflicts he at the same time lifts it above the conflict between traditionalism and modernism. Teilhard is one of the few modern thinkers who had the capacity to integrate the immediacy of living wholly in the twentieth century with a profound sense of the presence of the past.

From these general remarks, let us move to our central theme.

¹⁹⁶ See *Toward The Future*, “The Spiritual Contribution of the Far East: Some Personal Reflections” (Collins, London, 1973) p. 134 - 147.

¹⁹⁷ For a full study of Teilhard’s conception of the Cosmic Christ see J. A. Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982).

The title of this chapter is Cosmos and Consciousness. For Teilhard these two terms imply one another. If man calls the sum of all that is “cosmos” he is telling us something both about himself and about what he sees. On the one hand the word “cosmos” implies a complete and ordered totality, while on the other hand the word “consciousness” implies grasping or apprehending all that is in its totality. The problem of talking about “reality” therefore has two sides: the reality spoken of and the speaker, or the perceived and the perceiver. What emerges between the perceived and the perceiver is a relation between the cosmos and consciousness, and what arises from this relation of cosmos and consciousness is human reflection which manifests in the word, in the concept, in human discourse. What arises from the word, or from human discourse, is the apparently endless number of relations between man and the cosmos.

To put this another way and more shortly, we may say that cosmos and consciousness mutually shape one another. Out of cosmos arises consciousness, and out of consciousness arises cosmos. This is at once a scientific, a philosophical and a theological statement, though each of these disciplines will reflect upon it in their own specialised ways.

Speaking generally, we may say that science is principally concerned with reflection upon the nature of the cosmos, with what can be said of the cosmos in itself. Because of this emphasis science tends to place man among the objects of perception and to look at him from “outside” just like any other phenomena. Again, speaking generally, we may say that philosophy is principally concerned with reflection upon how man speaks of the cosmos and therefore with the relation of thought to reality. It is concerned with the ratio between speech and perception, and therefore philosophy looks at man in terms of his relation to the cosmos or to the sum

of reality. Thirdly, still speaking generally, we may say theology (or religion) is principally concerned with the ultimate significance of man's existence in the cosmos and with the destiny of the all that is. Theology focuses upon the telos of cosmos and consciousness. These three discourses all arise, however, from the conjunction of cosmos with consciousness. And it is clearly from this conjunction of cosmos with consciousness that all conceptions of reality arise, from the very crudest to the most sublime.

It follows from this that any truly meaningful discussion of evolution, and therefore any evaluation of any theory of evolution, is required to take full account of cosmos and consciousness. This is precisely what Teilhard attempted to do and that is why his work is worth our while examining. It is not enough simply to correlate thought with reality, enormous and worthy as that task may be. Ultimately it is necessary to correlate being with reality. It is at this point, and never before it, that man's intuitive sense of wholeness or cosmos reaches its term or fulfilment.

Let us pursue this relation of cosmos and consciousness in more specific evolutionary terms. According to Teilhard the relation between cosmos and consciousness emerges at the material level through a progressive process of centro-complexity. By centro-complexity Teilhard means the extremely high level of biological complexity that arises in life forms that develop into complex groups that attain autonomy, out of which arise the variety of types or modalities of consciousness. These complex forms become centres or points of consciousness, at first of very low order, characterised by mechanical instinct, but gradually emerging into higher and higher degrees of complexity. There is an exact correlation between the degree of complexity and the degree of consciousness in the hierarchy of living forms. Thus Teilhard writes "consciousness presents itself to our

experience as the effect or the specific property of this complexity, when the latter is taken to extremely high values".¹⁹⁸ The most complex organisation and centration of matter we know is the human brain. It is important to grasp here the meaning of "centred" in this conception of complexity. This high complexity is not dispersed but rather intensely focused or gathered into a single centre of high organisation which is characterised by autonomy. In a word, it is what Teilhard calls the interiorization of matter. Interiorization emerges into view at the point where organised form bursts into life, and again, in a yet higher order, at the point where life bursts into consciousness.

Looking back upon the emergence of life on earth, Teilhard traces a series of what he calls "critical points" of complexification. He summarises these as follows:

1. *Critical point of vitalisation*

Somewhere, at the level of the proteins, an initial emergence of consciousness is produced within the pre-living . . . And, by virtue of the accompanying mechanism of 'reproduction', the rise of complexity on earth increases its pace phyletically (the genesis of species or speciation).

Starting from this stage . . . it becomes possible to 'measure' the advance of organic complexification by the progress of cerebration. That device enables us to distinguish, within the biosphere, a specifically favoured axis of complexity-consciousness: that of the primates.

¹⁹⁸ *Toward the Future*, "A Summary of my 'Phenomenological' view of the World", (Collins, London, 1973) p. 212.

2. Critical point of reflection (or hominization)

As a result of some 'hominizing' cerebral mutation, which appears among the anthropoids towards the end of the Tertiary period, psychic reflection - not simply 'knowing' but 'knowing that one knows' - bursts upon the world and opens an entirely new domain for evolution. With man (apparently no more than a new zoological 'family') it is in fact a *second species of life* that begins, bringing with it its new cycle of possible patterns of arrangement and its own special planetary envelope (the noosphere).¹⁹⁹

3. Development of co-reflection

By the development of co-reflection Teilhard means the rise of human socialisation, that is to say, the arising of communal enterprises and institutions in which the human individual deepens his own personhood through participation in society and in the activities peculiar to humanity as a whole. This means the actualisation of human gifts and talents through collective thought and action. Thus arise the *inventive* and the *moral* qualities of man, the capacity of *foresight*, and what Teilhard calls the "sense of humanity". Human socialisation, taken as a global phenomenon, represents a new order of centro-complexity in which unity through co-reflection intensifies individual autonomy. Society, or civilisation, is more than mere human collectivisation in the sense of a general conformity to a norm. It intensifies individuality through unification or, to use Teilhard's formulation of the principle at work here, "unity differentiates" - that is the central core of his notion of centro-complexity. The higher the order of unity, the higher the order of self-reflection and interiorization. Unity in nature is not a force that obliterates distinctions by reducing forms or

¹⁹⁹ *Toward the Future*, "A Summary of my 'Phenomenological' view of the World", (Collins, London, 1973) p. 212 -213.

elements into homogeneity. On the contrary, Unity through differentiation *demand*s autonomy among the elements which are united together. Contrary to society submerging and limiting the human individual into a blind and crude collectivity, it is the necessary condition for the emergence of the individual, calling him to be most himself the more he participates in the larger human enterprise of civilisation. To grasp this fully - and this is where we may be critical of mechanistic social theories - we need to see society as a *psychic* phenomenon, as the arena of mind, and mind as the upper layer of the biosphere. According to Teilhard thought, in all its myriad forms, is in fact a new mode of life, a new dimension that emerges out of the biosphere.

Teilhard goes further in this series of critical thresholds and predicts, or extrapolates from the shape of the evolutionary journey thus far, a future phase which he terms *ultra*-homization, in which man participates in the spiritualisation of the universe. I shall leave discussion of that phase till later. Here I would like to go over the three phases we have just outlined in a slightly different way.

Looking back over the vast stretch of time in which the earth has taken form, Teilhard discerns a distinct sequence of stages in the progress from inert matter to the rise of reflective consciousness. This sequence shows us the connectedness of that progress through a series of "leaps" into different types of higher orders. The sequence is as follows:

1. Multiplicity
2. Organisation
3. Complexity
4. Life
5. Interiorization

6. Consciousness

7. Reflective Consciousness

No matter in which direction we look, whether to the greatest in magnitude or to the minute, the “atomic” or “granular” characteristic of the universe appears to us. The universe is, so to speak, a swarm of particles. To the reductive observer, who would pin reality down to a single factor, that is all that there is. Multiplicity, however, when looked at more closely has a number of quite different behaviours. It is not an anarchy of isolated grains. The multiple gathers into different planes of order or organisation. The universe suddenly appears to have a “geometry”, to have “form”, and this in itself is as mysterious as anything else in the universe. Matter is not merely dispersed evenly throughout space, it gathers or congregates. Then a further fact strikes us. Organised matter does not simply organise into fixed forms and rest there. It continues to move, and that movement emerges in a vast sequence of more and more complex forms, forms that are related to other forms, and thus organisation arises into a higher order of interrelatedness. All this appears, however, to be mechanistic. But then another factor emerges. Complexity polarises itself into relationship and autonomy, and thus life emerges, characterised by the power to reproduce itself. There is no mechanistic explanation for the emergence of life. Many scientists suggest that life is an improbable event in the universe, while others say that it is a mere local accident on our planet earth. These ideas, however, ought not to surprise us, since life represents a new order or realm of reality, founded upon all that preceded it, but discontinuous with the mere extension of mechanistic organisation, and freeing itself from the law of entropy.

Many scientists would regard the story of evolution complete with the emergence of life. From this point on, they say, life merely struggles to

survive, and different life-forms win over other life forms or adapt more readily to environmental factors. According to Teilhard, however, life is the foundation for yet another leap into a further realm of being. Life extends the line of integration (or adaptation to environment) and autonomy to concentrated interior organisation. This takes the form of the emergence of complex nervous systems, refined instincts and more powerful senses. The power to see, that is, consciousness, springs out of life. At this point we witness different creatures specialising in different types of sustenance and protection - the bird with its beak, the elephant with its trunk, the tiger with its swiftness. Life diversifies into a highly complex ecosystem.

But then something new happens just as “improbable” as life itself. Life concentrates within itself and arises as intelligence. We do not know the way different creatures “think” about their existence, but it is clear that many creatures have the power to some degree to conceptualise, that is to say, to represent to themselves some kind of interpretation of their world, even if that representation amounts to no more than an instrument for them to follow their instincts and adapt to their environments. The emergence of consciousness is just as mysterious as the emergence of life, for it is even less mechanical than life. But consciousness leaps beyond another threshold; consciousness runs counter to the localisation of life, for consciousness opens out to everything that is.

The emergence of consciousness does not stop here, however. It now moves in three directions simultaneously in the form of reflective consciousness. This leap from consciousness as simple awareness to reflective consciousness, the leap which Teilhard describes as the leap from “knowing to knowing that we know” and which he calls hominization, brings us to a threshold of unimaginable possibilities. But we can outline its general shape. On the one hand it opens up the possibility of life reflecting

upon itself. This is its inward possibility. On the other hand, precisely because it is now reflective, it can gaze outwardly in completely new ways. It can reflect upon the nature of everything. It can represent the cosmos to itself. Non-reflective consciousness knows its world, but reflective consciousness knows the world. From this arises the third feature of reflective consciousness, the power of foresight.

Foresight opens up to human perception and understanding the processes of being in the world, from the most elementary deductions of cause and effect to the most complex anticipations of the future of the entire universe. The power of foresight allows us to situate ourselves within the infinity of time and space. Foresight is the foundation of all our hopes as well as all our fears. Foresight releases our creative powers in every conceivable direction. Foresight made it possible for man to create the first tool, and the tools to make tools,²⁰⁰ just as it made it possible to create civilisation. But foresight also has an inner dimension. Because foresight opens up the possibilities of determining our individual and collective actions, it gives birth to the moral dimension of human life. Here I do not mean the simple choice between legal right or wrong, but the choice between acting for our own exclusive advantage or for the totality of everything. Seen from the perspective of complexification and interiorization the moral act is a reflective act and a more inclusive act, founded upon a refined sense of the wholeness or unity of the world. Seen from the perspective of the emergence of reflective consciousness, virtue is rooted in the capacity to participate in the wholeness of reality, while vice is a failure to participate. The criminal, the delinquent, is really the person who puts themselves outside society, outside humanity, or at least the

²⁰⁰ Mircea Eliade observes the fundamental importance to our understanding of man through his invention of tools with which to manufacture tools in *A History of Religious Ideas*, Vol. 1 (Collins, London, 1979) p. 3-4.

person who lacks the capacity to fully participate in life. The same may be said for all abuses of life, ranging from individual self-interest to the international company monopolising a market. And this is one way of examining why modern individualism produces so many problems. “Doing one’s own thing” is a way of opting out of the drama of evolution, which tends towards higher and higher orders of unity.

The process of evolution arrives, then, at a stage that Teilhard calls “involution”. That is to say, having dispersed itself throughout space, matter superconcentrates into life forms and finally into reflective consciousness, and the rest of the unfolding of the evolutionary journey moves along the axis of interiority and consciousness. Put shortly, the universe awakens to self-consciousness and begins to know itself. The vehicle or instrument of that self-knowledge is the species mankind. Where are the horizons of this process? So far as we can see, there are no horizons to reflective consciousness. Consciousness is infinitely open, or, to put it another way, consciousness is open to the infinite. Boundaries or fixity deny its essential characteristic of infinite receptivity. The only pressure that comes with reflective consciousness is the restlessness of the human spirit to settle for less than totality of being, or, to use Teilhard’s phrase, to settle for well being instead of more being. The rise of reflective consciousness runs counter to cosmic entropy:

Developing a counter-current that cuts across entropy, there is a cosmic drift of matter towards states of arrangement that show progressively greater centro-complexity (this occurring in the direction of - or within - a “third infinite”, the *infinite of complexity*, which is just as real as the infinitesimal or the immense). And consciousness presents itself to our experience as the effect or the *specific* property of this

complexity, when the latter is taken to extremely high values.²⁰¹

Here we begin to discern the dynamic and teleological properties of consciousness. It is the dynamic property of consciousness that reveals to us the link between the unfolding of the evolution of the universe and the mystical aspect of religion. Scientific knowledge and mystical knowledge (and revelation) are obviously qualitatively different orders of knowledge and arise from quite different acts of being. If science disputes the existence of God, or if religion disputes the findings of science, then both orders of knowledge are compromised and destroy their integrity. The deeper question to be asked about science and religion must surely be: What is the relation between these different orders of knowledge and experience? It is precisely here where I think Teilhard de Chardin has a contribution to make. And here is where a brief examination of the dynamic properties of consciousness will throw some light.

Human consciousness aspires to full knowledge in three directions. First and most obviously consciousness tends outwardly through the senses to the world and seeks to understand the order and meaning of the creation. At the same time, mankind seeks to affirm his existence in the world through action. Second, every human being aspires to self-knowledge and self-actualisation - man desires to be himself and to be true to himself. Third, consciousness aspires to a communion with a non-relative transcendent that lies beyond the play of the world, a point where consciousness can finally come to rest and fulfilment in absolute truth and absolute being.

²⁰¹ *Toward the Future*, "A Summary of my 'Phenomenological' view of the World", (Collins, London, 1973) p. 212.

Once we see these three aims of consciousness, three tendencies which cannot be separated from consciousness, it becomes evident that the different quests for knowledge are not at variance with one another in any fundamental way. Problems arise only when one of these properties of consciousness is valued above the others. When religion resorts to denying the meaning of the creation in its concern to reach the transcendent it puts consciousness in conflict with itself. When science resorts to denying the value of the human person in its quest for objective knowledge, it ceases to be responsible and human. When the quest for individual human fulfilment denies the value of every other human individual and looks upon the world simply as “material” to be used instrumentally for self-development, it devalues and negates the very foundations of being. What becomes clear, when we look at these three dynamic properties of consciousness carefully, is that they mutually support one another. One aspect cannot be fulfilled without the other two. Teilhard discusses this in some detail in an essay entitled *Reflections on Human Happiness*.²⁰² Here he starts from the perspective of the desire of every human being to become wholly unified in himself. He says:

When we examine the process of our inner unification, that is to say our personalization, we can distinguish three allied and successive stages, or steps, or movements. If man is to be fully himself and fully living, he must, (1) be centred upon himself; (2) be ‘de-centred’ upon ‘the other’; (3) be super-centred upon a being greater than himself.²⁰³

²⁰² *Toward the Future*, (Collins, London, 1973) p. 107.

²⁰³ *Toward the Future*, “Reflections on Happiness”, (Collins, London, 1973) p. 117.

We can clearly discern the three dynamic properties of consciousness in this analysis. The aspiration to become a fully integrated human being emerges as a responsibility of self-consciousness. But one cannot fully become oneself in isolation from the rest of mankind, or from the universe, or from the transcendent. In order to fulfil itself, self-knowledge must reach outside itself and embrace the being of all beings. Unity refuses any horizons. Selfhood rests in the same being of every being. The human individual, then, becomes most himself the more deeply he participates in the whole of humanity and in the whole human story. But then, to be fully human we must add a third dimension beyond all the beings that are beside us. The individual must transcend himself by participating in, or centring upon, the transcendent beginning and end of all things. Thus Teilhard says:

We must, then, do more than develop our own selves - more than give ourselves to another who is our equal - we must surrender and attach our lives to one who is greater than ourselves.

In other words: first, be. Secondly, love. Finally, worship. Such are the natural phases of our personalization.²⁰⁴

In this example it becomes clear that the inward, the outward and the transcendent dimensions of consciousness are not in conflict with one another. Rather it appears that they necessitate one another if they are each to attain their full term. It is only when they are limited that they become aberrations. Religion can degenerate into extreme or false asceticism, science can degenerate into materialism, and self-fulfilment can degenerate into individualism. But this for each of them is to fail in their natural ends.

²⁰⁴ *Toward the Future*, "Reflections on Happiness", (Collins, London, 1973) p. 120.

We may look at this from another perspective which Teilhard brings to our notice. On the one hand he observes that mankind desires to fulfil himself in the creation. For many of the most noble minds of recent times “religion” seems to offer a poor alternative to action in the world. The God of Christianity appears to them as “too small” to account for the marvels of nature, the extraordinary design of the universe, the mystery of being. These “workers” and researchers tend towards pantheism, Teilhard observes, and their participation in the world is fired by love and infused with a type of mystical surrender. On the other hand there are those who turn their gaze beyond the world and focus their entire efforts upon uniting with the transcendent. These two tendencies lie at the root of the conflict between science and religion. Mankind is divided into the “worldly” and the “other-worldly”. However, once we see that the universe, in Teilhard’s view, is in process of ascent towards higher and higher orders of being and consciousness, this division becomes a false division and no longer antagonistic. The universe itself, once we realise it is converging upon its creator, through becoming conscious of itself, becomes the revealer of the divine, even the embodiment of the divine.²⁰⁵

The question of evolution, then, raises the question of the transcendent to a higher pitch and calls into doubt any idea of an ultimate division between matter and spirit, between creator and creation.

4. The Spiritualisation of the Universe

²⁰⁵ See A. H. Overzee *The Divine Body: The Symbol of the Body in the Works of Teilhard de Chardin and Ramana*, (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

In the previous section we traced in general outline the phases of evolution that led to the birth of the noosphere, that is, to reflective consciousness. Here we shall look at Teilhard's vision of the future and the final end of evolution. Any meaningful speculation on the future of man and the universe, Teilhard insists, must, on the one hand, be grounded in a clear understanding of the shape of evolution up to the present from which we can extrapolate a possible future, and, on the other hand, it must, to be worth pursuing, meet the highest aspirations of life and the human spirit. That is to say, there must be a reasonable expectation of an opening into a possible future, informed by a sound knowledge of the nature of the universe, to which mankind can dedicate itself wholeheartedly.

If it is extrapolated into the future, mankind's technico-mental convergence upon itself forces us to envisage a climax of cc-reflection, at some *finite* distance in time ahead of us: for this we can find no better (indeed, no other) definition than a critical point of ultra-reflection. We cannot, of course, either imagine or describe such a phenomenon, which would seem to imply an escape from space and time. Nevertheless there are certain precise conditions in the field of energetics that must be satisfied by the event we anticipate (a more pronounced awakening in man, as the event comes closer, of the 'zest for evolution' and the 'will to live'); and from these we are obliged to conclude that ultra-reflection coincides with a final attainment of irreversibility. This must be so, since the prospect of a total death would be so disheartening as to stop the further development of hominization.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ *Toward the Future*, "A Summary of my 'Phenomenological' view of the World", (Collins, London, 1973) p. 214.

These preconditions call into question many of the traditional assumptions about the nature of time.

There are several ways in which we can speculate on time and the future. First, we can, with a kind of ascetic resignation, regard time as a closed circle of endless repetition from which the human spirit can only hope one day to escape, like the endless wheel of karma that Buddhism envisages. Here time is a prison of the endless play of cause and effect. It has no resting point and no meaning. Secondly, we can envisage time as a grand cycle, a burgeoning forth of beings into existence and the experience of joy and sorrow, destined one day to terminate where it began, leaving no trace and no value behind. Here existence is little more than a grand illusion, a mere appearance, the play of the gods, which resolves itself finally only by a return to some type of pure, timeless Being in which all differentiation is obliterated, all temporal aspirations relativised or wiped out like the awakening from a dream. The soul returns at last to its original immortal condition in union with Absolute Truth, as in the Platonic and Hindu visions. Third, we can envisage time as many scientists do, as an outflow and flowering of the universe in all its diverse forms, a grand drama of the warring elements of life and death, a glorious display of endless variations, finally closing in a total death, an obliteration and a return to nothingness.

Intermediate to these three visions of time there is a fourth vision that awaits or expects the coming of a Golden Age in which all sorrow will come to an end, where all conflict will cease, in which the world will be rebuilt into a utopia. This is the millennialist vision, in which the present time and all its ills can be borne in expectation of it being one day wiped out and replaced by a new order in which all effort and all struggle will end.

These four visions of time produce different ways of life. For the first, time is nothing more than bondage and suffering from which all efforts should be wisely mustered to find a way of being stoically “unaffected” or unmoved. For the second, time is, as it were, the place or condition in which one dedicates one’s life and energies to eventually winning a place in a world beyond the world in which the endless demands of existence are lifted off one’s back like a heavy burden. For the third, time is no more than the field of a purposeless spectacle, to be enjoyed while it lasts by the fortunate, to be patiently resigned to by the unfortunate, but in either case having no ultimate meaning or value beyond what we might attribute to it ourselves. For the fourth, the present time is but a waiting period for the new dawn that will come of itself and give life meaning by itself.

The common feature, however, of all these visions of time is that they relativise time, or understand present time is finite and even total time as finite. If we entertain the notion of an evolving universe, a universe moving from an origin which Teilhard calls *Alpha* to an end that he calls *Omega*, in which there is an overall unfolding process taking place *once only*, then time itself takes on a shape and a telos, and it becomes cumulative. Further, if the evolutionary journey so far has been in the direction of autonomy or self-determination, manifest in the rise of reflective consciousness, then its possibilities or potential are expanding rather than being merely “expended”. There is a movement, as we have already seen, in a counter-direction to entropy. Consciousness escapes entropy. To put this into other terms, the universe is in process of transformation. Thus a new concept of time itself emerges: time as transfiguration.

Such a concept of time provides us, at least intellectually, with a way of relating transcendent eternity to finite time as the West since Plato has always thought of it. The time of what we may call Absolute Being and the

time of mere passing, or of cyclical repetition, meet in transformative time - what the Christian tradition has always understood as eschatological time, the time of the sacred history of the creation. This is not a millennialist view of time, and neither is it a grand cyclic view of time. It is time in which the universe can determine its own destiny - if it may put it so boldly - or time in which creation can escape its existential finitude. A considered understanding of transformative time offers a way out of the duality of eternity and temporality.

This understanding of time only becomes meaningful, however, once we see that there is a qualitative difference between what we might call “material time” and “conscious time”. The time of material objects, their coming and going, their movements in space, is the usual scientific concept of time. This is also what we commonly regard as historical time. Conscious time, however, is quite different. In the mind there are, as Plato pointed out, permanent objects that have no material counterparts. One of these is number, and this still puzzles mathematicians. There is also, as we discussed earlier, the idea or intuition of the whole. But there is also the special kind of time that the mystics speak of, the “timeless moment” - the time that is at once paradoxically specific and yet unbounded. There is the time of dreams. There is the peculiar time of the sudden insight. There is the mysterious time that shapes music. There is the time of human memory. The experience of types of time that are neither wholly “eternal” nor wholly “finite” is not foreign to us. But what is new and perhaps challenging to us is that the material universe itself, according to Teilhard, is unfolding in another order of time than our senses usually lead us to suppose, an order of time that is meaningful and intelligent, an order of time that has some ultimate consummation as its goal, an order of time that makes all past time ultimately meaningful and purposeful, no matter what sorrows and tragedies have been undergone in that time.

If, as Teilhard suggests, the universe is in process of evolutionary transformation, then the power of foresight which comes with reflective consciousness, need not be, as it is for the nihilistic existentialists, a curse but rather a tool with which mankind can take upon himself the responsibility of actualising his own being and creative possibilities, not merely for himself, but for all that is. Self-determination, seen from this large perspective of the whole, is not an “opt-out” from responsibility, or a retreat back into personal fulfilment according to one’s own whim, it is an act of taking on the full implications of being in its most profound and fundamental sense.

This new order of time which the ascending process of evolution reveals to us opens the way, Teilhard believes, to reconciling what he takes to be two fundamental human aspirations. On the one hand the quest for the transcendent, which is the predominant feature of the world religions, and on the other hand the quest to perfect human life in the world. These two quests are generally considered to be in conflict with each other. The quest for the transcendent is all too often portrayed in religious literature as an effort against nature, as a struggle between the flesh and the spirit, while the way of the world is considered to be a denial of the spirit and a victory of the flesh. Teilhard argues, however, that both ways spring from the cosmic sense of the whole and the fundamental desire for union. There is a difference, however, in either conception of union. The quest for the transcendent, which Teilhard calls God-mysticism, conceives ultimate union in terms of suppression of the multiple, as a negation of all difference. The quest of the world, which Teilhard calls nature mysticism, conceives union in terms of unity in diversity, or as a grand synthesis of the multiple into a greater whole. Thus God-mysticism regards the journey to union as a “regress” back to the One prior to all manifestation, while Nature-mysticism

regards the journey to union as an outward progress or actualisation towards union. The first is an elimination of all difference, while the second is a totalisation through differentiation.

In Teilhard's view God and Nature are not at variance with each other. The way of regress and the way of progress are the two poles of a dynamic unity in which the beginning and end of all things converge. The two ontological categories of "being" and "becoming" actually belong together, and to negate one is to negate both. The suppression of development is in fact a suppression of being itself. The denial of the creation is ultimately a denial of the Creator. Once we see that "becoming", whether on the scale of the individual or of the entire creation, is the way "being" affirms itself or declares itself, we are compelled to question the completeness of any "static" ontology of pure being.

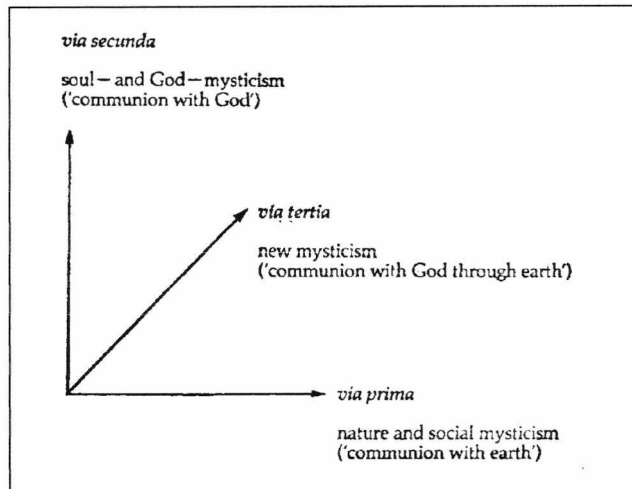
It is worth pausing here to consider the problems that arose in Neoplatonism where this conflict between the ontological status of the One and that of the creation occurs. A serious difficulty arises in conceiving the initial step from the One resting eternally in itself and shining forth or emanating itself as the cosmos. Why and how does the One emanate at all? Plotinus solves this difficulty by likening the One to the Sun. The Sun, so to speak, is self-sustaining, self-generating, complete in itself, and yet it shines forth also by nature. Take away the rays of the Sun and you remove the Sun itself. Thus the One, in a similar manner, is both wholly at rest with itself but also, by the superabundance of its Being, shines forth as the cosmos. Thus transcendence and immanence really belong together. Being and becoming are in fact wholly united, even though we must conceive of them separately. Even so, the Neoplatonists found it necessary to place a number of stages or steps between the One and its emanation of itself in order to preserve the integrity of the One as purely transcendent. A logical

difficulty arises in maintaining the absolute integrity of the One remaining wholly at rest with itself and wholly manifesting itself, since the manifestation of pure being into a state of becoming appears to imply a degradation of pure being, a falling away into nothingness at the farthest bounds of emanation.

This kind of metaphysical difficulty is resolved, in Teilhard's view, once we begin to see that the creation is in fact in process of self-unification. The progress of evolution, as we discussed it earlier, runs counter to any conception of cosmogenesis as a "falling away" from being. To see this demands that we take an overview that looks upon the universe in its entirety. If we look simply at objects in their immediate presence, we see that they come into being and pass away. If we stand back, however, what appears at first sight as mere transience turns out to be a continuous process of transformation. And if we stand back yet further, what appears to be mere cyclical transformation from one form to another, shows itself to have an overall design and telos. There is something unfolding in the universe that is a single action or event. It is gathering itself into an ultra-complex unity in which all its elements are being refined into higher orders of particular being which together compose a single being, or a single act of being.

It is on this basis that Teilhard proposes a reconciliation between the two ways that attract man to unity. If we imagine the quest for the transcendent as an attraction to the Above, as a vertical line that rises up from time, and the quest to know and perfect the world as an attraction from Ahead, as a horizontal line of potential in time, then there exists the possibility of time itself being transfigured by rising upward towards the transcendent, not by negation of the world, but through its realisation. In other words, there is a middle way between the escape from temporality and

the mere exhaustion of finite time, a way that takes time into itself and transforms it into spiritual potential. In this way the outward emanation of life and its source ultimately converge. The quest for unity ceases to be a negative quest in either of its forms. Ursula King offers the following diagram to represent this:²⁰⁷



She writes: “The horizontal line stands for the pantheistic nature mysticism and a social mysticism of the collective, represented by various forms of neo-humanism. This mysticism of the world is the *via prima*, opposed to the vertical line of the *via secunda*, the way of all traditional mysticism which seeks to link man directly with the Absolute to the exclusion of the world (i. e. all forms of either soul- or God-mysticism). The diagonal *via tertia* indicates the emergence of a new kind of mysticism whereby man is united with the Absolute *via the unification of the world*.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Ursula King, *Towards a New Mysticism: Teilhard de Chardin and the Eastern Religions*, (Collins, London, 1980) p.200.

²⁰⁸ Ursula King, *Towards a New Mysticism: Teilhard de Chardin and the Eastern Religions*, (Collins, London, 1980) p.200.

Teilhard suggests that mankind is gradually moving to a position where such a choice must be made, although he sees the “new mysticism” as already seeking expression in various ways. From the evolutionary perspective and looked at simply as another zoological species, humanity is reaching the point where the phase of spreading and multiplying upon the globe is no longer a way forward. The “fanning” of Homo Sapiens is now virtually complete. The next phase is that of convergence, that is to say, of inward conscious growth as a whole species. This phenomenon is manifest in the socialisation of man. Whether we like it or not, our finite globe forces man to socialise, to form into societies and discover new creative and spiritual potential there. This phase has been in progress, Teilhard suggests, since the beginning of recorded history - which in evolutionary time is very recent. Now, in our own century, societies and nations are being compelled to associate, through economic necessity, through research, even through the threat of total extinction through war. If Teilhard was alive now he would no doubt include the rise of ecology and environmentalism. In short, collective responsibility is being forced upon mankind whether he wills it or not. The survival of the human species depends upon its power to cooperate and integrate. This pressure, at the physical level enforced by the roundness of the earth, reaches man as a moral pressure on the social and political level. The age of the “separate individual”, or of the separate nation, which could go its own way regardless of the species as a whole, is coming to a close. Man is being forced to come into a new relation with the earth, and consequently into a new evaluation of himself and his destiny, not merely out of idealism, but out of necessity.

All this, Teilhard concedes, is confused at this time. Mankind is groping for a right way ahead. Evasions are being sought. The self-interest of individuals and of nations is still being served and resists collective responsibility and the possibilities of collective action. Nevertheless the

pressures to find a way forward intensify. The ills that befall a people in a far off land now have repercussions on the world economy, the discoveries of science have consequences for all peoples and into the future as far as man can see it, the abuses of natural resources ultimately extract a price from the abusers. That is on the negative side. But on the positive side the “private moralities” of individuals and nations increasingly look frail and unworkable and a new sense, vague but nonetheless compelling, of a total human history and a total human destiny is emerging, and a new set of values that respects the integrity and potential of all life is increasingly looking like the only workable and desirable approach to life. The emergence of human society as a purely mechanistic phenomenon, like the hive, is showing us not only to be undesirable but unfeasible. All these pressures point in one general direction: towards the awakening of collective responsibility. This Teilhard calls the maturation of the species in which the “sense of humanity” arises as a centre of action. In short, the mere struggle to survive, though it may be the lot of a very large portion of humanity, is in itself an insufficient reason, and has insufficient power, to sustain the species. This means a complete revaluation of the nature and purpose of human work. Work that denies human dignity and which does not lend itself to the full cultivation of the human person saps strength from the roots of life. If man does not find a way forward that meets the deepest human aspirations for fuller being, then the species will simply wither away.

All these pressures upon man, Teilhard observes, amount to a re-emergence on the psychic plane of the impulse of matter to complexify and re-order itself into higher unities. The biological instinct to survive reappears on the psychic plane transformed into the moral sense, that is, as conscience. Conscience adds a new dimension to the instinct to survive: the duty to fulfil one’s own being in a manner that supports and compliments the fulfilment of all beings. This birth of conscience, the sense of

responsibility to one's own self and to the world, opens an entirely new domain of activity and purposefulness, as well as a new order of energy in the world. The desire for fuller being which, until the human species, expressed itself merely through propagation, is now transmuted into the desire to serve and the willingness to sacrifice personal ends for some greater end, for some absolute Good that is worth everything.

It is worth considering Teilhard's notion of the moral sense a little more closely. Looked at from the perspective of the rise of reflective consciousness, conscience arises from the sense of totality, the cosmic sense of the whole, which was our starting-point in this chapter. The sense of the whole is, once articulated, a metaphysics, a vision of coherence. The moral sense is, according to Teilhard, the active or dynamic component of this sense of the whole. Thus Teilhard says "The more an individual, as a consequence of his metaphysical convictions, recognises that he is an element of a universe in which he finds his fulfilment, the more closely he feels that he is bound from within himself to the duty of conforming to the laws of the universe."²⁰⁹ It follows from this, of course, that we can infer the underlying metaphysics of any moral act of man, or any moral system or code of laws. This means that, in the act of conscience, there is a correlation between perception and will, and this correlation amounts to a union of reason and the heart, that is, a direct union of the "without" and the "within", or, to take it to its highest metaphysical level, between universal being and individual being. This interdependence of metaphysics and morality is defined in the following way by Teilhard:

It follows, then, that moral science and metaphysics must inevitably be seen as, structurally, the two aspects (the

²⁰⁹ *Toward the Future*, "Can Moral Science Dispense with a Metaphysical Foundation" (Collins, London, 1973) p. 131.

intellectual and the practical) of one and the same system. A metaphysics is necessarily backed by a moral science, and vice versa. Every metaphysics entails its own moral science, and every moral science implies its own metaphysics. Essentially the two go together *in pairs*.²¹⁰

Conscience, then, is an expression on the psychic plane of the law of complexity-consciousness which Teilhard's finds to be the key to the process of evolution, in which union differentiates. The moral act is a direct expression of this, since it draws forth an individual act of being that unites the individual with the whole and yet affirms the integrity of both. This provides us with a critique of all moral systems: "The test of a metaphysics is the moral system which is derived from it."²¹¹ And likewise, the key to a moral system is the metaphysics it is based upon.

Teilhard discerns two fundamentally different types of metaphysical systems that have two very different types of moral implications: on the one hand a static metaphysics and on the other a dynamic metaphysics. ". . . moral science . . . implies *coherence* of action with - either a universal equilibrium (static moral systems) or a universal movement (dynamic moral systems)."²¹² It follows that any moral system can be based either upon a conception of *conformation* to a fixed norm that stands for all time and applies to all circumstances, or upon an ideal of *transformation* that is open towards higher potential modes of being.

²¹⁰ *Toward the Future*, "Can Moral Science Dispense with a Metaphysical Foundation" (Collins, London, 1973) p. 131.

²¹¹ *Toward the Future*, "Can Moral Science Dispense with a Metaphysical Foundation" (Collins, London, 1973) p. 133.

²¹² *Toward the Future*, "Can Moral Science Dispense with a Metaphysical Foundation" (Collins, London, 1973) p. 131.

I said a moment ago that conscience also releases a new form of energy and therefore opens a new field of activity unique to man. It is not hard to see that, raised to a higher plane, conscience, in the sense Teilhard sees it, is the root of the human sense of vocation, the desire to fulfil one's own being through service to the whole. The sense of vocation, the sense of being called to act, is surely a marriage between truth and goodness or between metaphysics and moral justification. If this principle is applied to every human activity, to every civilised institution, to society as a whole, then it becomes clear that the perfection of human society depends upon the release of this higher energy. The only way out of the problem of human society becoming a burden to man, or of man becoming a slave to meaningless economic activity, or society becoming mechanised like the hive, (all of which follow from static moral systems conceived within a static metaphysics) is for each individual to find their particular vocation in which they fully actualise their being in relation to the whole. This implies the awakening of a collective human conscience. The awakening of this collective human conscience, Teilhard suggests, is the next phase of human evolution. In his view, human society has not yet been born. Society as we know it is really society in its embryonic stage. Man has not yet awakened to what he calls the sense of species. He has not yet awakened to his purpose in the universe as the vehicle through which the creation becomes conscious of itself. This will become possible only when humanity becomes united in a unanimous love of truth embraced in such a way that it opens up and confirms the deepest desires for personal actualisation or fulfilment.

Conscience, then, when it flowers through vocation and matures into the love of truth, turns out to be the active principle in the world that opens the way to a convergence of the actualisation of human potential and the quest for the transcendent. It is clearly one animating principle in what Teilhard calls the *via tertia*. The universal intuition of all religions that God

is both Absolute Truth and Absolute Good find confirmation in the very necessity of the created order. Truth and goodness reveal themselves to be the dynamic properties of being and becoming, rather than conflicting principles. The good finds its term in truth, while truth demands of every being the full expression of itself as an element of the whole. The within and the without, the transcendent and the immanent, matter and spirit ultimately converge once this profound relation between being and becoming is grasped. Seen from this perspective, the choice between escape from the world into union with an unmoving transcendent and commitment to the world through personal actualisation shows itself to be a false pair of alternatives. The two belong together and are falsified if separated. Nor does this view contradict Christian theology, for Aquinas says that the love of God which culminates in mystical union with God is at that moment transfigured into God's universal love for all things. Nor does it contradict the mysticism of Hinduism, in which every creature is regarded as a manifestation of the Supreme Brahman. The only kind of mysticism it denies is what might be called the pseudo-mysticism of private fulfilment - what Teilhard calls the "egoist" moral systems²¹³ - or the limited religious ideologies of salvation conceived as escape from the burden of existence.²¹⁴

²¹³ *Toward the Future*, "Can Moral Science Dispense with a Metaphysical Foundation" (Collins, London, 1973) p. 131.

²¹⁴ Elements of the mysticism of "escape" appear in all religions and cannot be said to be characteristic of any one religion in particular. Yet it is probably true that Teilhard saw this type of mysticism as characteristic of the Eastern religions and essentially uncharacteristic of Christianity. But in his general classification of the three types of mysticism it features in both the *via prima* and the *via secunda*, and is therefore to be found in Christian mysticism as much as in Eastern mysticism. Also we have to take into account that the "mystical sense" or aspiration is for Teilhard itself involved in evolution, just as the religions are themselves. It is perhaps the tensions involved in the contrary pulls of the *via prima* and the *via secunda* that necessarily prepare the way for the *via tertia*.

Once we take on board Teilhard's notion of transformative time, then the question inevitably arises: What is the ultimate future of the universe and of mankind? This question brings us to the problem of the final dissolution of the universe. How can man, Teilhard asks, have the determination to fulfil his destiny through the world, no matter how nobly he conceives of it, if what awaits him at the end of time is the catastrophe of the disintegration of the universe? Surely it is a prerequisite if man is to have faith in the world, and if his actions are to have ultimate value, that the end of the universe is not total destruction.

It is on this question that Teilhard ventures his boldest vision. Given that the human species is not wiped out by some accidental catastrophe, or by disease, or by war, but endures until the end of cosmic time, what kind of end is he to meet? To this question Teilhard has two answers, one natural and one mystical, which between them form his complete answer. On the natural side Teilhard takes the process of evolution as it has unfolded until the present. As we have seen, this process moves from multiplicity to unity, to higher and higher orders of complexity which have culminated thus far in reflective consciousness. Teilhard suggests, on the one hand, that we have no reason to suppose that this process will not continue into the future, repeating itself on higher and higher planes. This process of complexification is the counter-movement to entropy. Consciousness represents an increase in energy and potentiality. There is nothing to suggest that the universe is in any sense "running down" once the implications of conscious transformation are taken into account. The idea that the universe will use up all its energy belongs to a partial and mechanistic view of reality. On the other hand, Teilhard suggests that it is inconceivable that a universe evolving to higher and higher orders of consciousness, and ultimately to full self-consciousness, should meet upon its full awakening nothing but the prospect of its total death. What point

would there be to all that effort and groping towards higher forms of being if, at the end of it all, only consciousness of total death awaited the entire drama? Why, indeed, would the universe thrust its way to such an end? What could impel it to do so?

This problem calls us again to Teilhard's teleological notion of time. The static notions of time which we considered earlier understood causality simply in terms of an original cause. The ancient cosmologies, because they are based upon a static ontology, envisioned the universe as simply the "result" of some prime cause or prime mover. Two factors, well known to philosophy, indicate that this notion of causality is inadequate. First, the Aristotelian notion of first, material, efficient and final causes show us that causality resides both in the beginning and the end of things. If, for example, man makes a tool to cut wood, it is clearly the desired end that causes him to make the tool. The cause does not lie within the physical qualities of the tool itself, nor in the man who makes it. All four causes are present. So likewise, when we consider causality in relation to the universe we have to logically assume a final cause as well as a first cause. In an evolving universe this becomes compelling. In some manner the universe contains its final end in its beginning and is drawn to its culmination from ahead. All that is essentially different in thinking of the universe as drawn from ahead towards a final cause, as compared to any other act we know, is the magnitude of the time-scale and the immediate appearance of completeness or motionlessness. Those who would wish to argue for the final death of the universe are surely required to explain why the universe is the sole exception to a law that governs everything within it. We are compelled, therefore, Teilhard argues, from our knowledge of the process and pattern of evolution and by logic to expect the universe to culminate in perfection and not in disintegration. Our difficulty lies in imagining that perfection.

No one would dare to picture to himself what the noosphere will be like in its final guise, no one, that is, who has glimpsed however faintly the incredible potential of unexpectedness accumulated in the spirit of the earth. The end of the world defies imagination. But if it would be absurd to try to describe it, it may none the less - by making use of the lines of approach already laid down - to some extent foresee the significance and circumscribe the forms.²¹⁵

From the spiritual point of view, and especially from that of Christian revelation, it becomes inconceivable that God should create a universe from the depths of His being and infinite love that is one day destined to end in total destruction, *as though it had never been*. A cosmic drama that left no trace or meaning is inconceivable. It negates even its conception since even to conceive of it is also negated. Although Teilhard sees Christianity specifically as the religion of evolution, it is to be noted that no religion conceives the destiny of the creation in terms of a final meaningless void, a return to absolute nothing without trace or significance. Even the escapist elements of the mysticism of Platonism, Gnosticism or Buddhism in which there is no aspect of cosmic development conceive some form of "final return" to a state of absolute perfection. But the prospect of an absolute extinction of everything can only degrade our conception of God. It is indeed for this kind of reason, Teilhard often observes, that many scientists reject the Christian idea of God and declare themselves atheists - a position that Teilhard absolutely respected - since a God that is *less than the universe he has created* is surely no god. A conception of God who is nothing more than the administer of rewards and punishments, as so many

²¹⁵ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (Collins, London, 1966) p. 273.

Christians conceive him, is hardly a conception of God that can hold ultimate attraction to man or that can give ultimate value to creation.

But of course this is not the God we encounter in the Old and New Testaments, nor in the lives of the great Christian mystics. The essential Christian mystery, as Teilhard understands it, lies in the Incarnation of the Word in the creation and in taking all things into himself that they might be fulfilled, so that, in the words of St. Paul, God should become “all in all.” For God to become “all in all” is not the same as God negating all and replacing it with only Himself. Teilhard insists that this essential Christian mystery, as St. Paul and St. John of the Fourth Gospel clearly show, is a cosmic mystery, and that the act of Redemption is the drawing of all things into God through their full actualisation. The Cosmic Christ, as Teilhard frequently calls the Word, is both the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the beginning and end of the universe, and the process of evolution is nothing else if not the realisation of mystic absorption of the creation into God through man. Christian theology, Teilhard remarks many times in his writings, has traditionally emphasised the “human” Christ above the Cosmic Christ, and in so doing has compromised the Christology both of the New Testament and of the early Church. Modern man’s discovery of evolution at once presents a challenge to this diminished Christology and opens the way to a restoration of its original universal vision.

Throughout the whole range of things Christ is the principle of universal consistence: *‘In eo omnia constant.’* For such a Christian, exactly as for the modern philosopher, the universe has no complete reality except in the movement which causes all its elements to converge upon a number of higher centres of cohesion (in other words, which spiritualises them); nothing holds together absolutely except through the Whole;

and the Whole itself holds together only through its future fulfilment. On the other hand, unlike the free-thinking philosopher, the Christian can say that he already stands in a personal relationship with the centre of the world; for him, in fact, that centre is Christ it is Christ who in a real and unmetaphorical sense of the word holds up the universe. So incredible a cosmic function may well be too much for our imagination, but I do not see how we could possibly avoid attributing it to the Son of Mary. The Incarnate Word could not be the supernatural (hyper physical) centre of the universe if he did not function *first* as its physical, natural, centre. Christ cannot sublimate creation in God without progressively raising it up by his influence through the successive circles of matter and spirit. That is why, in order to bring all things back to his Father, he had to make himself one with all - he had to enter into contact with every one of the zones of the created, from the lowest and most earthly to the zone that is closest to heaven.²¹⁶

Put in these terms Teilhard's conception of the Cosmic Christ strikes us a novel. Yet this is really only because the cosmic aspect of Christology has been generally neglected and the "human" side of Christ concentrated upon. However, the Christian mystics have been more alert to this side of Christology, as we see for example in Evelyn Underhill's famous study of mysticism:

The Incarnation, which is for traditional Christianity synonymous with the historical birth and earthly life of

²¹⁶ Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, "Pantheism and Christianity" (Collins, London, 1971) p. 71.

Christ, is for mystics of a certain type, not only this but also a perpetual Cosmic and personal process. It is an everlasting bringing forth, in the universe and also in the individual ascending soul, of the divine and perfect Life, the pure character of God, of which the one historical life dramatised the essential constituents.²¹⁷

Lyons observes that “This passage echoes a remark made by Inge in 1902 on the Christian Platonists of Alexandria, that their great aim was ‘to bring the Incarnation into closest relation with the cosmic process.’”²¹⁸

For Teilhard, then, there is no contradiction between the unfolding of the universe towards ultimate union with God and the essence of Christianity. For him, the vision of science, when pressed as far as we can see, and the vision of revelation point to the same ultimate purpose and mutually confirm one another. He conceives the long struggle between religion and science as a necessary struggle between the rational and mystical elements of human consciousness:

But, as the tension is prolonged, the conflict visibly seems to be resolved in terms of an entirely different form of equilibrium - not in elimination, nor duality, but in synthesis. After close on two centuries of passionate struggles, neither science nor faith has succeeded in discrediting its adversary. On the contrary, it becomes obvious that neither can develop normally without the other. And the reason is simple: the same life animates both. Neither in its impetus nor its

²¹⁷ E. Underhill, *Mysticism: A study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, (Methuen, London, 1960) p. 118.

²¹⁸ J. A. Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982) p. 35.

achievements can science go to its limits without becoming tinged with mysticism and charged with faith.²¹⁹

He explains this by arguing that the *impetus* of scientific research, the passionate interest in knowledge, is dependent on the conviction, which is undemonstrable to science itself, that the universe has a direction which should result in some sort of irreversible perfection. From this conviction springs belief in progress. Secondly, that science is founded upon a belief in the essential coherence and of the unity of the universe. Thus “as soon as science outgrows the analytic investigations which constitute its lower and preliminary stages, and passes on to synthesis - synthesis which naturally culminates in the realisation of some superior state of humanity - its is at once led to foresee and place its stakes on the *future* and the *all*. And with that it out-distances itself and emerges in terms of *option* and *adoration*.”²²⁰

When, in the universe in movement to which we have just awakened, we look at the temporal and spatial series diverging and amplifying themselves around and behind us like the laminae of a cone, we are perhaps engaging in pure science. But when we turn towards the summit, towards the *totality* and *the future*, we cannot help engaging in religion.

Religion and science are the two conjugated faces or phases of one and the same complete act of knowledge-the only one which can embrace the past and future of evolution so as to contemplate, measure and fulfil them.

In the mutual reinforcement of these two still opposed powers, in the conjunction of reason and mysticism,

²¹⁹ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (Collins, London, 1966) p. 283.

²²⁰ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (Collins, London, 1966) p. 284.

the human spirit is destined, by the very nature of its development, to find the uttermost degree of its penetration with the maximum of its vital force.²²¹

It is for mankind to find ways that lead him to his maximum development and personal fulfilment within the world and in complete harmony with the ultimate destiny of all things in God. For this to be accomplished Teilhard believes it is necessary, indeed inevitable, that human knowledge will itself evolve into a new form. It will move from “analysis” to “synthesis”. It is worth exploring this terse concept because within it lies both the key to the controversy provoked by Teilhard’s understanding of evolution and its resolution.

Teilhard has often been attacked for going beyond the proper bounds of science in his theory of evolution. The most famous attack came from P. B. Medawar in his review of the English translation of *The Phenomenon of Man*, in which he attempts to show that Teilhard has no scientific basis for his theory and that it is more a work of imagination than of science.²²² But Teilhard is also attacked by theologians who’s aim was to ‘defend’ Christian belief from science. These attacks attempt to undermine science itself.²²³ To make the situation yet more confused, many voices defended Teilhard on the basis that his *The Phenomenon of Man* was a work of poetry or mysticism. The problem, from the scientific side, revolves around the question of scientific method and how this is conceived. There is an unspoken assumption that all scientists share a common understanding of scientific method. This is even the case with those who

²²¹ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (Collins, London, 1966) p. 285.

²²² P. B. Medawar, Review of Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*. In *Mind*, 70, No. 277 (January 1961), 99-106.

²²³ See for example O. Rabut, *Mankind Evolving* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1962).

attack scientific method.²²⁴ In fact this is clearly not so, as is clearly attested by the wealth of literature devoted to the philosophy of science.

The question of Teilhard's scientific method has been explored in R. O'Connell's *Teilhard's Vision of the Past: The making of a Method*.²²⁵ O'Connell argues that Teilhard's work has been generally misunderstood because his method has not been observed by his critics, even though in *The Phenomenon of Man* Teilhard explicitly states his method at the outset. Starting with a study of Teilhard's early essays while he was still a student of physics, O'Connell finds that Teilhard was deeply interested in the philosophy of science and that the work of Duhem, the physicist and philosopher of science, played a major part in his conception of scientific method. It will be helpful, then, to draw a rough outline of Duhem's conception of scientific method.

The fundamental question for science is: what is the relation of theory to reality? Does scientific theory, despite its reliability in practical application, actually faithfully represent the phenomena it observes and provide insights into how the laws of nature operate? Duhem's answer to this is a qualified negative. It is a qualified negative because, first, the question of the "nature of reality" does not belong to science but to metaphysics or philosophy. Scientific method cannot "test" reality. It is a qualified negative, second, because what science aims at is not the

²²⁴ See Philip Sherrard, *Human Image: World Image*, (Golgonooza Press, Ipswich, 1992), in particular Chapter 2 "The Fetish of Mathematics and the Iconoclasm of Modern Science" in which he attempts to trace the "descent" from the sacred cosmology of the Middle Ages to the birth of modern science and elaborate its essential methodology. The book is a critique of science from the perspective of what Sherrard calls sacred cosmology or ancient metaphysics. Chapter 5 is devoted to a severe critique of Teilhard de Chardin from the perspective of Christian doctrine.

²²⁵ Robert J. O'Connell, *Teilhard's Vision of the Past*, (Fordham University Press, New York, 1982).

disclosure of some essential truth about reality but rather what he calls “natural classification”. By natural classification Duhem means the creation of models of phenomena that correlate their relations and interconnections in a fundamentally coherent way. Such models, especially when formulated into mathematical theories, produce “ideal” abstract representations or approximations of laws or processes observed in the phenomenal world. Their “truth” does not depend upon a correlation with “reality” itself, which is a metaphysical problem, but upon their inner consistency and coherence and relation to or consistency with scientific models generally. Thus a scientific theory is “tested” through observing its coherence with other scientific models or theories. The higher its proximity to coherence with scientific theories, the higher its probability of truth in a scientific sense. In Duhem’s view, the aim of scientific method is to arrive at (an ideal) classification of all phenomena. In other words, the first principle of science is self-consistency with science taken as a whole. This self-consistency is nearer to the self-consistency of geometry or mathematics than to an approximation of “reality as such”.

This qualified negative answer is also what allows science to advance. This is because any new observation may call into question any previously established coherent model or natural classification. This is because some newly observed phenomena may upset the previously presumed coherence of a theory or model. Thus, in sense, science advances just as much when it discovers an inconsistency as when it discovers a new consistency. It also means that when two contradictory theories compete, such as the “steady state” and the “expanding universe” theories, the resolution of the conflict can only be attained when one (or neither) of the two theories proves consistent with newly observed phenomena. In other words, when it fits some greater natural classification. Thus, in strict scientific theory, there cannot be two contradictory models of the same

phenomena. The same pattern can be observed, but there may be several possible theoretical explanations of that pattern. The verification of any theoretical explanation can only ever be found in its consistency with the general natural classification of phenomena.²²⁶

The problem of the relation of any scientific theory being a faithful representation of reality as it is is not resolved in this explanation. Duhem does not regard that as a problem in itself for science as such, although it is for metaphysics or philosophy. But for the scientist the “conviction” that there is a correlation with reality is certain, even though he cannot explain it:

Without being able to give an account of our conviction, and still, without being able to give it up, we see in the exact arrangement of such a system the mark whereby a *natural classification* is recognised . . . we sense that the groupings our theory has established correspond to real affinities between the realities themselves.²²⁷

In the end, then, the scientist is left with a “sense” that there is an affinity between the coherent structure he has extrapolated from observation and reality itself. There is no proof that this is in fact true - nor of course any proof that it is not true. This means that the coherence observed in phenomena when formulated into a consistent theory carries only the burden of coherence but not the burden of truth. The conviction that there is a real correspondence with reality is still a conviction of coherence. But it is important to remember that “truth” is a metaphysical concern or problem,

²²⁶ This explanation is a summary of that given by O’Connell in *Teilhard’s Vision of the Past*, (Fordham University Press, New York, 1982) pp. 11-21.

²²⁷ Quoted from *Teilhard’s Vision of the Past*, (Fordham University Press, New York, 1982), p. 21 who quotes from P. Duhem *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory*, trans. Philip P. Wiener, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1954.

not a scientific one. The problem of truth is no more at stake in a scientific theory than it is in our direct everyday observation of the world in which we rely upon the world remaining consistent. We do not demand that a proof of its reality in order to live our lives.

It is evident, however, that Teilhard had doubts as to whether this “intuition” of scientific truth was reliable and could be trusted. We have to appreciate that at this time he was undergoing his Jesuit training and that he had already come to the decision to dedicate his life to God. He seems to have been drawn in two directions at once. On the one hand his clear sense of calling to the Church and on the other his love of the world which had been there from his earliest childhood. So the question appears to have inevitably arisen as to whether the truth of scientific observation - the truth of appearances - was in conflict with the truth of revelation. In a long essay written in 1917, in the midst of the World War, we find evidence of this conflict and its resolution as he saw it at that time:

For a long time I thought that the increasing fragmentation into which things disappear when we try to trace them back *historically* (scientifically) to their source was only an appearance, the result of some ‘form’ or law of our minds. Just as we cannot imagine any limit to stellar or interatomic space, so we cannot see any absolute beginning to temporal series. We see everything around us extending into endless perspectives, because that is the way in which the Real breaks down under the action of our minds. That, I say, is the view I first accepted.

According to this hypothesis, it is clear, the ontological order of creation had nothing in common with the historical order of evolution. God, for example, could perfectly well have created the world in the state it reached in

the year 1000, without our being any the wiser. Our experience, our science, would have continued none the less to carry the cosmic series indefinitely back into the past. The world of 1000 A. D. is conditioned by a network of antecedents, and science is concerned with discovering their threads, simply from the point of view of their mutual connection, without prejudging their absolute reality.

This duality of the cognitive order and the real order has since seemed to me arbitrary and false. We have no serious reason for thinking that things are not made in the same pattern as that in which our experience unfolds them. On the contrary, that pattern may very well disclose to us the fundamental texture of Spirit.

In the theory of creative union, the imponderable Multiple which evolution indicates as the original state of the cosmos, must be considered as having a true, objective, absolute existence.²²⁸

It is significant that Teilhard experienced himself a conflict between two orders of truth, the cognitive and the real, and found a way of resolving it through a synthesis of the two within himself. When he says “We have no serious reason for thinking that things are not made in the same pattern as that in which our experience unfolds them.. On the contrary, that pattern may very well disclose to us the fundamental texture of Spirit,” we find that conflict not only calmly resolved but that experience (by which he means here scientific observation or research) may itself provide an opening to the spirit that moves and animates the universe. And in taking this step he has embarked upon the problem of a resolution of the conflict between science

²²⁸ *Writings in Time of War*, “Creative Union”, (Collins, London, 1967) p. 162

and religion. But this resolution is not a merely theoretical or philosophical one. He has committed himself to science *as a way to Spirit*.

To understand Teilhard's way of seeing the problem more clearly it is important to realise that scientific method was still very controversial at this time. On the one hand many scientists regarded science as attaining metaphysics, that is, knowledge of the essence of things, and therefore able to challenge all previous metaphysic theories or systems. On the other hand there were those who claimed that metaphysics could, at least in theory, disclose by inference the laws of physics. This was a problem that Duhem tried to resolve by distinguishing the proper domains of physics and metaphysics and also trying to establish their proper relationship. But Duhem's theory of *natural classification* was itself challenged by scientists. Duhem responded to this attack in an article entitled "Physics and Metaphysics". This article states his position so clearly and tersely that it is worth quoting a substantial portion of it directly rather than trying to summarise it:

The knowledge that metaphysics gives us of things is more intimate and deeper than the one provided by physics. It therefore surpasses the latter in excellence. But if metaphysics precedes physics in order of excellence, it comes after physics in the order of logic. We cannot come to know the essence of things except insofar as that essence is the cause and foundation for phenomena and the laws that govern them. The study of phenomena and laws must therefore precede the investigation of causes. In the same way, when one ascends a staircase, the highest step is the one crossed last.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding, we must insist on this logical priority of physics over metaphysics as an essential point.

Here, to begin with, is a proposition that it seems to us cannot be contested: Any metaphysical investigation concerning brute matter cannot be made logically before one has acquired some understanding of physics.

It is quite evident, in fact, that one cannot think of investigating anything whatsoever about the causes of phenomena without having studied the phenomena themselves and having acquired some understanding of them.

But once some knowledge of physics has permitted the first metaphysical investigations and these investigations have provided some indications about the nature of material things, can one not follow the inverse order, descending the staircase one has climbed, and, from what one knows about the nature of material things, deduce the phenomena which they must produce and the laws that these phenomena obey?

To deny in an absolute manner the possibility of such an intellectual path seems to us rash at the minimum. Theoretically, it is possible that the knowledge of the nature of things, obtained through metaphysics, permits the establishment, by deduction, of a true physics. But practically, the method that consists of taking metaphysics as the point of departure in the discovery of physical truths appears very difficult and full of danger. It is easy to reveal the reason for this.

A complete and adequate knowledge of substances carries with it a complete and adequate knowledge of the phenomena they can produce. The knowledge of causes

implies the knowledge of effects. But the reverse of this proposition is not true. The same effect can be produced by several different causes. To this extent, even the total and complete knowledge of a set of phenomena would not give us a complete knowledge of the substances through which they are produced.

Thus, when we ascend from effects to causes in order to obtain a metaphysics, starting from some established physical knowledge, as perfect and extensive as one would like, we gain a very incomplete and imperfect knowledge of the essence of material things. This knowledge proceeds more through negation than through affirmation, more by the exclusion of some hypotheses that might be made about the nature of things than by positive indications of that nature. It is only in certain rare cases, through the exclusion of all possible hypotheses except one, that we are able to acquire positive proof about the essence of material things.

To understand this essential point properly, it is important never to confuse the *truths established by metaphysics* with *metaphysical systems*. The truths of metaphysics are propositions few in number and, for the most part, negative in form, which we obtain in ascending from observed phenomena to the substances which cause them. A metaphysical system, however, is a collection of positive judgements-although hypothetical for the most part-by means of which a philosopher seeks to relate metaphysical truths among themselves in a logical and harmonious order. Such a system is acceptable provided none of the hypotheses composing it conflicts with an established metaphysical truth.

But it remains always highly problematic and never forces itself on reason in an unavoidable fashion.

What we have just said on the subject of metaphysical truths makes evident that these truths can almost never become the point of departure for a deduction leading to a physical discovery. When, by depending on knowledge of a set of phenomena, we have succeeded in demonstrating the impossibility of certain assumptions concerning the substances through which the phenomena are produced, in acquiring even some positive indications on the subject of these substances, the view we have of them remains too general and too little *determinate* to enable us to foresee the existence of a new class of phenomena or to anticipate a new physical law.

Metaphysical systems present to us a definition of the nature of things more detailed and more determinate than that furnished by demonstrated metaphysical truths. Because of that, metaphysical systems become capable of leading us to physical consequences more easily than can metaphysical truths alone. But while a physical consequence deduced from some metaphysical propositions participates in the certainty of the latter, a physical consequence deduced from a metaphysical system suffers from the doubtful and problematic character affecting the system itself and cannot be regarded as established. It is no more than an indication that physics will have to examine and on which physics will rule.

In conclusion, *if it is not impossible, it is at least extremely difficult to deduce a new physical truth from well-established metaphysical truths. As for metaphysical*

*systems, they may suggest a proposition in physics, but physics alone can decide if this proposition is correct or incorrect.*²²⁹

From this it is evident that there is an intricate interplay between metaphysical truths and physical truths. Science cannot of itself attain knowledge of metaphysics, yet neither can metaphysics of itself establish physical truths, even though we can grant that in principle it may do so. Yet, strictly speaking, it does not matter to science that it cannot attain metaphysical certainties, since this is not its primary aim. Its aim, Duhem insists, is to arrive at a natural classification of physical reality, verifiable by its own coherence and subject to correction through knowledge of greater coherence similarly derived. Having established the distinct domains of physics and metaphysics and gained an idea of the interplay between them, the question still remains as to how these two domains arise in the first place. Why cannot we have direct perception of the causes and essences of things from which a complete physics could be derived? Duhem locates the reason in the nature of the intellect itself:

It does not follow from the nature of the things studied, but only from the nature of our intellects. An intellect which had a direct intuitive view of the essence of things - such as, according to the teaching of the theologians, an angel's intellect - would not make any distinction between physics and metaphysics. Such an intellect would not know successively the phenomena and the substance - that is, the

²²⁹ Pierre Duhem, *Essays in the History and Philosophy of Science*, trans. R. Ariew and P. Barker (Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis & Cambridge, 1996) "Physics and Metaphysics" pp. 32-34. The article was in response to E. Vicaire, "De la Valeur objective des hypotheses physiques," *Revue de questions scientifiques* 33 (1893): 451-510.

cause of these phenomena. It would know substance and its modifications simultaneously. It would be much the same for an intellect that had no direct intuition of the essence of things but an adequate - though indirect - view through the beatific vision of divine thought.²³⁰

This answer throws the question back upon human nature. It is the traditional Medieval answer. It does not deny the possibility of a direct intuition of the essence of things, but such a direct intuition, because it “would not know successively the phenomena and the substance” could not delineate a system of natural classification subject to the test of internal coherence. And it is this which science seeks. So even such intuition of essences, even if it is in principle the final resting-place of knowledge, could not substitute the method of science. Such intuitive knowledge could never replace the “community of knowledge” that is foundational to scientific knowledge. That is to say, whatever could be *reported* to us of the direct intuition of essences could not be verified except through identical direct intuition. Scientific knowledge, on the other hand, is in principle testable by anyone prepared to test it. It is *communicable* knowledge. Intuitive knowledge is not.²³¹ It follows from this that, even though a scientist may directly intuit a universal truth or law, it cannot become knowledge for the human community until it is expressed as a cogent scientific theory which can be directly absorbed into the natural classification already established in the scientific community. It is this formulating of an “insight” into a

²³⁰ Pierre Duhem, *Essays in the History and Philosophy of Science*, trans. R. Ariew and P. Barker (Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis & Cambridge, 1996) “Physics and Metaphysics” p. 31.

²³¹ It is for this reason that Sherrard’s thesis that science can be critiqued by metaphysics or Christian revelation or doctrine falls down. The attack upon science in the name of Christian doctrine can, in the end, only be made on the grounds of authority, not reason. But science has the right to demand that doctrine justify itself to reason because that is the domain of science. See P. Sherrard, *Human Image: World Image* (Golgonooza, 1992).

coherent theory in which scientific “work” consists, for it is only the theory that can be verified, not the insight as such.

There is for Teilhard a reciprocity between intuition and articulated observation. The primary though illusive intuition of the whole, the “cosmic sense”, calls the intellect to its task of grasping reality in a concrete sense. The sciences, despite their claim of agnosticism, are an affirmation of the coherence of reality. In this affirmation of the coherence of reality is the key to Teilhard’s conception of scientific method. Following Duhem’s definition of natural classification, Teilhard saw the wider aim of science in terms of bringing all our understanding of the universe into a coherent synthesis. And this means discerning the interrelations of the different strata of the cosmos, both in terms of their hierarchical arrangement and their evolutionary direction. Thus when Teilhard discerns the continuity of an elementary organising principle in a higher strata of nature he is proceeding exactly as Duhem describes the methodology of natural classification. For example his correlation of the organising principle of the cell into more complex organisms with the organising of human society follows logically from his method. The process of differentiation and unification runs through every strata of the evolution of the earth. It is largely due to a failure to grasp this procedure which Teilhard consistently follows throughout *The Phenomenon of Man* that the accusations that his description of evolution lacks scientific coherence arise. Teilhard’s method runs counter to the assumption that science can deal only with single matters at a time. Yet any interpretation of evolution involves extrapolating from details which form an organised pattern an overall explanatory model. Even the crude notion of competition of species for survival producing the accidental or chance emergence of stronger species is an extrapolation which assumes some organising principle, even though a highly reductive one. But for Teilhard such an explanation is deficient because it does not account for *all* the factors involved. Most significantly it does not account

for the fact that the historical drift of evolution was always in the direction of more and more complex organisation, and the drift of more and more complex organisation was always in the direction of higher forms of consciousness. It is really the problem of consciousness that presents the difficulty for critics of Teilhard's understanding of evolution. The phenomenon of consciousness is always discounted by science generally, or simply overlooked or explained away as an epiphenomenon. "Up to the present, whether from prejudice or fear, science has been reluctant to look man in the face but has constantly circled round the human object without daring to tackle it."²³² For Teilhard consciousness is the inevitable and logical outcome of biological evolution. It is what every experiment of nature was groping for. It was therefore completely logical that Teilhard should pose the question of the future of the earth in terms of the *potential of consciousness*. Yet this presents enormous problems:

. . . at the end of its analyses, physics is no longer sure whether what is left in its hands is pure energy or, on the contrary, thought. At the end of its constructions, biology, if it takes its discoveries to their logical conclusion, finds itself forced to acknowledge the assemblage of thinking beings as the present terminal form of evolution. We find man at the bottom, man at the top, and, above all, man at the centre - man who lives and struggles desperately in us and around us. We shall have to come to grips with him sooner or later.²³³

²³² Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (Collins, London, 1966) p. 281.

²³³ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (Collins, London, 1966) p. 281.

It is therefore not surprising that there is a current in modern science to level down the explanation of all phenomena to the *least conscious* explanation, as if the key to the universe lay in what is most inert.²³⁴

These observations about Teilhard's understanding of scientific method lead us directly to his conception of the noosphere. The rise of science as a way of coming to knowledge of the universe corresponds precisely with the rise of the human desire for a *common understanding* of the universe. It is the principle of public verification that singles out science as a *social phenomenon* from other modes of knowledge. The promise of science, which distinguishes it from other types of knowledge, is that it makes possible *communal knowledge*. There is no science without a scientific community. And there is no scientific community if the general community does not fund science. The general community funds science because it believes that scientific knowledge is a common property. Teilhard acknowledges that science appears to be valued at present merely because of its economic benefits, but he regards this as only transitional:

The truth is that, as children of a transition period, we are neither fully conscious of, nor in full control of, the new powers that have been unleashed. clinging to outworn habit, we still see in science only a new means of providing more easily the same old things. We put Pegasus between the traces. And Pegasus languishes-unless he bolts with the wagon! But the moment will come - it is bound to - when man will be forced by disparity of the equipage to admit that science is not an accessory occupation for him but an

²³⁴ For a strong argument against scientific reductionism in modern biology and genetics see S. Rose, R. C. Lewontin and L. J. Kamin *Not In Our Genes: Biology, Ideology and Human Nature*, (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1984)

essential activity, a natural derivative of the overspill of energy constantly liberated by mechanisation.²³⁵

But looked at in terms of the emerging noosphere, science, or the pursuit of knowledge generally, offers a way towards the accomplishment of a collective human task, above and beyond the mere struggle to survive or the enjoyment of material wealth, where consciousness itself comes fully into play as the centre of human activity:

Noogenesis rises upwards in us and through us unceasingly. We have pointed to the principal characteristics of that movement: the closer association of the grains of thought; the synthesis of individuals and of nations or races; the need of an autonomous and supreme personal focus to bind elementary personalities together, without deforming them, in an atmosphere of active sympathy. And, once again: all this results from the combined action of two curvatures - the roundness of the earth and the cosmic convergence of mind - in conformity with the law of complexity and consciousness.²³⁶

Yet for modern man to grasp the rise of the noosphere Teilhard was convinced that a completely new approach to anthropology was required, or rather a new anthropology which looked at man as an entire species in process of unification:

²³⁵ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (Collins, London, 1966) p. 279.

²³⁶ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (Collins, London, 1966) p. 287.

. . . what strikes me more and more is the evident necessity of conceiving and of building a new anthropology. Since the time of Darwin, evolution has passed beyond the narrow limits of zoology and become a general process covering the atom as well as the cell. And, during the same period, while successfully attacking the roots of nuclear and cellular evolution, Man has at the same time learnt that he is both the maker and the subject of some sort of ultra-evolution.

For these two main reasons, the science of Man can no longer be left in the hands of the "writers" or "humanists" for whom Humanity is only a type of isolated and self-sufficient microcosm in the universe - nor in the hands of pure anatomists, whose only interest is to search for osteological differences between Man and the anthropoids, without ever being aware of the frightening power, which suddenly emerged in a Pliocene primate, to change the whole face of the earth in the course of a million years..

One way or the other, anthropology cannot fail to become a prolongation of physics, and not just a department of medicine or of philosophy.²³⁷

It is interesting here that although Teilhard conceives the new anthropology emerging from the scientific study of man, he also regards science alone as inadequate. On the other hand he speaks almost disparagingly of what he terms the "humanist" study of man, by which he means primarily sociology and philosophy or philosophical anthropology. These disciplines take man as isolated from and unrelated to the universe, as though man was a "microcosmos" sufficient and complete in himself. Near the end of his life

²³⁷ Quoted from a letter of Teilhard (1952) in C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 347.

when he helped organise or attended various conferences on anthropology he seems to particularly despair of the humanists:

And it is ridiculous to see the leaders and pontiffs of a certain cultural, social, or psychological “anthropology”, to say nothing of the “phenomenologist” or “existentialist” philosophers now in vogue, still treating Man as a world apart from the rest of the great world; if not starting from *a priori* ethical, aesthetic, or ontological postulates, at any rate in such a way as to square with them. In our scientific age, we have not yet succeeded in defining a science of Man. . . . (18 April 1953.)²³⁸

As Cuenot observes:

Teilhard’s synthetic spirit refused all compartmentalisation - the separation of physics and anthropology, the splitting of anthropology into various disciplines. Moreover, one of the persistent themes of his thought is that the idea of evolution, originally a biological theory, has invaded all the sciences. There is a genesis of the atom just as there is a genesis of Man. The various anthropological disciplines must, therefore, be assembled into a single science of anthropogenesis.²³⁹

It is a bold enterprise that Teilhard is suggesting here. Yet it is completely in accord with his insistence that we grasp man in his entirety. While each

²³⁸ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 348.

²³⁹ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 348.

of the disciplines concentrates on researching specific aspects of man, the larger event of human reflective convergence remains hidden from view. That is to say, the continuation of evolution through man, in the emergence of the noosphere, is not seen either as a present fact before man nor as the activating principle of the human quest for knowledge. So it is not simply on theoretical grounds that Teilhard was so concerned that a new science of man should take form, bringing together all the various disciplines, but also because such a synthesis would of itself forward the general trend of noospheric synthesis that is presently taking shape. The emergence of a new science of man corresponds with the unfolding discovery of the noosphere and the “within” of things generally:

From all the evidence, we find ourselves irrevocably engaged at the moment, as everyone can see, in a rapidly accelerated process of human totalisation. By the combined effect of multiplication (in number) and of expansion (in radius of action) of human individuals on the surface of the globe, the noosphere has begun to compress itself sharply and to compenetrates itself organically, for almost a century now. This, without doubt, is the most enormous and central of modern events on the earth. (*The Convergence of the Universe, 1951.*)²⁴⁰

Again, these observations are extremely bold. The increase in human population is generally considered a major problem because of the pressure it exerts on natural resources. Yet the process of multiplication and expansion of the human species is consistent with the emergence of any new species and it is instructive to try an look upon it as a natural phenomenon

²⁴⁰ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 349.

rather than simply as an economic crisis. This is especially the case with the human species if the concurrent phenomenon of interiorization (consciousness) and reflection are taken into account. This second phenomenon indicates that the human species is, as it were, generating its own specific “habitat” - the noosphere - in which human activity rises from material production and consumption to *cultural* production and exchange. Thus man, though like any other biological species, dwells in an extended dimension of the universe, the dimension of consciousness which, so far as we can tell, is an *infinite sphere* with infinite possibilities of further evolution, but which ultimately places no new demands on the physical resources of the earth. This is what Teilhard means when he speaks of the expanding radius of human activity. On the one hand he is now a “global” species. Through technological adaptation there is no sphere of the earth that is inaccessible to man or which, at least theoretically, is not habitable to him. Yet, because the earth is round, the species cannot infinitely expand by dispersion. The roundness of the earth forces man back upon himself and obliges him to seek ways to act as a total species.²⁴¹ This phenomenon of man being forced back upon himself, which appears as a limitation when looked at simply as a circumscription to his dispersion as a species, turns out to be a convergent force which draws man’s inner potential for higher and collective consciousness.

For Teilhard this fact contains the clue for the discovery of an evolutionary force which compensates for the general law of entropy. To grasp the scope and context of this idea of consciousness opening up a sphere liberated from entropy we may turn to Teilhard’s major insights into the problem of energy. So far as I am aware, Teilhard is the only scientist who has explored the question of energy in *all its modes*, ranging from the

²⁴¹ Teilhard mentions the “roundness of the earth” so frequently in his writings that no particular citation would be especially pertinent here.

more obvious physical level of thermodynamics, through the phenomenon of *life*, to *consciousness* and, finally, to *convergent consciousness*. His thoughts on this enormous question, which is a recurrent theme throughout his writings, are summarised in a article, *Reflections of Energy*, published in 1952, near the end of his life:

1. Taken at its origin, in each human element, Reflection (or the passage of a single being *from the conscious state to the self-conscious state*) corresponds to a critical point separating the two species of life from each other.
2. Once begun elementary in the interior of individuals, reflective life continues to diversify and intensify itself following a collective process closely bound up with the technico-cultural convergence of mankind, prolonging and transposing into a new domain the movement of non-reflective life.
3. At the end of this process of ultra-reflection, operating on a limited planetary “quantum” a pole of maximum convergence appears, which, as a result of the exigencies of irreversibility inherent in the reflective state, cannot be considered as a transitory or “flash” state, but rather as a critical higher point of reflection beyond which, for us, the evolutive curve of complexity-consciousness rises from time and space.
4. Finally, from the energetic viewpoint, everything happens as if the universe were propagating itself not along a single axis but rather along two *joined* axes; one (entropy) the axis of greatest probability and the other (life) of the greatest complexity - consciousness developing all along as a function of entropy in keeping with the exigencies of

thermodynamics, but finally avoiding “disorganisation” by a specific effect of reflection, either as a separate energy “of the second species”, or as an interiorised fraction of a common energy.

5. All of which amounts to this: that, in order to cover entirely the evolutive economy of the universe including life, a third principle, that of the reflection of energy, must be added and associated to those of the conservation and dissipation of energy already admitted.²⁴²

Here the phenomenon of “life” represents a second axis to entropy first because, while entropy is observed in the tendency of matter to disperse and settle along lines of least resistance, life moves along an axis of greater complexity and the transformation of energy into consciousness. Thus physical entropy and biological “orthogenesis” move in opposite directions, one towards dispersion and the other towards complexity. Life represents the “interior” dynamics of matter, the organisation of matter within itself into complex unities. Thus while the universe appears to be *expending* itself along one line of energy, it is *generating* itself along the other. The phenomenon of life, the emergence of consciousness and finally reflective consciousness indicate a universe still in birth and striving towards *knowing itself* - for this is the place that the human species is given in the cosmic unfoldment: the species through which the universe becomes conscious of itself. Viewed in terms of such an energetics the more obvious appearance of the species merely struggling to survive is superseded by a far larger process which embraces the total movement of evolution towards a maximum actualisation of itself. And this phenomenon raises another major

²⁴² Quoted from the translation from the French given by C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 351.

question for Teilhard: the final state of the universe and the necessity of its ultimate irreversibility:

It seems more and more evident to me (and this has nothing to do with my personal predilections or religious background) that once evolution becomes reflective, it can no longer function biologically except in a universe offering to human organic convergence an *irreversible* centre of super- or ultra-personalization, that is, in a universe generally definable as of a “lovable and loving” nature. (Just think this over a little and you will see that there isn’t any “sentiment” here but pure energetics.) (8 September 1952.)²⁴³

There are two reasons why Teilhard sees that evolution must be irreversible, one negative and one positive. On the negative side, it seems inconceivable to Teilhard that the supreme effort of the universe should end in ultimate suicide. This is especially the case if man, becoming more and more knowledgeable of the universe and being able, one day, to *predict* the dissolution of the universe, is to continue to find meaning in existence and dedicate himself selflessly to the task of actualising the possibilities of the earth and of man. Having become the species that is conscious of time - including cosmic time - and of the processes of life, such a consciousness could only lead to a diminution of the zest for being if its final prospect was nil, a total oblivion of all that had been. Such a universe would not merely be the final and absolute victim of entropy, but the whole journey would have been pointless and self-defeating. On the positive side, wholly outweighing such a prospect of pointless dissolution, Teilhard is convinced that the universe is drawn by an ultimate centre of unity *ahead*.

²⁴³ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 353.

From his earliest writings Teilhard shows that he conceived the principle of *unity* to be ontologically prior to *being*. In the early 1920's he wrote a number of short essays on ontology, not of any high merit, but they contain the seeds of a number of the themes that were to be developed throughout his life. As Cuenot writes,

For instance, just as in the view of twentieth-century physicists matter is no longer an absolute, but merely a function of its own rate of motion, so, in Teilhard's view, *being* is no longer the fundamental concept, yielding its place to *uniting*. Creation, then, he considered above all an act of union: and it is this union that produces being.²⁴⁴

Union produces being. It is a bold thought, yet an amazingly productive thought, both metaphysically and physically. Metaphysically an absolute Unity, beyond or prior to being, is a perfect conception of God residing wholly in Himself. Physically, because it is a dynamic principle, it is the active principle of cohesion of all that exists in the universe. Evolutionally, it is the key to all processes of growth, both in terms of their expansion into plurality and their mutual belonging together. It allows for the autonomy of every monad, while at the same time giving every monad the possibility of transcending its isolation in communion with every other monad. Thus, as is evident throughout Teilhard's writings, it contains, because of its dynamism, the evolutionary principle of differentiation through unity, because it is at once the active force of individual centration and convergence beyond individuality. It is also the dynamic principle of self-reflection - the crown of

²⁴⁴ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 39.

autonomy and the precondition of unification with the whole. Teilhard gave expression to this seed thought right at the end of his life:

I am more and more convinced that, if it is to found a neo-humanism, evolution must not only be of a converging nature (as co-reflection proves), but that it must converge in the direction of a *real* focus (i.e. not simply "virtual"). This, I repeat, is not for philosophical reasons, but on pure grounds of "psychological energetics". There must be, in the future, some integration on itself of the evolutive whole, under some superconscious form (an integration in which I may be, in some way, integrated myself). Otherwise, I feel, I lack the stimulus, I *would* lack the stimulus is what I mean to say - to go further. (31 January 1955.)²⁴⁵

Although he attended numerous conferences organised to find new approaches to the study of man in his cosmic setting and as a species still in evolution, he was in general rather disappointed with what came of them. The problem among scientists was similar to that of the philosophers and humanists he had encountered. They each looked at man in isolation, according to their own specialities, from the rest of the universe. For example a large anthropological conference was organised by the Wenner Gren in New York in 1952. Teilhard was satisfied to some degree but also some disappointment:

Such as it was (i.e. however hazy the atmosphere in which the discussions took place) last June's "test" was, I believe, valuable and revealing, since it made it apparent that, for the

²⁴⁵ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 354.

majority of those present, humanity still unfortunately represents a sort of self-sufficient, enclosed, island within the universe - a sort of neoplasm - and that it is still legitimate and possible to study it in itself, with no particular reference to the general processes of cosmic evolution as at present being brought to light by physicists and biologists.

Most of the anthropologists who met last summer at the Wenner Gren Foundation spoke as Americans or archaeologists, as logicians or jurists, but not as humanists, not as scientists: and this *because, for them the social was not really part of the general evolution of matter and life!*²⁴⁶

We may assume that the reason that the social, manifest in the development of civilisation, was not understood as part of evolution because evolution itself was not seen as a general movement in a particular direction - towards higher complexity, reflection and unification. Evolution is looked at by most scientists as simply the study of the *mechanisms* of adaptation, but with any conception of a teleology. Yet for Teilhard the salient feature of human socialisation was that of collective convergence, reflected in ethics, economic exchange and cultural creativity and exchange and, above all, in research. For Teilhard, man is the means by which the universe becomes conscious of itself. Because man is reflective (knowing *that* he knows) there arises the next phase of reflection through co-reflection (knowing together). Co-reflection, then, is the salient feature of the noosphere. But co-reflection, possible only through socialisation, is itself possible only if centred in some convergent point in which consciousness itself is wholly fulfilled or attains its object. This ultimate object Teilhard calls Omega, or the Omega point. Omega point is not for Teilhard merely a theoretical

²⁴⁶ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 356.

object that man might posit as the object of co-reflection, but that which animates consciousness in the first place. Thus it is to be conceived:

not as something engendered by energy as it reflects upon itself - but a centre that constitutes the generative principle (the mover) of that reflection. The phenomenon, in fact, of the third reflection - by which "Omega" reflects itself upon (reveals itself to be) a universe that has become (through reflection 1 and 2²⁴⁷) capable of reflecting it in turn.²⁴⁸

Omega is already in existence, drawing consciousness towards itself from ahead. If we understand Omega as the unifying principle of the universe this conception becomes intelligible. Unity, as an active principle throughout evolution, is at once dynamic and teleological as we have already observed. It is teleological in the sense that Aristotle understands telos: as the potential of things to actualise themselves, as for example the oak-tree in the acorn. It is teleological also in the sense that Aquinas understands that all things tend to their own ultimate good. But for Teilhard the most immediate and powerful exemplification of Omega is Christ, or what he refers to as the Cosmic Christ.²⁴⁹ For Teilhard, religion is evolving just as everything else is, and for him the incarnation represents a decisive moment in evolution in

²⁴⁷ Reflection 1 being individual reflection and reflection 2 being collective reflection.

²⁴⁸ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 362.

²⁴⁹ For a full study of Teilhard's use of the phrase "Cosmic Christ" see J. A. Lyons, *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1982). For an exhaustive study of Teilhard's use of Scripture see R. W. Kropf, *Teilhard, Scripture, and Revelation: A Study of Teilhard de Chardin's Reinterpretation of Pauline Themes*, (Associated University Presses, London, 1980). For a comparative study of Teilhard's Cosmic Christ and Eastern religion see A. H. Overzee, *The Body Divine: The Symbol of the Body in the Works of Teilhard de Chardin and Ramana*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992).

which the cosmic presence of Christ is revealed to man. Christ articulates the union, physical and mystical, of man and God, and through this union the union of the whole of matter with God through the redemptive and divinizing activity of Christ. Teilhard sees Christianity as the religion of evolution and therefore the one religion that points the way forward for man:

In fact, no religious faith releases (or has ever, at any moment of history, released) a higher degree of heat, a more intense dynamic drive towards unification, than - the more Catholic it is - Christianity at the present moment. And, logically, it is perfectly natural that this should be so; for in no other creed, ancient or modern, do you find so "miraculously" and effectively associated to attract us and hold us, the three following characteristics of the incarnate Christian God:

(a) Tangibility; experimental in order, the result of the historical entry (by his birth) of Christ into the very process of evolution.

(b) Expansibility, universal in order, conferred on the Christic centre in virtue of "resurrection".

(c) Finally, assimilative power, organic in order, potentially integrating in the unity of a single "body" the totality of human kind . . .²⁵⁰

What marks Christianity off from the other religions is "that it is becoming more and more conscious of being identified with a *Christogenesis*, i. e. with the rise, collectively recognised, of a certain universal Presence, at once

²⁵⁰ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 372.

immortalising and unifying.”²⁵¹ The cosmic presence of Christ and hominisation belong together if either are to be understood in their totality:

On one side (in the case of the Christian) a centre in process of expansion, which seeks a sphere for itself.

And on the other (in the human) a sphere looking deeper into itself, which seeks a centre.²⁵²

Here Christ, through Christianity, is seen as centring the universe in Himself, as drawing all things into his body, while man, through reflection and co-reflection, is seeking a centre within himself (as a species) from which he may act with all the powers of his being. Neither of these, for Teilhard, can be fulfilled in a purely abstract sense. Thus there comes a point in his thought when science, as the knowledge of the universe, must join forces with Christ, the animator of the universe. Hence Teilhard’s term “Christogenesis”. Thus he writes:

For, in the end, however convinced we may be that a higher pole of completion and consolidation (which we may call the Omega) awaits us at the higher term of hominization, this Omega pole can never be decisively attained except by extrapolation; it will always be by its nature a conjecture and a postulate.

And this without taking into account the fact that, even if we admit that it is "guaranteed in its future existence", our anticipation of it can see only a vague, misty picture of it,

²⁵¹ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 372.

²⁵² C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 372.

in which the collective and the potential are perilously confused with the personal and the real.

On the other hand, what happens when our minds awake first to a suspicion and then to clear evidence that the *Christ of Revelation* is one and the same as the *Omega of evolution*?

Then, in one flash, we both see and feel in our hearts that the experimental universe attains its fulfilment and is finally energised.

On the one hand, we see above us the positive glimmer of an *opening* at the highest point in the future. In a world that quite certainly opens out at its peak into Christ Jesus, we no longer need fear to die, stifled in our prison.²⁵³

For the scientist, no matter how bold his vision, or rather, no matter how clearly he sees the process of evolution as the ascent towards consciousness and towards the reflection of matter upon itself, he can only form a conception of the likely future - the full flowing of evolution - by a theoretical extrapolation. It is at this point that Julian Huxley, in his *Introduction to The Phenomenon of Man*, says he cannot follow Teilhard, not because he denies Teilhard's vision of the future, but simply because he cannot do more than see it as a theoretical possibility. But in all other respects Huxley does follow Teilhard. Teilhard is perfectly aware of this difficulty for the scientist, and believes that it will eventually be overcome. For the Christian, the demand is equally great. The Christian has to overcome the centuries of distaste for the world, the spiritual detachment which dissociates man from his place and work in the universe and nature. The only way in which Teilhard can see this can be done is for the Christian

²⁵³ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 372.

to acknowledge the cosmic presence of Christ in the world. As we have seen, the whole thrust of Teilhard's thought is towards an optimal inclusivity, in which there is no conflict between the labour of the earth and the labour of the spirit, for it is one energy that animates both. The natural detachment in labour lies in its self-transcending aspect, for all labour is ultimately a giving of human powers and gifts to the sum of human endeavour. Thus any spiritual detachment that withdraws from the world, because it is regarded as having no intrinsic value, is also a denial of the spirit. It is a closure of one avenue to unity. Both for the scientist and the religious it is a question of grasping the full implications of the energising powers of the universe:

Energy taking on Presence. And so the possibility appears, opens out, for man not only of believing and hoping but (what is much more surprising and much more worthwhile) of loving, co extensively and co-organically with all the past, the present and the future of a universe in process of concentrating around itself . . .²⁵⁴

Energy taking on Presence. That phrase sums up Teilhard's entire vision. It implies not merely that man is that being who must personalise himself, in the sense of becoming a whole person, but the species as a whole in a universe with a personal and personalising centre.

²⁵⁴ C. Cuenot, *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*, (Burns & Oates, London, 1958), p. 373.

CONCLUSION

Our study has taken us through a wide range of religious views and interpretations of man, even though we have confined ourselves to four principle religious figures. This diversity of views is itself informative and indicates that the profoundest reflections on human nature disclose almost infinite possibilities because the depth of man recedes back to the very ground of being and existence as such. If one clear thing emerges it might be said to be that, from the religious perspective, man is always in question of himself. This is of the very essence of human self-reflection. It is not that human nature evades understanding, or that self-reflection is finally blind, but rather that man is that being among beings who is aware of the infinite openness of his being and who is in question of himself continually in the present. No *formulation* of the self ever grasps the self because selfhood is always a venture of being into the unknown possibilities and potential of man. Being is always emergent and never wholly finished and is therefore always essentially a mystery. As we saw at the outset, the question of man arises in each age in new ways and from different perspectives. Man is continually called into question by life itself and through the different ways he relates to the world or directs his concern to God.

Nevertheless, I believe our study has shown us certain fundamental features that are characteristic of the religious approach to the question of man - not the least being that the very ground of religion itself lies in the awakening to the question of the meaning of selfhood. From the religious perspective the question of the meaning of the world is inseparable from the question of the meaning and place of man within the world, the being for *whom* the world is a concern and for whom responsible action within the world is always a concern. Religion is not concerned with how the world works, in a strictly "objective" or scientific sense, but with what the world signifies or means and what it demands of man. The various religious myths

of creation are not so much explanations of the phenomenal world, as J. G. Frazer supposed they were, but articulations of the *human response* to the unfolding of reality to human consciousness. As Eliade observed, the “mythical” consciousness is grounded in an apprehension of the essential unity of all dimensions of reality and it is this unitive apprehension that makes them “sacred” representations. Man narrates the world to himself because the world calls upon him to participate in it and at the same time disclose himself to the world and to himself. And this response to reality, which calls man to himself, ultimately calls him to the ground and origin of all things and so leads man to self-knowledge through knowledge of God. One feature characteristic of Shankara through to Teilhard, despite their immense differences in time, tradition and approach, is that every quest for knowledge and every desire for the fulfilment of life leads ultimately to union with God. There is a mystical dimension underlying every mode of knowledge and experience, and it is this facet of knowledge that is the essentially religious concern.

Also we saw that the question of the unity of reality was addressed by each of the figures we have studied. They each attempt to demonstrate that reality is ultimately one. For Shankara Reality is the defining feature of eternal truth - or eternity is the defining feature of Reality. I have tried to demonstrate that his nondualism is in no sense a negation of the phenomenal world but, on the contrary, an affirmation of its underlying Reality (as Brahman) when seen from the highest level of consciousness. In the ignorant state the phenomenal world appears as a distinct reality in its own right, but this is an appearance only, just like the world that appears in dreams. But Shankara’s position is that there is no real or actual difference between the phenomenal world and the ultimate Reality. The one does not negate the other, but rather they are identical - not two.

Of the western works we have studied, the closest to Shankara is Eriugena’s *Periphyseon*. His fourfold division of nature, although a rational

apprehension, in the end represent “four views” of what is in truth one “nature”. This is shown in his reduction of the fourfold into one. We noted that his interpretation of the *Genesis* Paradise departed from the Augustinian view, in which it is held to be the original state from which man has fallen. For Eriugena Paradise represents the *possible* state of man and that for him the Fall is nothing else than a forgetting of this ultimate possibility. For him man has, as it were, fallen asleep and in so doing forgotten both his final destiny and his own nature as the Image of God. In this notion there is a seed, even though largely neglected by later Christian tradition, of the notion of a possible evolution of human consciousness which resonates with the vision of Teilhard de Chardin, even though arrived at on completely different grounds. But the notion of an unfolding sacred history, or eschatology, is to be found in Bonaventure in the Franciscan tradition, although again this has remained marginal in later Christian thought. But whether we look at Eriugena, Bonaventure or Teilhard the *direction* of this unfolding evolution is towards a consummation of all things in union with God, in which all becomes what it truly and essentially is.

The forms in which they each see this union fulfilled are, obviously, very different. As I said at the outset, it is not my intention to reconcile these differences and even less to argue that they are each identical. What is striking when we look at them each in their own terms is that “unity” is itself a profoundly difficult thing to grasp. There is not a single concept of unity. As Shankara points out, the ultimate unity lies beyond the grasp of mind because mind itself works with differences and distinctions. Mind is itself part of the multiplicity of reality and therefore cannot apprehend the unity which ontologically precedes it. Yet it is not beyond the Self or Atman which is itself identical with Brahman. Thus, from Shankara’s viewpoint, only unity itself can know unity, not as an object to be gazed upon by an outside observer but rather as the ground or substratum of existence itself in

being itself. The measure of knowledge is finally absolute knowledge, where knower and known are identical.

Bonaventure takes a different path. Rather than regard the phenomenal world as merely appearance, he takes the essentially Platonic view that the world of sensory objects are “vestiges” or “footprints” of the Divine Trinity. In this way he grants to visible things a power of mediating between created reality and the uncreated Divine Trinity, in which all things have their true Being. So for Bonaventure the world of sense is like a book that is laid open before man so that, at any stage of the spiritual journey, man may perceive images or semblances of the underlying reality which is the Divine Trinity. Thus the sensory world discloses a reality beyond itself and its reality or meaning consists in this disclosing power. This disclosing power of the sensory world is the opposite to the concealing power of Maya in Shankara’s thought. Only at the last step can the real unity of the Trinity Itself be grasped, which for Bonaventure is a dynamic unity or a unity of superabundance. Thus with Bonaventure there is, so to speak, a kind of “complexity” in ultimate unity which somehow holds completely together sameness and difference - such as in qualities like infinite power and total rest, total completeness and infinite creativity, potential and productivity, total indwelling and complete outpouring. This unity in complexity is part of the ungraspable mystery of the Divine Trinity. Yet it is, at the same time, the key to the perception of the Trinitarian structure of all visible things and the means by which all vestiges can be traced back through the hierarchy of reality to God.

With Teilhard we have an entirely different approach. Rather than commence with a theological understand of the mystery of the Divine Trinity, or any *metaphysical* principle, Teilhard begins with a penetration of physical phenomena directly and seeks his way to an understanding of its foundational structures and processes. His is an attempt to grasp the fundamental unity of the world as it discloses itself. Yet, as we have seen,

this task begins in an original “intuition” of wholeness or sense of totality. It is this intuition of wholeness which initially guides the mind in finding *any* type of order or coherency in the world. But this principle of wholeness, grasped intuitively by the mind, is the same principle that runs through all the strata of the physical universe from inanimate matter, through all living forms and right up to the activities of consciousness itself. It is this startling fact of unity which causes so many scientists to part company with Teilhard. This is largely because science tends to seek the explanation of things in the “part” rather than in the whole, and so there is a quest for the keys to the workings of the physical world in its minutest particles - such as in genetics - rather than in the overall architecture and telos of the universe. Thus Teilhard’s understanding of the universe as a single, directed process of complexification and unification appears as a metaphysical notion to many scientists. Teilhard frequently insists that it is not a metaphysical principle but, on the contrary, evident in every unfolding process in nature. A further problem lies in the notion that consciousness is an epiphenomenon, a factor so local, recent and ephemeral in the cosmic scheme that it can be left on one side in any broad account of the universe. The curious thing about this view is that it leaves out of account the very observer who seeks to understand the universe, as though man stood outside reality as one looking in. Yet more curious is the fact that the investigation of the nature of reality is *precisely* an instance of the universe “reflecting upon itself” which Teilhard marks as the human function or calling within it.

It is not our concern here to settle this issue. But it is to be remarked that this “blind spot” in science generally betrays an unspoken anthropology. Man is “merely” man and of no account in the cosmic scheme. It is not - as so often argued - that science is atheistic that makes it blind to the question of consciousness, but rather that it supposes that *man is already explained*. But man is not explained. And for some reason the question of man has fallen out of modern Christian discourse as though it

never were an essentially religious question. Thus we need not point a finger at science for its limited view of man but rather wonder why the question of man has fallen out of general theological and philosophical discussion and enquiry, which is where it really belongs.

Here we might take note of an apparent distinction between the Eastern religious approach to the question of man and the western. For the East this question has been formulated as "Who am I". Certainly this is the case with Hinduism and most obviously with Shankara. But it is also the case with Buddhism, different as their answers are. In either case, it is the ontological question that is central to the East and, as Teilhard notes, this is where the Eastern contribution to human thought lies. The West, at least through the Judeo-Christian traditions, has formulated the human question differently as "How I am justified before God". This is not, at least on the face of it, an ontological question but rather a relational question. It is no doubt for this reason, as we observed in the Introduction, that it is said that Christian theological anthropology is concerned with the relation of man with God. And this itself has been largely considered as an ethical relation, not an ontological one. For many Christian thinkers the idea of asking about the ontological relation between man and God would seem almost blasphemous, although not this was not the case in the Middle Ages. As we have seen, Eriugena and Bonaventure both presuppose that the ground of man's being resides in God. The same, in very bold terms, may be said of Meister Eckhart too. The Christian mystics, most especially where they have adopted an emanationist position, stemming from Christian Platonism, very clearly come at the question of human selfhood from the ontological viewpoint. And it is probably accurate to say that where mysticism is rejected within Christianity that this rejection is centred on precisely this ground. The ontological approach transcends the necessary dualism of the ethical approach. And this same question of ontology lies at the heart of the rejection of "pantheism" as heresy, as was the case with Eriugena. At

bottom, these problems within the Christian tradition represent a struggle between dualism (the relationsist position) and nondualism (the emanationist or theophanic position). And this same problem runs unconsciously through the scientific atheism and its consequent dismissal of the question of man. On the other hand, if the question of ethics is pushed far enough it too takes us to the ground of being, since ultimately all that God demands of man is that he be the being he was made to be.

As I tried to show at the outset of this study, the question of man inevitably raises the question of man's place in the universe, and this question inevitably leads to the question of God. I formulated this in the following way: In order to know himself man must know the world, and in order to know the world man must know God. One could place any one of these three first and the other two follow. Within the framework of these three great questions the ontological and the ethical questions inevitably also arise. But also, I suggested, *all* modes of human thought and concern arise within this framework. I suggested that in confronting the world, man is called to reflect upon himself. And in reflecting thus upon himself man may cast his eye towards the future and the shaping of his destiny. As we saw in our study of Teilhard, once man looks to his possible future and determines a direction to take, then not only does the phenomenon of culture arise but also the question of the destiny of the universe itself. If the prospect before man is, finally, a dead universe and therefore a wiping out without trace the whole sum of human endeavour, love and hope, then even the action of the present hour is rendered barren and meaningless. A Stoic resolution in the face of final oblivion of all things is no adequate answer to such a prospect, even if it contains a noble strain. It still renders the enactment of the drama before the dissolution pointless and therefore not worth undertaking well. The Christian answer is the New Kingdom. Religion, to put it boldly, is *required* to offer the prospect that all things shall be well, both for the individual human being as well as for the human race. The Hindu answer is

that All is Brahman, which is to say that all things are already well - if we could but see it. I see no need to polarise these two religious answers. They are not mutually exclusive alternatives we are compelled to choose between. If we follow the logic of Teilhard's thought, they are two independent insights into the nature of reality, two contributions framed within the contexts of posing the religious question differently within their respective communities. And if one community feels the truth of one insight, it does not follow that it must reject that of another community. Nor does it mean that one religious tradition needs to compromise itself to accommodate another. The very diversity of ultimate explanations is itself indicative of the mysterious nature of reality.

Where Teilhard and Shankara do converge lies in perceiving an essentially *sacred* aspect to the universe or creation. In neither case is the created world merely negated. This is also the case with both Eriugena and Bonaventure. Different as each are, they each overcome the apparent conflict between the created and uncreated, the spiritual and the material, the temporal and the eternal. I have endeavoured in this study to show that overcoming this apparent conflict is an essential religious concern. Yet understanding how the conflict is overcome involves, in the end, a mystical vision of reality which ordinary reason cannot attain by itself.

A further very significant feature of all the views of man we have studied is that each one rests upon the possibility of the transformation of man. In part this is what makes these concepts difficult to grasp. They are not simply alternative fixed descriptions or definitions of man. In each case man is seen in relation to the call to totally different state of being to the one he finds himself in at the dawn of self-reflection. He is called to an actualisation of his potential, and so the religious understanding of man involves coming to an understanding of the hidden possibilities of man. At the moment man is called to himself he is also called to transcend himself. Thus there are discontinuities between different planes of knowledge and

self-understanding. With Shankara the discontinuity between phenomenal knowledge and absolute knowledge is enormous. There are no relations at all between the two orders of understanding since one is illusory and the other absolute. With Eriugena there are a sequence of steps between the mere perception of multiplicity to unity within that multiplicity, to a final reduction of all to a unity containing everything including nonbeing. This final unity is not a reconciliation of all the opposites that comprise diversity, but rather a wholly different order of reality in which difference and sameness no longer have any meaning because they belong to the realm of diversity. In the case of Bonaventure also there are a series of steps in ascending order from the perception of the phenomenal world to perception of what it signifies, to a direct perception of the Divine Trinity, and finally to knowing through a participation in God's own knowledge of all things. Thus different orders of knowledge correspond to different modes of being or different states of mind, each one of which leaves a previous one behind. So there is no cumulative body of knowledge involved but rather a series of transformations of perception in which a type of knowledge corresponds to a state of being, and each state of being involves a different relation of self and the world and God. Every mode of knowledge is transitional, and even the final rest in the knowledge of God is infinitely open because God is without bound or end.

In the case of Teilhard this transformative or self-transcending property is extended from man himself to include the whole universe. It has often been said that Teilhard is too anthropocentric, but in fact his thought is essentially cosmocentric, with Christ at the very centre of the transforming universe. However, what has emerged from our study is that either the universe, man or God may be taken as the initial starting-point of the religious question and that the other two will inevitably become incorporated into the question. In terms of the types of mysticism, of which

these three centres form the material, the unity of man, the creation and of God forms a mysticism that incorporates them all.

This observation brings us to a final reflection on the question of unity. I said at the outset that it was not my intention to reconcile Shankara, Eriugena, Bonaventure and Teilhard de Chardin. To seek some equivalence between them would involve compromising their distinctive standpoints, historical moments and traditions. There is an integrity about each that comes from their particular approaches and the questions they are addressing and it is this that lends each their force. Any conceptual merging of their views would destroy this integrity. Nevertheless, I suggested that the contrasts and tensions between each of them were themselves valuable and informative. These contrasts and tensions demonstrate that there is no simple and direct question about man and his spiritual origin and destiny, let alone a simple and direct answer. One reason for this is that the *intuition* of ultimate unity, which lies at the heart of them all - and which I have suggested is an original religious question - is an intuition of the ineffable. Because it is an intuition of the ineffable it seeks ways of being articulated and made graspable, and there is no fixed way in which it can be so articulated because every articulation must borrow from the visible realm, by way of sign, symbol, myth, analogy and metaphor and so on, and these themselves arise through the varying story of man's collective experience through history and thought. In this sense they are indeterminate and unpredictable. So it follows that any comparison between different traditions and different ages within a single tradition can only make comparison between these transitional articulations, between symbols whose meaning belongs to the community for whom they disclose something of what always remains essentially a mystery or always still in question. We cannot compare the *substance* of these articulations because that substance is no more accessible to us than to those traditions from which these articulations arose meaningfully.

If we take this into account it is not so difficult to understand that different ages and traditions encounter the question of ultimate unity in different ways. These different ways can bear almost no comparison at all. For example we see in the Old Testament a continual struggle through story and myth to make explicit the discontinuity between man and God, where we find man always perplexed by God's ways. Out of this arose an elaborate conception of man attempting to obey the will of God and in this sense conforming his being to that of the creator. No "metaphysics", in the Greek or Indian sense, arises out of this approach. Yet perfect obedience to the will of God leads to its own form of mysticism, through a union of the human conscience with the divine will. But the dualism between Creator and creation remains never dealt with, never even called into question, and this strand has lived on within the Christian tradition in many respects. Eriugena and Bonaventure each confront that dualism and overcome it in very different ways as we have seen. In Hinduism, on the other hand, this dualism between creator and created emerges as the central religious question or concern - and this is even the case with Buddhism. That there could be an eternal and a temporal reality competing for the appellation of "the Real" is the essential problem of Vedantic metaphysics - and it takes on a metaphysical mode of discourse rather than a mythological one. Putting this contrast boldly we might say that for the Judeo-Christian traditions the ultimate questions were centred in the human conscience, while in the Hindu tradition the ultimate questions were centred in the intellect. Thus obedience and understanding stand as two quite distinct grounds for mysticism. To expect such different approaches to give rise to comparable articulations is to expect the impossible.

With Teilhard de Chardin a completely new factor, belonging entirely to our own age, emerges into view. Through the scientific study of the phenomenal world the factor of evolution - of a universe in process of ascent towards complexity and higher forms of consciousness, in short, a

universe with a teleology - confronts western man and the Christian tradition. As we have seen, this process is for Teilhard essentially a process towards unity. Thus the intuition of unity suddenly discloses itself as the moving force of matter itself, and so the question of the relation of Creator to creation takes on a completely new form and force. Such a view is entirely alien to the traditional Christian view of the universe as static and finished, and obviously contrasts with the Hindu view of cyclical creations. In a universe in process of spiritualisation suddenly all human activities and aspirations come into question in wholly new ways. The relegation of a final spiritual destiny for man to a post-mortem life suddenly looks like a partial view because it belongs to a conception of the created order being static and ultimately dispensable. Thus the question of unity takes on a wholly new set of concerns and implications, none of which could have been deduced from previous ways of articulating unity, although in retrospect the Christian doctrine of progressive revelation (as we find in Bonaventure's doctrine of history) and the doctrine of eschatology contain the seeds of such a conception, yet not in any obvious material sense.

The intuition of unity, which appears on first sight as something rather simple and easy to grasp, turns out to be highly complex and can appear in countless forms in different strata of reality. It turns out to be the moving principle of all human aspiration, whether in each human being seeking personal unity or integration, or in human creativity or industry, or in the desire for God. At the same time, any type of disunity, no matter where it appears, is always destructive.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blumenthal, Uta-Renate, ed. *Carolingian Essays*. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America, 1893.

Bonaventure. *The Breviloquium*. Translated by Jose de Vinck. Edited by Jose de Vinck. Vol. 2, *The Works of Bonaventure*. New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963.

Bonaventure. *De Reductione Artum ad Theologiam*. Translated by Sister Emma Therese Healy. Edited by P. Boehner & M. F. Laughlin. Vol. 1, *Works of Saint Bonaventure*. New York: Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 1955.

Bonaventure. *Disputed Questions on the Knowledge of Christ*. Translated by Zachery Hayes. Edited by George Marcil. 4 vols. Vol. 4, *Works of St. Bonaventure*. New York: Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 1992.

Bonaventure. *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*. Translated by Zachery Hayes. Edited by George Marcil. 4 vols. Vol. 3, *Works of St. Bonaventure*. New York: Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 1979.

Bonaventure. *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. Translated by Philotheus Boehner. Edited by P. Boehner & M. F. Laughlin. 3 vols. Vol. 2, *Works of Saint Bonaventure*. New York: Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, 1956.

Bonaventure. *Mystical Opuscula*. Translated by Jose de Vinck. Edited by Jose de Vinck. 6 vols. Vol. 1, *The Works of Bonaventure*. New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1960.

Bourgerol, J. Guy. *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure*. Translated by Vinck, Jose de. Paterson: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1964.

Buber, Martin. *Between Man And Man*. Translated by Smith, Ronald Gregor. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949.

Buber, Martin. *The Knowledge of Man*. Translated by Friedman, Maurice. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965.

Burns, J. Patout, ed. *Theological Anthropology*. Edited by William G. Rusch, *Sources of Early Christian Thought*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981.

Burrell, David. B. & Bernard McGinn, ed. *God and Creation: An Ecumenical Symposium*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990.

Caputo, John D. *Heidegger and Aquinas*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1982.

Cassirer, Ernst. *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.

Cassirer, Ernst. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Volume 2: Mythical Thought*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955.

Cousins, Ewert H. *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978.

Cuenot, Claude. *Teilhard de Chardin: A Biographical Study*. London: Collins, 1958.

de Chardin, Teilhard. *Activation of Energy*. Translated by Rene Hague. London: Collins, 1970.

de Chardin, Teilhard. *The Appearance of Man*. Translated by Cohen. J. M. London: Collins, 1965.

de Chardin, Teilhard. *Christianity and Evolution*. Translated by Rene Hague. London: Collins, 1971.

de Chardin, Teilhard. *The Future of Man*. Translated by Norman Denny. London: Collins, 1964.

de Chardin, Teilhard. *The Heart of Matter*. London: Collins, 1978.

de Chardin, Teilhard. *Le Milieu Divin*. London: Collins, 1960.

de Chardin, Teilhard. *Letters From a Traveller*. London: Collins, 1962.

- de Chardin, Teilhard. *Letters to Leontine Zanta*. Translated by Bernard Wall. London: Collins, 1969.
- de Chardin, Teilhard. *The Making of a Mind: Letters from a Soldier-Priest*. Translated by Rene Hague. London: Collins, 1965.
- de Chardin, Teilhard. *Man's Place in Nature*. Translated by Rene Hague. London: Collins, 1966.
- de Chardin, Teilhard. *The Phenomenon of Man*. Translated by Bernard Wall. London: Collins, 1966.
- de Chardin, Teilhard. *Toward The Future*. Translated by Rene Hague. London: Collins, 1975.
- de Chardin, Teilhard. *The Vision of the Past*. Translated by Cohen. J. M. London: Collins, 1966.
- de Chardin, Teilhard. *Writings in Time of War*. Translated by Rene Hague. London: Collins, 1968.
- de Lubac, Henri. *The Eternal Feminine: A study on the Poem by Teilhard de Chardin*. Translated by Rene Hague. London: Collins, 1971.
- Deutch, Eliot. *Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1980.
- Donceel, J. F. *Philosophical Anthropology*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1967.
- Dourley, John P. *Paul Tillich and Bonaventure*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975.
- Duhem, Pierre. *Essays in the History and Philosophy of Science*. Translated by Roger Ariew and Peter Barker. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. Translated by Philip Mairet. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinheimer & Donald G. Marshall. London: Sheed and Ward, 1993.

Gersh, Stephen. *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978.

Gilson, Etienne. *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. London: Sheed & Ward, 1989.

Gilson, Etienne. *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*. Translated by Dom Illtyd Trethowen & Frank J. Sheed. New Jersey: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965.

Harris, R. Baine, ed. *Neoplatonism and Indian Thought*. Vol. II. Norfolk: International Society For Neoplatonic Studies, 1982.

Heidegger, Martin. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Macquarrie & Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

Hill, Edmund. *Being Human*. Edited by Michael Richards. Vol. 3, *Introducing Catholic Theology*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984.

Indich, William M. *Consciousness in Advaita Vedanta*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995.

Isayeva, Natalia. *From Early Vedanta to Kashmir Shaivism: Gaudapada, Bhartrhari, and Abhinavagupta*, 1995.

Jaspers, Karl. *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*. Translated by Ashton, E. B. London: Collins, 1967.

Keith, Arther Berriedale. *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads: Part 1*. Vol. 31, *Harvard Oriental Series*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970.

King, Richard. *Early Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism*. New York: SUNY, 1995.

King, Ursula. *Spirit of Fire: the Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin*. New York: Orbis, 1996.

- King, Ursula. *Towards a New Mysticism: Teilhard de Chardin and Eastern Religions*. London: Collins, 1980.
- Klostermaier, Klaus K. *A Survey of Hinduism*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- Kropf, Richard W. *Teilhard, Scripture, and Revelation: A Study of Teilhard de Chardin's Reinterpretation of Pauline Themes*. London: Associated University Presses, 1980.
- Legget, Trevor. *The Chapter of the Self*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.
- Lott, Eric. *Vedantic Approaches to God*. Edited by John Hick, *Library of Philosophy and Religion*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1980.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. *The Revolt Against Dualism*. London: Transaction Publishers, 1996.
- Loy, David. *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Lyons, J. A. *The Cosmic Christ in Origen and Teilhard de Chardin: A Comparative Study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- Macleod, Alistair M. *Tillich: An Essay on the Role of Ontology in his Philosophical Theology*. Edited by H. D. Lewis, *Contemporary Religious Thinkers*. London: George Allan & Unwin, 1973.
- Macquarrie, John. *Existentialism: An Introduction, Guide and Assessment*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972.
- Macquarrie, John. *In Search of Deity: An Essay in Dialectical Theism*. London: SCM Press, 1984.
- Malatesta, Edward, ed. *A Christian Anthropology*. Edited by Edward Malatesta. 5 vols. Vol. 2, *Religious Experience Series*. Weathamstead: Anthony Clarke, 1974.
- Marion, Jean-Luc. *God Without Being*. Translated by Carlson, Thomas A. Edited by Mark C. Taylor, *Religion and Postmodernism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

- Martin, R. N. D. *Pierre Duhem: Philosophy and History in the Work of a Believing Physicist*. Illinois: Open Court, 1991.
- Moltmann, Jurgen. *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*. London: SCM Press, 1985.
- Morewedge, Parviz, ed. *Philosophies of Existence: Ancient and Modern*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1982.
- O'Connell, Robert J. *Teilhard's Vision of the Past: The Making of a Method*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1982.
- O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Olafson, Frederick A. *What Is A Human being*. Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1995.
- O'Meara, Dominic. "The Problem of Speaking About God in John Scottus Eriugena." In *Carolingian Essays*, edited by Blumenthal, 151-167. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America, 1983.
- O'Meara, Dominic J., ed. *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*. Edited by R. Baine Harris. Vol. III, *Studies in Neoplatonism: Ancient and Modern*. Norfolk: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1982.
- Otten, Willemien. *The Anthropology of Johannes Scottus Eriugena*. Edited by A. J. Vanderjagt. Vol. 20, *Brill's Studies in Intellectual History*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991.
- Otto, Rudolf. *Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Study of the Nature of Mysticism*. Wheaton: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1987.
- Overzee, Anne Hunt. *The Body Divine: The Symbol of the Body in the Works of Teilhard de Chardin and Ramanauja*. Edited by John Clayton. Vol. 2, *Cambridge Studies in Religious Traditions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Prabhavananda, Swami. *The Spiritual Heritage of India: A Clear Summary of Indian Philosophy and Religion*. California: Vedanta Press, 1979.

- Radhakrishnan, S & P. T. Raju. *The Concept of Man*. New Delhi: Indus, 1995.
- Rahner, Karl. *Spirit in the World*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1989.
- Rahner, Karl. *Theological Investigations*. 11 vols. Vol. 9. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972.
- Rahner, Karl. *Theological Investigations*. 17 vols. Vol. 17. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981.
- Rahner, Karl. *Theological Investigations*. 12 vols. Vol. 13. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975.
- Ramanan, K. Venkata. *Nagarjuna's Philosophy: As Presented in The Maha-Prajnaparamita-Sastra*. Madras: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Fallible Man*. Translated by Charles J. Kelbey. New York: Fordham University Press, 1986.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination*. Translated by Pellauer, Paul. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *History and Truth*. Translated by Kelbey, Charles, A. Edited by John Wild, *Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *The Symbolism of Evil*. Translated by Buchanan, Emerson. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
- Satprakashananda, Swami. *Methods of Knowledge: Perceptual, Non-perceptual, and Transcendental; According to Advaita Vedanta*. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1986.
- Sharpe, Eric J. *Understanding Religion*. London: Duckworth, 1983.
- Sri Bharati Krisna Tirthaji Maharaja, Jagadguru Sankaracarya. *Vedic Metaphysics*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978.

- Stace, W. T. *Mysticism and Philosophy*. London: Macmillan, 1989.
- Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Thatcher, Adrian. *The Ontology of Paul Tillich*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Theumissen, Mechael. *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber*. Translated by Macann, Christopher. Edited by Thomas McCarthy, *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986.
- Tillich, Paul. *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.
- Tillich, Paul. *The Courage to Be*. Glasgow: William Collins & Sons, 1986.
- Tillich, Paul. *Love, Power and Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954.
- Tillich, Paul. *The Protestant Era*. London: Nisbet, 1955.
- Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. Vol. 2. London: SCM Press, 1988.
- Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. Vol. 1. London: SCM Press, 1988.
- Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 3. London: SCM Press, 1991.
- Tillich, Paul. *Theology of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Underhill, E. *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*. London: Methuen, 1960.
- Vesey, Godfrey, ed. *The Philosophy in Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Woods, Richard, ed. *Understanding Mysticism*. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1980.
- Zimmer, Heinrich. *Philosophies of India*. Edited by Joseph Campbell. Vol. XXVI, *Bollington Series*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

