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University of Cape Town

**The Approach of the Traditionalist School  
to the Epistemological and Ecumenical Concerns  
of the Mystical Experience Debate**

By

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## DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.



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### Abstract:

The present thesis begins with an identification of the fact that numerous academic commentators on the mystical experience debate misrepresent the epistemological position of the Traditionalist school; and this, through a confusion of the mystical experience with metaphysical intellection. The thesis then sets out to correct this misperception through a detailed presentation (in chapters 1-3) of the epistemology of the Traditionalist school, viz.: (i) its doctrine of a supra-individual Intellect, and of metaphysical intellection; and of their distinctness from reason, Revelation, and inspiration, respectively (chapter 1); (ii) its foundational distinction between the Intellect and metaphysical intellection on the one hand, and the mystical experience on the other hand; and of the direct – not mediated or constructed – nature of the supra-rational knowledge conferred in metaphysical intellection of the Intellect (chapter 2); and finally (iii) its tripartite spiritual epistemology of Intellect, reason, and the empirical senses, respectively; and of their direct correspondence to the Traditionalist spiritual anthropology of Spirit, soul, and body, respectively (chapter 3). Thereafter, the inherent difficulty in any attempted rational and/or empirical ‘proof’ of the Intellect is identified; and this, consequent upon the devolutionary doctrine of the ‘qualitative (or deteriorating) determinations of time’, whereby a gradual occlusion of the Intellect has occurred through the imposition of a variously defined ‘fall’ (first part of chapter 4).

With a full and detailed elucidation of the Traditionalist spiritual epistemology thus completed, the present thesis then proceeds to a general critique of the rationalist and empiricist epistemologies prevalent within the mystical experience debate. Based upon



the medieval epistemological maxim *adaequatio rei et intellectus* ('the understanding [of the knower] must be *adequate* to the thing [known]'), the argument is put forward that the knowledge of any particular epistemological faculty (viz. the Intellect, reason, or empirical senses) is necessarily restricted to its particular ontological degree of Reality (viz. the celestial, subtle, or corporeal realms, respectively); such that, the subtle reason and the corporeal empirical senses are in no position to pass judgement on the existence – or not – of the celestial Intellect (second part of chapter 4). Finally, a detailed Traditionalist critique of the epistemology of Steven Katz – foremost of the neo-Kantian constructivist/rationalist/empiricist academics within the mystical experience debate – is presented (last part of chapter 4).

Thereafter, the spiritual epistemology of the Traditionalist school is applied to the ecumenical concerns of the mystical experience debate, i.e. to the question of whether or not a so-called 'common-core' essence exists beyond each of the religious traditions of the world. In this regard, the 'esoteric ecumenicism' of the Traditionalist school is presented, viz. its thesis of a 'transcendent unity of religions' wherein a subtle balance is maintained between an esotericism 'in the pure state' – i.e. the *philosophia perennis*, or *religio perennis* – independent and discontinuous vis-à-vis exotericism; and an esotericism as 'mystical path', dependent and continuous vis-à-vis exotericism. Based upon this twofold definition of esotericism, a Traditionalist critique of (i) the 'contextualist' position of Steven Katz, and (ii) the 'essentialist' position of Robert Forman is proffered, wherein Katz is shown to restrict the nature of esotericism to that of a contextualized 'mystical path' alone, and thereby to deny the reality of a trans-

contextual esotericism 'in the pure state'; whereas Forman is shown to lay stress upon the reality of a trans-contextual esotericism 'in the pure state' alone, and thereby to downplay the reality of an esotericism contextualized as a 'mystical path' (chapter 5).

The present thesis, then, makes the argument for the admissibility of both the spiritual epistemology, and the esoteric ecumenicism, of the Traditionalist school; which – despite not basing themselves in any way upon the mystical experience – provide a viable alternative to (i) the prevailing rationalist and empiricist neo-Kantian epistemological perspectives within the mystical experience debate; and (ii) to the contending 'contextualist' and 'essentialist' approaches to the ecumenical concerns of the mystical experience debate.

**Dedication:**

**To F. S.: “If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true” (*St. John*, V, 31).**

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## Introduction:

The literature on the mystical experience debate is replete with mention of the so-called “perennial philosophy” (or *philosophia perennis*); and of its association with the ‘essentialist’ position of such authors as “William James, Evelyn Underhill, Joseph Maréchal, William Johnston, James Pratt, Mircea Eliade, W. T. Stace”, Rudolph Otto, Robert Forman, Aldous Huxley, Huston Smith, and Frithjof Schuon (Forman, 1990a:3-4; See also Katz, 1978b:23-24; 67). It is typically assumed that affiliation to this ‘essentialist’ position is based upon a variously defined *mystical experience* wherein an immediate apprehension of a so-called “common-core” (Katz, 1978a:4) supra-religious reality is divulged (Katz, 1978b:23-24; Forgie, 1985:205; Evans, 1988:53; Forman, 1990a:3-4; Shear, 1994:319-342; Janz, 1995:81). Thus, an authority such as Steven Katz could confidently claim that the affiliation of Frithjof Schuon – and *a fortiori* of the Traditionalist school – to the *philosophia perennis* is based upon their alleged belief in the fact that “all *mystical experiences* are the same” (1978b:23-24; italics added).

It took a short, but incisive, article by Huston Smith, entitled “Is There a Perennial Philosophy?” (1987:553-566), to represent the true basis for the belief of the Traditionalist school<sup>1</sup> – consisting of such authors as the aforementioned Frithjof

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief historical overview of the Traditionalist school and its major authors, see Borella (1992:330-358); Stoddart, in Burckhardt (1984:3-8); Lings (1987:79-93); Nasr (1989:100-110); Perry, in Fernando (1991:3-16), and Oldmeadow (1998:56-65; 2000). A provocative view of the eschatological role of the Traditionalist school may be found in Schaya (1980:159-167); Perry (1996:157-160); and Lings (1987:89-91). For an understanding of the fundamental idea of “Tradition” – in its Traditionalist acceptance – see Lord Northbourne (1963:34-44); Nasr (1989:65-92); Guénon (2000:87-108); Pallis (1991:9-10);

Schuon<sup>2</sup>, as also René Guénon<sup>3</sup>, Ananda Coomaraswamy<sup>4</sup>, Joseph Epes Brown, Titus Burckhardt, Rama Coomaraswamy, James Cutsinger, Charles le Gai Eaton, Martin Lings, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Lord Northbourne, Marco Pallis, Whittal Perry, Leo Schaya, Huston Smith, Wolfgang Smith, and William Stoddart – in a *philosophia perennis*<sup>5</sup>.

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Oldmeadow (2000:58-67); Cutsinger (1997:3-4); Danner (1994:19-28); Eaton (1994:29-44); R. Coomaraswamy (1994:91-116); Lings (1994:191-201); and especially Schuon (1984a:7-57; 99-110; 1994c:13-18). “Tradition” – which is not to be confused with mere custom or habit – may be defined as “the transmission, over time, of permanent and universal truths, whose written sources are the revealed scriptures as well as the writings of great spiritual masters” (Schuon, 1994b:1); or again, as those “truths or principles of a divine origin revealed...to mankind...along with... [their] application...in the different realms...[of] law...social structure, art, symbolism, and supreme [metaphysical] Knowledge along with the [ritual] means for its attainment” (Nasr, 1987:68). This particular understanding of the term Tradition implies the concomitant Traditionalist principle of “orthodoxy” (i.e. right belief, view, or doctrine), for details of which, see Schuon (1984a:137-138; 1985:87; 1995a:1-42); Guénon (2000:189-194); Stoddart (1993:5-7); and Perry (1991:271-272; 275-301).

<sup>2</sup> Schuon is the undoubted leader of the Traditionalist school and their foremost expositor of the *philosophia perennis*. Biographical details of Schuon may be found – most notably – in Nasr (1991a:1-6; 1991b:50-52; 1999:27-48); Lings (1998:15-24); Perry (1998:32-46); Oldmeadow (2000:36-39); and on the World Wisdom Books website (<http://www.worldwisdom.com>). On the Schuon oeuvre, see Nasr (1991b:1-64); and Oldmeadow (1998:68-77). Cutsinger provides both an excellent introduction (1992:465-491) and an extended elucidation (1997) of the work of Schuon. Two notable websites are also devoted to the work of Schuon: (i) <http://www.frithjof-schuon.com>; and (ii) <http://www.sophia-perennis.com/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Guénon was evidently the founder of the Traditionalist school. For biographical details of him, see for example, Lings (1995:20-37); Crouch (1995b:viii-xiv); Oldmeadow (1995c:vi-xxxvii); Michon (1997:6-16); and Chacornac (1995). See also Schuon (1984b:3-6; 1995:5-11) and Wetmore (1996:vii-viii) for a concise definition of the Guénonian ‘nature’ and writings.

<sup>4</sup> Details of the life of A.K. Coomaraswamy may be found in Lipsey (1977); Perry (1977:205-220) and Pallis (1978:176-188). See also R. Coomaraswamy and A. Moore Jr. (1988:xix-xxxiii); Perry (1988:ix-xiii; 1996:153-160); and Oldmeadow (2000:26-35) for a summation of the vast Coomaraswamy corpus. Eaton (1995:183-209) provides a useful introduction to the Traditionalist perspective through an elucidation of the work of Guénon and Coomaraswamy.

<sup>5</sup> The *philosophia perennis* – in its Traditionalist recension – refers to the one supra-formal and “absolute Truth” (Schuon, 1994a:109) which in-forms each of the intrinsically orthodox religious traditions of the world, but which is not itself a ‘formal’ religion (Stoddart, 1991:90; Laude, 1999:62-63). It is the “Truth

Smith argued that a foundational distinction should be made between (i) “metaphysical intellection” (Schuon, 1995a:41) conferred by the supra-rational Intellect<sup>6</sup> (Greek: *Nous*; Latin: *Intellectus*; Sanskrit: *Buddhi*; Arabic: *ʿAql*) on the one hand; and (ii) the mystical experience on the other hand; for “the doctrines” of the Traditionalist school, he said:

derive from metaphysical [or supra-rational intellectual] intuitions and it is to these [and not to the mystical experience] that the [Traditionalist recension of the] perennial philosophy appeals. To discern the truth of a metaphysical axiom one need not have an “experience”. The ontological discernments of pure [metaphysical] intellection, which must be distinguished from rational argumentation – *ratio* [i.e. reason] is not [the same as the supra-rational ‘higher’ Mind called the] *intellectus* – have nothing to do with mystical rapture or access to [introvertive mystical experience] states of “pure consciousness” (1987:554).

In other words – contra the claims of countless authorities engaged in the mystical experience debate – the Traditionalist school does *not* in any way base its view of a *philosophia perennis*, or “transcendent unity of religions” (Schuon, 1993a), on the mystical experience; but rather, on truths conferred by the Intellect in metaphysical intellection (Smith, 1987:554-555).

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[that] is one, [which] the sages call...by many names” (*Rig Veda*, I, 164, 46); and that “Wisdom uncreate, the same now as it ever was, and the same to be for evermore” (St. Augustine, *Confessions*, IX, 10; Cited in Coomaraswamy, 1989:13; See especially Schuon, 1975:3; 1979a:133-137; 1984a:136-144; 1991b:21-24; and Nasr, 1976:vii – viii; 1989:69-71 for an elucidation of the subtle distinctions between the essentially identical terms: *philosophia perennis*, *sophia perennis*, and *religio perennis*, respectively; Schmitt, 1966:505-532 provides an elucidation of the term *philosophia perennis* as it was conceived in the ‘Renaissance’ period and following).

<sup>6</sup> The term “Intellect” is capitalized throughout the present thesis to indicate that it is being used in the particular sense given to it by the Traditionalist school, which is that of a supra-individual and supra-rational faculty of ‘higher’ Mind, capable of a direct apprehension of transcendent Reality. The term “Intellect” – as its use has now been defined in the present thesis – must in no wise be confused with the term “intellect” in its modern acceptation, which is that of a synonym for the rational faculty, or the reason.

Unfortunately, Huston Smith mentioned this distinction between (i) metaphysical intellection and (ii) mystical experience all too briefly in his article (1987:554-555); and then too, without a sufficiently detailed elucidatory explication for those many academic commentators unfamiliar with the Traditionalist perspective. Consequently, the aforesaid distinction has been misunderstood – when indeed it has been acknowledged at all – by certain authorities in the mystical experience debate. Thus, metaphysical intellection – henceforth dissociated from the mystical experience by Smith – has *now* all too often been perceived as a phenomenon of the purely rational order alone. Jonathan Shear, for example, speaks of the “*rationalist metaphysics*” (1994:334; italics added) of the Traditionalist school; when in fact the metaphysics of the Traditionalist school is based strictly upon the supra-rational Intellect, and only incidentally – in terms of its exposition – upon the rational faculty<sup>7</sup>. And Steven Katz – to cite another example – represents the Traditionalist argument for a transcendent unity of religions as if it were no more than a logical syllogism following on from an *a priori* “metaphysical axiom” of the “putative Oneness at the heart of things” (1988:751). “Having posited the Unity of [all] things”, he says, “...it is a simple, even logically necessary, matter [for the Traditionalist school] to arrive at the[ir] perennialist conclusion” (Katz, 1988:751) of a transcendent unity of religions. Katz, however, fails to understand that the initial “metaphysical axiom” of the Traditionalist school viz. “the Unity of [all] things”, is not a mere rational belief “posited” (Katz, 1988:751) as a logical or empirical possibility; but an “absolute

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<sup>7</sup> Apparently, the elementary mathematical metaphor (“ $2 + 2 = 4$ ”; 1987:555) used by Huston Smith – to illustrate and evoke the direct and immediate apprehension of the Truth by the Intellect in metaphysical intellection – has been taken rather too literally by this academic commentator, who understands the said metaphysical intellection to be of the rational order.



certainty” (Schuon, 1995a:21) based upon an immediate apprehension of transcendent Reality, conferred by the Intellect in metaphysical intellection.

It must, however, be acknowledged that the abovementioned misconceptions have, in part, arisen from the fact that Smith – in wanting to make as clear a distinction as possible between metaphysical intellection and mystical experience – perhaps errs in presenting the Intellect and metaphysical intellection somewhat ‘naturalistically’. In saying, for instance, that “to discern the truth of a metaphysical axiom one need not have an ‘experience’ ”; and that “the ontological discernments of pure [metaphysical] intellection...have nothing to do with mystical rapture or access to states of ‘pure consciousness’ ”; and again: “to understand that  $2 + 2 = 4$  does not require access to higher realms of either consciousness or being” (Smith, 1987:554-555), the impression is given – without a subsequent presentation of details concerning the nature of the *supra-individual* Intellect – that metaphysical intellection is an accomplishment as ‘natural’ and accessible as mathematics. But, in fact, as Frithjof Schuon states: “In most men of the [present] ‘iron age’ [i.e. the Hindu *Kali Yuga*] the Intellect [and *a fortiori* metaphysical intellection] is atrophied to the point of being reduced to a mere virtuality” (1995a:9-10)<sup>8</sup>;

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<sup>8</sup> According to Frithjof Schuon, the supra-individual Intellect has two distinct modalities or functions: the first discriminative, and the second contemplative. When the Intellect discerns the Absolute from the relative, the Infinite from the finite, the Real from the unreal, Truth from error, the Essential from the secondary, the Necessary from the contingent, the Substance from the accident, it operates in accordance with its discriminative capacity (Sanskrit: *viveka*; Arabic: *furqān*; i.e. “the [qualitative, or ‘vertical’] discern[ment] of spiritual reality...[from] the mirage of the world’s appearances” [Johnston, 1994:5]; See also Schuon, 1984a:137; 1986:5; 1991b:21). When the supra-individual Intellect directly “perceives the Principle in manifestation, the Cause in the effect, the Absolute in the relative, the Infinite in the finite” (Schuon, 1997:156n), it operates in accordance with its contemplative capacity. The discriminative function

and again: “The Intellect...is not the individual. The individual [only] experiences it in the form of a fulgurating darkness and he grasps only the flashes which illumine and transfigure him” (Schuon, 1987:155).

These misconceptions – viz. (i) the confusion of metaphysical intellection with mystical experience, and (ii) the rationalization of the Intellect and metaphysical intellection – in addition to the brief and somewhat incomplete nature of Huston Smith’s elucidation of the subject (no more than 1½ pages), necessitate – it is argued – a fuller exposition of the Traditionalist position vis-à-vis the *epistemological* and *ecumenical* concerns central to the mystical experience debate<sup>9</sup>. In this regard, chapters 1-4 of the present thesis elucidate the “spiritual epistemology” (Schuon, 1986:9) of the Traditionalist school – its doctrine of the Intellect and metaphysical intellection – as well as its criticism of the prevailing rationalist/empiricist epistemology operative amongst the ‘contextualist’ exponents of the mystical experience debate; whilst chapter 5 elucidates the “esoteric ecumenicism” (Schuon, 1985) of the Traditionalist school – its doctrine of the *philosophia perennis*, or

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of the supra-individual Intellect pertains to the Absolute, the transcendent, the separative, the eliminative, the analytic, the ‘masculine’ – (‘*Brahman* is reality, the world is appearance’ [*Brahman satyam, jagan mithyam*]); whereas the contemplative function of the supra-individual Intellect pertains to the Infinite, the immanent, the unitive, the assimilative, the synthetic, the ‘feminine’ – (‘That [*Atmā*] art thou’ [*Tat tvam asi*; cf. *Chāndogya Upanishad*, VI, 8]). It is to be noted that at the level of the individual order, these two functions polarize into the reason and (sensory) intuition, respectively (See Schuon 1990c:54-55; 1991a:3-4; 1992a:6-7; 13-14; and 1994a:53; and Burckhardt, 1987:98).

<sup>9</sup> If the question were asked: why is the mystical experience debate of such immense interest to scholars within the field of Religion, a possible answer might be that (i) it presents the intriguing possibility of transcending the limitative rational and empirical *epistemology* predominant in the West since the time of the so-called ‘Enlightenment’; and that (ii) it presents the equally intriguing *ecumenical* possibility of transcending the limitative religious ‘forms’, by attaining to their so-called Universal ‘essence’, viz. the *philosophia perennis*.

“transcendent unity of religions” (Schuon, 1993a) – as well as its tempering of the opposing ‘contextualist’ and ‘essentialist’ positions within the mystical experience debate, respectively.

More particularly, chapter 1 of the present thesis identifies the peculiar nature of the supra-individual Intellect, by contrasting it with (i) the individual reason, (ii) Revelation, and (iii) inspiration. Chapter 2 makes the foundational distinction between metaphysical intellection (or “intellectual intuition” [Schuon, 1975:48]) of the Intellect, and the mystical experience; and details the direct – not mediated or constructed – character of the non-dual knowledge conferred by the Intellect in metaphysical intellection. Chapter 3 relates the Traditionalist tripartite spiritual epistemology of (i) Intellect, (ii) reason, and (iii) the empirical senses, to the more familiar tripartite “spiritual anthropology” (Schuon, 1982b:76) of (i) Spirit, (ii) soul, and (iii) body; and this through an elucidation of the medieval doctrines of (i) *duo sunt in homine* (“there are two [realities] in the human being”) and of (ii) the Heart.

With a full and detailed elucidation of the Traditionalist spiritual epistemology thus completed (in chapters 1-3), chapter 4 identifies the difficulty inherent in any attempted rational and/or empirical ‘proof’ of the Intellect; and this consequent upon the devolutionary doctrine of the “qualitative [i.e. deteriorating] determinations of time” (Guénon, 1995c:50), whereby a gradual occlusion of the Intellect has occurred through

the imposition of the 'fall'<sup>10</sup>. Thereafter, a general critique of the rationalist and empiricist epistemologies prevalent within the mystical experience debate is advanced, based upon the medieval epistemological maxim *adaequatio rei et intellectus* ("the understanding [of the knower] must be *adequate* to the thing [known]"), whereby the knowledge of any particular epistemological faculty (viz. the Intellect, reason, or empirical senses) is restricted to a particular ontological degree of Reality (viz. the celestial, subtle, or corporeal realms, respectively); thereafter, a detailed epistemological critique of Steven Katz – foremost neo-Kantian constructivist/rationalist/empiricist proponent of the 'contextualist' position within the mystical experience debate – is presented.

Chapter 5 presents the esoteric ecumenicism of the Traditionalist school – its thesis of a *transcendent* unity of religions (supra-formal and esotericist, *not* formal and exotericist) – as a subtle balance between an esotericism ("in the pure state" [Stoddart, 1979:216], i.e. the *philosophia perennis*, or *religio perennis* [Stoddart, 1991:90]) independent and discontinuous vis-à-vis exotericism; and an esotericism (as "mystical path" [Stoddart, 1979:216]) dependent and continuous vis-à-vis exotericism. Based upon this twofold Traditionalist definition of esotericism, a critique of (i) the 'contextualist' position of Steven Katz, and (ii) the 'essentialist' position of Robert Forman is proffered, wherein Katz is shown to restrict the nature of esotericism to that of "mystical path" alone, and

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<sup>10</sup> It bears mentioning that the first four chapters of the present thesis contain a comprehensive listing of sources from sundry traditional authorities in the field of esotericism; and this in order to provide textual substantiation for the central Traditionalist claims (viz. the Intellect, metaphysical intellection, the tripartite spiritual epistemology etc.).

thereby to deny the reality of esotericism “in the pure state”; whereas Forman is shown to lay stress upon the reality of esotericism “in the pure state” alone, and thereby to downplay the reality of esotericism as “mystical path”.

In summary then, the present thesis revolves around the foundational distinction between the Intellect and metaphysical intellection on the one hand, and the mystical experience on the other hand (chapters 1-3); following which the spiritual epistemology of the Traditionalist school is contrasted with rationalist and empiricist-type epistemologies in general, and the neo-Kantian constructivist/rationalist/empiricist position of Steven Katz in particular (chapter 4); thereafter the Traditionalist thesis of a transcendent unity of religions is contrasted with the ‘contextualist’ and ‘essentialist’ positions of Steven Katz and Robert Forman, respectively (chapter 5). Finally, let it be said that the main arguments of the present thesis – following on from the aforementioned claim for a distinction between the Intellect/metaphysical intellection, and the mystical experience – are: (i) the inadmissibility of the rationalist/empiricist critique of the Traditionalist supra-rational spiritual epistemology (chapter 4); and (ii) the partial, and therefore, incomplete nature of the ‘contextualist’ and ‘essentialist’ understandings of the relationship between esotericism and exotericism (chapter 5).

Part I: The Traditionalist Spiritual Epistemology:

Chapter 1: The Intellect: Faculty of Higher Knowledge.

“There is an eye of the soul which...is more precious far than ten thousand bodily eyes,  
for by it alone is truth seen.”

(Plato, *Republic*, 527e; B. Jowett translation).

“Metaphysics”, in the understanding of the Traditionalist school, and in conformity with its received etymological meaning, refers to that which is “after”, “above” or “beyond physics” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). It is well known that the term has its temporal and historical provenance from Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.), who designated a treatise he had written after his *Physics*, with the name *Metaphysics* (literally: ‘after physics’).<sup>11</sup> Now, if the word “metaphysics” began with Aristotle, the *thing* in itself, say the Traditionalists, existed before him. And, indeed, the Traditionalist school sees in the Orphic-Pythagorean-Platonic current of Greek philosophy a more direct and plenary elucidation of metaphysical ideas. According to the Traditionalists, Aristotle represents a certain exteriorization of the more directly metaphysical wisdom derived from the Orphic-Pythagorean-Platonic current in Greek philosophy (Schuon, 1975:48-49; 1981:24). Whereas Plato (427-347 B.C.E.) moved from Universals to particulars (i.e. from the meta-physical to the physical) – schematically speaking – Aristotle moved from particulars to Universals<sup>12</sup> (Cutsinger, 1987:37-39)<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> See Guénon (1964:7; and 2000:109). Metaphysics may be defined as “knowledge [by the *Nous*, or *Intellectus*] of the Universal” (Guénon, 2000:110); “knowledge of principles belonging to the universal order” (Guénon, 2000:110); knowledge of the Divine realm; the “science of the Real” (Nasr, 1989:132); or, “the comprehension of the whole Universe”, extending from “the Divine Order to the terrestrial contingencies” (Schuon, 1992a:vii; See Guénon, 1964:6-16; 2000:108-120; and Nasr, 1989:130-159 for an elucidation of metaphysics in its Traditionalist acceptance).

<sup>12</sup> It is instructive to note that the greater part of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* deals with cosmology and not with the uncreated Divine order (See Burckhardt, 1986:36n).

<sup>13</sup> Cutsinger is, in fact, summarizing the views of the Christian Platonist Samuel Taylor Coleridge on this point. It is quite obvious, however, that in the Platonic dialogues a movement from particulars to Universals *also* occurs, as for instance in the *Republic*, 514a-521b and the *Symposium*, 209a-212c. Contrariwise, Aristotle’s work is not devoid of direct metaphysical intellections of the Universal order. Nevertheless, the Platonic corpus is above all centered on a direct and immediate perception (*noēsis*) of the supernatural and Universal Forms, whereas the Aristotelian work tends to become fixated with rational and empirical

It is for this reason that the great Franciscan theologian St. Bonaventure (1221-1274 C.E.) has, within the Christian tradition, attributed 'wisdom' to Plato and 'science' to Aristotle<sup>14</sup> (Schuon, 1995:33; Burckhardt, 1967:75); and it is to be noted that Meister Eckhart (1260-1329 C.E.) could call Plato "that great priest...[who] found the way [i.e. saving truth, or metaphysical wisdom] ere ever Christ was born" (cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1979:59-60). Furthermore, within the Islamic Sufi tradition Frithjof Schuon mentions that the followers of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (founder of the Mawlawīyyah Sufi order, 1207-1273 C.E.) see in Plato (called, respectfully, Sayyidnā, [i.e. Lord] Aflātūn) a "kind of prophet"<sup>15</sup>, whilst another great Sufi, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (1366-

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considerations. In other words, for Plato the transcendent Forms were concrete and real; for Aristotle they had become abstract and relatively 'unreal' (See Smith, 1993:xxiii-xxxiv). It should be noted that the later medieval controversy as to whether Universals (the Platonic Forms or Ideas) are independently existing transcendent realities or, on the contrary, mental reflections in the subjectivity of the mind (the so-called Realist versus Nominalist debate) has its roots in this 'tension' between Plato and Aristotle (See Schuon, 1975:19-24; See also Guénon, 1999:18-19 for an elucidation of the distinction between the Universal and individual orders respectively. It should be noted that – as René Guénon maintains – the "individual" order is comprised of the "general" and the "particular" respectively; which latter category, in turn, is comprised of the "collective" and the "singular" respectively. Modern science – contrary to much modern opinion – never pertains to anything more than the "individual" order; and this by reason of its epistemological methodology, which is rationalist and empiricist [1999:18-19]). Medieval Realism, it will be recalled, claims that the transcendent Forms (or Ideas) are truly real, whilst the 'everyday' world is only real in so far as it participates in this Reality – that is, the world in itself is but shadow or illusion (See Plato's *Republic*, 507a-521b where the similes of the Sun, the Divided Line, and the Cave elucidate this thesis. See also Lee, ed. and trans., in Plato, 1987:394-397 which gives a useful diagrammatic summation of Plato's metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology).

<sup>14</sup> "Among the philosophers, Plato received the word of Wisdom, Aristotle that of Science. The former considered principally superior reasons, the latter inferior reasons" (St. Bonaventure, cited in Burckhardt, 1967:75).

<sup>15</sup> Al-Fārābī (870-950 C.E.) refers to the Athenian philosopher as the "greatest (sage), the Divine Plato [*Aflātūn al-ilāhī*]" (Cited in Fakhry, 1983:110).



1428 C.E.), saw Plato in a vision “filling the whole of space with light” (Schuon, 1981b:24n). Here are two further examples from the Sufi tradition: the Shaykh al-Akbar (i.e. the very greatest Sufi Master) Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165-1240 C.E.) is sometimes referred to as Ibn Aflatun – son of Plato; and these pertinent words from Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 1191 C.E.):

I will now set forth the truths which I learnt in hours of solitude, when I turned away from corporeal things, and turned to the purely spiritual things of Light [i.e. the Platonic Forms]...I first grasped a definite [spiritual] truth by mystic intuition [i.e. directly], and then sought to demonstrate it by arguments; whereas the Peripatetics [i.e. the predominantly rational and empirical philosophers] follow the reverse method, letting themselves be led by (logical) demonstrations...Our master is Plato...whereas Aristotle remains the loadstar of those who seek truth by the empirical method...This mystic-Platonic method is a different kind of philosophy, and a shorter way than that of the Peripatetics, which loses itself in secondary questions (cited in Perry, 1991:757-758).

It has now been established that although the word “metaphysics” has its origin with Aristotle, its meaning and reality had become somewhat attenuated with him. His teaching, say the Traditionalists, is more directed towards the world of the reason and the senses (Schuon, 1975:48-49)<sup>16</sup>. With Plato, however, despite the logical and rational formulation of his metaphysics<sup>17</sup>, the ‘whole’ is fundamentally based on a direct, supra-

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<sup>16</sup> “With Aristotle [compared to Plato and Plotinus (205-270 C.E.)], we are much closer to the earth, though not yet so close as to find ourselves cut off from heaven” (Schuon, 1975:48; See also Schuon, 1975:48-49; 1982b:127 on Aristotelianism). This last point is crucial in distinguishing the Stagirite philosopher from modern rationalist and empiricist philosophers.

<sup>17</sup> “Plato is sometimes included under the heading of rationalism, which is unjust despite the rationalistic style of his dialectic and a manner of thinking that is too geometrical; but what puts Plato in the clearest possible opposition to rationalism properly so-called is his doctrine of the eye of the soul...[which] lies buried in a slough from which it must extricate itself in order to mount to the vision of real things, namely the [transcendent] archetypes” (Schuon, 1975:46-47; See also 1990c:63n; 1995a:33n-34n). According to

rational apprehension (“mystic intuition”) of the transcendent Forms.<sup>18</sup> Frithjof Schuon clarifies this epistemological discrepancy between Plato and Aristotle as follows:

If by rationalism is meant the reduction of the [Platonic supra-rational] intelligence [*Nous*] to logic alone and hence the negation of intellectual intuition [of the transcendent Forms] (which in reality has no need of mental supports even though they may have to be used

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Traditionalist John Murray: “Platonism [is essentially]...the idea of the One and the Many, of the Good, the Beautiful and the True, the doctrine of Recollection (*anamnesis*) and of the immortality of the soul, of the primacy of the Intellect [the *Nous*, i.e. the “eye of the soul”] as well as the need for the practice of the virtues – which proves its spirituality, not its [rational] dialectic which it shares with the Sophists” (1973:246). In other words, the fact that Plato uses reason to express his direct vision (*gnōsis*) of the archetypes (*eidos*), does not necessarily mean that he is a rationalist; for it is the *content* of his ‘vision’ which determines that it is of a supra-rational order.

<sup>18</sup> Plato says in his famous *Seventh Letter*: “When human capacity [the reason and senses] is stretched to its limit, a spark of [supra-rational] understanding and intelligence flashes out and illuminates the subject” (1973:140). See also Plato’s *Republic* 435a where an identical image is used to describe the direct apprehension of the nature of Justice. Frithjof Schuon describes the process of this supra-rational knowledge as follows: “[Metaphysical] intellection [*noēsis*] takes place suddenly – not continuously or progressively ... When the heat produced by rubbing together two pieces of wood – or by a lens catching a ray of the sun – has reached the precise degree which is its culminating point, flame suddenly bursts forth. In the same way, as soon as the mental operation is capable of supplying an adequate support, intellection instantaneously grafts itself on to this support” (1987:13); and: “The mode of manifestation of gnosis is ‘vertical’ and...‘discontinuous’; it is like fire and not water, in the sense that fire arises from the invisible and can disappear into it again” (Schuon, 1990a:23). It should be emphasized that the “mental operation” (i.e. reason or dialectic) is not the only means of attaining metaphysical intellection: “[Supra-rational] intelligence has only one nature...but different modes of working...Intelligence with a ‘logical’, ‘mathematical’ or...‘abstract’ quality is not enough for reaching all aspects of the real; it would be impossible to insist too often on the importance of the ‘visual’ or ‘aesthetic’ function of the intellectual faculty [*Nous*]” (Schuon, 1987:140). This ‘aesthetic’ dimension – of metaphysical intellection, or recollection (*anamnesis*) through beauty – is particularly evident in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, 249-250 (1973:55-57; W. Hamilton, trans.) and *Symposium*, 210a-212c (1951:92-95; W. Hamilton, trans.), where the contemplation of physical beauty is used as a support for the contemplation of the transcendent Form of Beauty. It should be understood that the contemplation (akin to the Hindu *darshan*) of youthful masculine beauty by adult Greek males – at the time of Plato (4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. – cf., for example, the *Symposium*, 211-212) – had, as its original intention, the “visual assimilation of celestial qualities” (Schuon, 1990c:55), and nothing else.

for communicating perceptions of a supra-mental order), then it will be seen that Aristotelianism is a rationalism in principle but not absolutely so in fact, since its theism...depend[s] on [supra-rational metaphysical] Intellection and not on reasoning alone (1975:48).

Mention has severally been made of a supra-rational faculty of pure intelligence that directly apprehends its transcendent object; and which essentially distinguishes the Platonic epistemology from its Aristotelian counterpart. Plato referred to it as *Nous* (pure intelligence) as opposed to *dianoia* (reasoning)<sup>19</sup>, and claimed for it the ability to possess direct knowledge (*epistēmē, gnōsis*)<sup>20</sup> of the transcendent Forms (*eidos*)<sup>21</sup>. It was to it he

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Plato's *Republic* 511a-e for the distinction between these two forms of knowledge – the one direct, the other indirect.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Plato's *Republic* 477a-b; and particularly his famous simile of the Cave (514a-521b) where the degrees of knowledge are 'mythically' represented. Desmond Lee (in Plato, 1987:259n) categorizes Plato's simile of the Cave as follows:

1. Tied prisoner in the cave	Illusion
2. Freed prisoner in the cave	Belief
3. Looking at shadows and reflections in the world outside the cave	Reason
4. Looking at real things in the world outside the cave	[Pure] Intelligence [ <i>Nous</i> ]
5. Looking at the sun	Vision of the form of the Good

In the Traditionalist view, levels 1 and 2 refer, within the material world, to shadows and the physical objects they reflect, respectively (i.e. the world of particulars). Notably, Plato represents the mass of humanity as understanding this physical world to be the *all* of reality. This is the level of what Plato calls mere 'opinion' (*doxa*; See the *Republic*, 477b) because its object (the world of 'becoming') is always changing. Epistemologically this level corresponds to empiricism. Level 3 refers to the general order and corresponds epistemologically to rationalism. Level 4 designates the transcendent and intelligible (Universal) realm of the Platonic Forms (*eidos*) and corresponds epistemologically to supra-rational and

was referring when he said in his *Republic* (527e): “there is an eye of the soul which...is more precious far than ten thousand bodily eyes, for by it alone is truth seen” (cited in Perry, 1991:816).

The pure knowledge apprehended by the “eye of the soul”, or the *Nous*, may be related to reason in the following manner: rationality, as its etymology (Latin: *ratio*) suggests, is a distinctly individual faculty that attains to a mediate and indirect knowledge by relating one thing to another. For example, in order for the reason to understand ‘black’ it must compare and contrast it with ‘white’; without the latter as a standard of comparison, the former cannot be known. As such, its form of knowledge is entirely dualistic and ‘this-worldly’, presupposing as it does a knowing subject and a known object. The Platonic “eye of the soul” (or *Nous*) by contrast, is a Universal (or supra-individual) faculty capable of a direct and immediate knowledge of transcendent Reality; and this by virtue of its capacity – consequent upon its Universal and supra-formal nature – of transcending the subject-object duality, which latter is a defining characteristic of all rational knowledge. Thus, says Frithjof Schuon, the rational faculty “perceives [only] the general [order] and proceeds by logical operations, whilst [the] Intellect [*Nous*] perceives the

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direct (i.e. immediate) intellectual knowledge (*gnōsis* or *epistēmē*). Finally, the vision of the Supreme Good (*ta Agathón*) represents the pinnacle of the aforementioned intellectual knowledge, and may truly be called wisdom (*Sophia*).

<sup>21</sup> Plato’s *Phaedo*, 101b-105b; and *Republic*, 476a; 478a; 479c; 485b etc. provide a clear traditional elucidation of the transcendent Forms.

principal – the metaphysical – and proceeds by [supra-sensory] intuition” (1990a:41)<sup>22</sup>.

And again, knowledge of transcendent Reality:

...is not possessed by the individual insofar as he is an individual, but insofar as in his innermost [i.e. Universal] essence he is not distinct from his Divine Principle. Thus metaphysical certitude is absolute because of the identity between the knower and the known in the Intellect [*Nous*] (Schuon, 1993a:xxx).

In the supra-individual *Nous*, then, the subject ‘knows’ the object because it ‘is’ the object – and this by its quality of ‘omnipresent’ universality (See Schuon, 1981a: 25-27; and Cutsinger, 1992:482-484).

Now, it follows that if the supra-individual Intellect – in its innermost Universal essence – “is not distinct from...[the] Divine Principle” (Schuon, 1993a:xxx), then all knowledge must be contained in its substance. Consequently, it must be that:

[Supra-formal] knowledge, as Saint Augustine maintains with Plato and many others,<sup>23</sup> is not something that is added from outside [i.e. by a separate object in contradistinction to a knowing subject]; teaching is only the occasional cause<sup>24</sup> of the grasping of a

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<sup>22</sup> “It is necessary to distinguish”, says Frithjof Schuon, “between rational thought, which is discursive and proceeds from the mental faculty alone, and intellectual thought, which proceeds from [supra-sensory] intuition and pure Intellect [*Nous*]” (1990a:86); and: “[T]he mind is analogous to the intellect [*Nous*] insofar as it is a kind of intelligence, but is opposed to it by its limited, indirect and discursive character” (1995a:10); again: “‘intellectual intuition’...is [the] direct perception of truth” [Schuon, 1999:6]; and finally: “Intellectual intuition [or metaphysical intellection] communicates *a priori* the reality of the Absolute. Reasoning thought [only] infers the Absolute by starting from the relative” – in other words, the Intellect ‘sees’; the reason ‘concludes’ (1987:112; See also Schuon, 1981b:16-17; 1994b:14-15; and H. Smith, 1993:xiv).

<sup>23</sup> These “others” will be mentioned presently in some detail.

<sup>24</sup> The well-known Platonic method of dialectic is precisely the “occasional cause” Plato envisaged for ‘eliciting’ *noēsis* (see, for example, Plato’s *Seventh Letter*, 344). It should be understood, however, that dialectic (or reason) does not ‘produce’ *noēsis*, according to the traditional principle that the “greater

truth already latent within us.<sup>25</sup> Teaching is a recalling; understanding is a recollection [i.e. the Platonic *anamnesis*]<sup>26</sup>. In the Intellect [the Platonic “eye of the soul”, or *Nous*], the subject is the object, “being”, and the object is the subject, “knowing”: whence comes absolute certitude<sup>27</sup> (Schuon, 1995a:15).

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cannot come from the less” (René Guénon, cited in Schuon, 1995a:89n; See also Schuon, 1982b:16). The relationship between *noēsis* and dialectic (or reason) is summarized as follows by Frithjof Schuon: “in regard to [metaphysical] Intellection [*noēsis*] the rational faculty has two functions to fulfill, the one descending or communicating and the other ascending or actualizing. In the first case, the task of reason is to formulate direct intellectual perceptions [i.e. supra-rational ‘intellectual intuitions’; See Guénon, 1964:8 on the distinction between supra-rational ‘intellectual intuition’, and infra-rational ‘sensory intuition’] dialectically, availing itself for this purpose of symbolical expressions or logical demonstrations on which, however, those perceptions themselves are in no wise dependent. In the second case, the reason of the hearer or reader for whom the teaching is intended participates in the intellection that is being communicated” (1975:37-38; See Schuon, 1981a:25-26; 1981b:10-11; See also W. Smith, 1976:250-252 on the role of reason vis-à-vis the Intellect).

<sup>25</sup> “Total truth is inscribed, in an immortal script, in the very substance of our spirit [or *Nous*]; what the different [religious] Revelations do is to ‘crystallize’ and ‘actualize’...a nucleus of certitudes which not only abides forever in the divine Omniscience, but also sleeps by refraction in the ‘naturally supernatural’ kernel [i.e. the *Nous*] of the individual” (Schuon, 1984a:136); “In principle the Intellect [Platonic *Nous*] knows everything, because all possible knowledge is inscribed in its very substance” (Schuon: 1975:71). Cutsinger comments as follows: “This doctrine would clearly be false if [such principal] knowledge were of a composite, cumulative, or synthetic sort – the cybernetic ingestion of empirical facts, or the storage and retrieval of information. But such is not the gnosis in question” (1992:483).

<sup>26</sup> “Direct and supra-mental intellection [*noēsis*] is in reality a ‘remembering’ [Platonic *anamnesis*] and not an ‘acquisition’ ” (Schuon, 1990a:23-24). The doctrine of ‘recollection’ (*anamnesis*) may be found in Plato’s *Meno* 81a-86c and *Phaedo*, 73a-77a. See also Perry (1991:755-760) for a list of quotations from several religious traditions throughout the world enunciating the doctrine of ‘recollection’; See also, A.K. Coomaraswamy (1977:49-65).

<sup>27</sup> “The inherence of Truth in our spirit is, in principle, of a nature capable of conferring direct and plenary certitude...if [however, in practice]...it offers only a sufficient minimal [intellectual] intuition [*noēsis*] – decisive in any case – it is because in fallen, hence exteriorized, man there is a veil separating him from the inner light, while [still occasionally] allowing a glimmer to filter through; unless the veil – or series of veils – is torn and gives rise to the Platonic *anamnesis*, which the [exoteric] religions situate in the beyond – it is then the ‘beatific vision’ – but which plenary esoterism aims at rendering possible in this very life” (Schuon, 1994a:15).

This alleged identity of ‘essence’ between the knowledge contained within the supra-individual Intellect and the Knowledge contained within the Divine Principle (Schuon, 1993a:xxx), allows of two questions: (i) what distinction – if any – is there between Divine Revelation and intellectual intuition of the Intellect, for both represent divulgations of transcendent knowledge? And, (ii) what need is there for Revelation if the Intellect is capable of conferring a direct knowledge of transcendent Reality in metaphysical intellection (or, intellectual intuition)? Now, concerning the first question, Frithjof Schuon states that the Intellect is a “kind of static *Revelation*” (1995b:25); a “*Revelation* within the individual” (1995a:48); and an “immanent and subjective<sup>28</sup> *revelation*” (1994b:57; italics added; See also Schuon, 1975:31; 33n). Further, he says that:

[T]here are two poles for the manifestation of Divine Wisdom...firstly, the Revelation “above us” and secondly the intellect “within us”; the Revelation provides the symbols while the intellect deciphers them and “recollects” [Platonic *anamnesis*] their content (Schuon, 1994b:57); [and]: Revelation is to the macrocosm what [metaphysical] intellection is to the microcosm (Schuon, 1985:4).

As for the second question – and the inevitable objection that the presence of the Intellect within the individual, renders Revelation redundant – Schuon responds:

If every man possessed intellect...as a fully developed faculty, there would be no Revelations, since total intellection would be a natural thing; but as it has not been like this since the end of the Golden Age [“In most men of the “iron age” the intellect is atrophied to the point of being

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<sup>28</sup> The Intellect, says Frithjof Schuon, “is ‘subjective’ because empirically it is within us [and not because it is lacking in objectivity]” (1994b:57n). It should be emphasized that the Intellect – far from being ‘subjective’ in the ordinary sense – is purely objective; or rather, it transcends the subject-object duality altogether.

reduced to a mere virtuality'<sup>29</sup> (Schuon, 1995a:9-10); See also Schuon, 1995a:9-10], Revelation is not only necessary but even normative in respect to individual intellection [*noēsis*]...[for] although [metaphysical] intellection can occur, as an isolated miracle...outside the language of Revelation...[it] has need of occasional causes in order to become fully aware of itself and be exercised unfettered...Revelation is for the intellect like a principle of actualization, expression and control" (1995a:48; See also 1975:72).<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, says Schuon:

[Metaphysical] intellection has need of tradition, of a Revelation fixed in time and adapted to a society, if it is to be awakened in us and not go astray...[K]nowledge cannot spring up 'subjectively' except within the framework of an 'objective' divine formulation of Knowledge (1994b:157; See also 1990a:32)<sup>31</sup>

But it is necessary, further, to make a distinction between "metaphysical intellection" (Schuon, 1995a:41) and inspiration; for although both derive from the Intellect (Schuon, 1981a:38; 1994b:116): "inspiration [comes] from above...[whilst metaphysical] intellection [occurs] *ab intra* [i.e. 'from within']" (Schuon, 1982b:127-128; See also 1993a:153-154). And again:

Inspiration, like Revelation, is a *divine dictate*, with the difference that in the second case the Spirit dictates a law-giving and obligatory Message of overriding force, whereas in the first case the Message...has no dogmatic import, and has an illustrative role within the framework of the fundamental Message (Schuon, 1981a:25; italics added).

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<sup>29</sup> However, it is important to note – despite 'fideist' opinions to the contrary – that in the wake of the general 'fall' of humanity, "the Intellect...has been obscured – but not [completely] abolished" (Schuon, 1994b:131; See also 1975:71); and it is precisely within the esotericisms of the various intrinsically orthodox religions of the world that it – the Intellect – can become partially or fully operative again.

<sup>30</sup> "Revelation is the objectivation of the transcendent Intellect and...awakens the latent knowledge...we bear within ourselves" (1994b:93).

<sup>31</sup> "As for Revelation, intellection lives by it, for it receives thence its whole formal armature; thus intellection cannot replace the objective, prophetic, lawgiving and traditional manifestation of the Divine Intellect. One can neither conceive a Saint Augustine without the Gospel, nor a Shankaracharya without the Veda" (Schuon, 1995a:44).



As an example, Schuon mentions the case of the Hindu sage, Shrī Rāmāna Mahārshi (1879-1950 C.E.), whose stanzas – entitled *Ulladu Narpadu* – “came to him as if ‘from outside’...and became fixed in his mind without the collaboration of his will” (Schuon, 1987:117n). In this way, says Schuon, inspiration “derives from a particular grace” (Schuon, 1981a:38), which may “result from a mystical degree [of realization]” (Schuon, 1987:117); or from a spiritual function where the ‘grace of state’ (i.e. the grace attaching to a religious function) may confer the inspiration – as for example with the Pontiff, and the correlative Catholic doctrines of “ ‘authority’, ‘infallibility’ and the ‘help of the Holy Spirit’ ” (Schuon, 1987:117n; See also 1981a:27 for the role of inspiration in traditional hermeneutics).

It is now necessary to list *in extenso* sundry quotations from Whitall Perry’s monumental compendium<sup>32</sup> of spiritual writings pertaining to the *philosophia perennis*; the better to verify – quasi-‘empirically’ – the presence of the *Nous* (or *Intellectus*) within the ‘Egyptian’, Greek, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Native American Indian religious traditions respectively:<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*; See also S. H. Nasr (1989:1-64) on the universal provenance of the *Nous-Intellectus*.

<sup>33</sup> Historicist critics will no doubt decry the lack of ‘contextual’ historical method in the list of quotations that follow; and the Traditionalist response to this criticism must be that: (i) “real knowledge has no history” (Schuon, 1987:16) – which is to say that it remains ‘essentially’ the same over time, whilst availing itself of different formulations to best suit a given period. In this regard Kenneth Oldmeadow notes that “the great doctrinal elaborations which follow [on from] a [given] Revelation...do not essentially constitute an ‘addition’ to the tradition, but an unfolding of principles and perspectives which until then [had]... remained implicit” (2000:65). And according to Titus Burckhardt, “doctrine grows, not so much by

“For the things that are in the spiritual world can be seen by the eye of the mind alone.”

– Hermes

“Let us all with one accord give praise to Him, who is seated high upon the heavens,

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the addition of new knowledge, as by the need to refute errors and to reanimate a diminishing power of [intellectual] intuition [i.e. *noēsis*]” (1995a:17). And thus, Frithjof Schuon argues: “it is...[the] increasing weakness, and therewith the risk of forgetfulness and betrayal, which more than anything else obliges [the religious tradition]...to externalize and to make explicit things that were at the beginning included in an inward and implicit perfection...More or less late epochs – the Middle Ages for example – are faced with an imperious need for externalizations and developments, exactly as the water from a spring, if it is not to be lost on the way, needs a channel made by nature or by the hand of man; and just as the channel does not transform the water and is not meant to do so – for no water is better than spring water – so the externalizations and developments of the spiritual patrimony are there, not to change that patrimony, but to transmit it as integrally and as effectively as possible” (1984a:11). As example, Schuon cites Thomist scholasticism and the birth of the Gothic cathedral as necessary “externalizations and developments” for the Christian Middle Ages, consequent upon an increasing diminution of the direct perception of celestial ‘essences’. By contrast, St. Paul – says Schuon – had no need of these externalizations: “for all profundities and all splendours were in himself, and all around him in the sanctity of the primitive [Christian] community” (1984a:11). Thus, where the historicist sees only a myriad of outward forms and no common ‘essence’ (and hence, a constant change of contingent and differing ideas through time), the Traditionalist sees the outward forms as so many elaborations and developments of an inward ‘essence’ ever principally the same (however, it is most important to understand that the foregoing Traditionalist remarks apply only to cases where a common principle or ‘essence’ does, indeed, govern a set of elaborated ideas within a homogeneous tradition; and does not bear application to disparate schools of thought, which evidently share no common principle or ‘essence’); and (ii) the historical method, or rather its abuse – which is historicism – is itself a product of the so-called ‘Enlightenment’; an age wherein the scientific method – comprised of a rather limited rationalist and empiricist epistemology, and entirely ignorant of the supra-individual *Nous* – gained ascendancy and became the only accepted mode of ‘objective’ knowledge. Now, it is the argument of the present thesis that this rationalist and empiricist epistemology – which includes the historical method – need not be the only ‘legitimate’ approach to the objective comprehension of reality; and it thereby reserves the right to approach its subject material in a trans-historical manner (See Schuon, 1975:8; and Nasr, 1989:45-47 for a Traditionalist critique of historicism; See Schuon, 1975:7-18; and Cutsinger, 1992:473-475 for a critique of relativism – of which historicism is one form; Nasr, 1989:1-64 provides a Traditionalist account of traditional sacred knowledge, and of its desacralization from the time of the so-called ‘Renaissance’).

creator of all that is. It is He that is the eye of my mind."<sup>34</sup> – Hermes

"In these outlines, my son, I have drawn a likeness of God for you, so far as that is possible; and if you gaze upon this likeness with the eyes of your heart, then, my son, believe me, you will find the upward path; or rather, the sight itself will guide you on your way." – Hermes

"God implanted in man a sight called intellect, which is capable of beholding God." – Crito (5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.)

"Recognise what God is, and what that is in you which recognises God." – Sextus the Pythagorean

"They (the statesmen elect) must raise the eye of the soul to the universal light which lightens all things, and behold the absolute good; for that is the pattern according to which they are to order the State and the lives of individuals, and the remainder of their own lives also<sup>35</sup>; making philosophy<sup>36</sup> their chief pursuit." – Plato (*Republic* VII, 540b)

"Knowing demands the organ fitted to the object." – Plotinus

"You must close the eyes and waken in yourself that other power of vision, the birthright of all, but which few turn to use." – Plotinus

"(Pythagoras) divinely healed and purified the soul, resuscitated and saved its divine part, and conducted to the [supra-formal] intelligible [world] its divine eye, which, as Plato says, is better worth saving than ten thousand corporeal eyes; for by looking through this alone, when it is strengthened and clarified by appropriate aids, the truth pertaining to all beings is perceived." – Iamblichus (d. 333 C.E.)

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<sup>34</sup> Hermes Trismegistus here affirms the identity of 'essence' between the human and the Divine *Nous*.

<sup>35</sup> Here Plato moves from the Universal order to the particular order. See Cutsinger (1987:37-39).

<sup>36</sup> Plato uses the word in its traditional and etymological sense as "love of wisdom."

"He set his eye upon their hearts to shew [sic] them the greatness of his works."

*Ecclesiasticus*, XVII, 7

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (*St. Matthew*, V, 8)

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single [or non-dual], thy whole body shall be full of [divine] light." – *St. Matthew*, VI, 22.

"...The eyes of your heart enlightened [*illuminatos oculos cordis vestri*], that you may know what the hope is of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in his saints." – *Ephesians*, I, 18.

"Jesu, who always showest thyself unto us – for this is thy will, that we should at all times seek thee, and thyself hast given us this power, to ask and receive, and hast not only permitted this, but hast taught us to pray: who art not seen of our bodily eyes, but art never hidden from the eyes of our soul..." – *Acts of Thomas*, 53

"God is light, not such as these eyes see, but as the heart seeth, when thou hearest, 'He is Truth.' " – St. Augustine (354-430 C.E.)

"I entered (into my inward self) and beheld with the eye of my soul [*ocula animae*], above the mind [*supra mentem*], the Light Unchangeable."<sup>37</sup> – St. Augustine [*Confessions*, VII, 16]

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<sup>37</sup> See St. Augustine, *Confessions* (VII, 23) for a description of the epistemological progression leading up to the pure 'vision' conferred by the supra-rational intelligence, otherwise called the "eye of the soul" (VII, 16). In his *De Genesi ad Litteram*, St. Augustine distinguishes between three kinds of perception: (i) "corporal", whereby physical things are seen; (ii) "spiritual", whereby physical things not present to the corporal senses, are seen by the memory and imagination, respectively (the Bishop of Hippo apologizes for his idiosyncratic usage of the term "spiritual" [!] based on a rather idiosyncratic exegesis of *I Corinthians*, XIV, 15); and "intellectual", whereby things non-physical, and incapable of representation by mental imagery – i.e. the *intellectualia* or *intelligibilia* of the Divine realm – are apprehended by the pure Intellect, and *not* the reason (XII, 6-9 [15-20]). According to St. Augustine, whilst the "corporal" (i.e. empirical) and "spiritual" (i.e. imaginative and retentive) senses pertain to science (*scientia*) and are liable to error, the *intellectus* pertains to wisdom (*sapientia*) and is infallible (*intellectualis visio non fallitur*, in *De Genesi ad Litteram*, XII, 25 [52]; See also, XII, 14 [29]): "[T]o wisdom pertains the intellectual cognition of things

“For it is with the interior eye that truth is seen.” – St. Augustine

“Our whole business therefore in this life is to restore to health the eye of the heart whereby God may be seen.” – St. Augustine

“His divinity can in no wise be seen by human sight, but is seen by that sight with which those who see are no longer men, but beyond men.” – St. Augustine

“For the outer sense alone perceives visible things and the eye of the heart, alone sees the invisible.”<sup>38</sup> – Richard of St. Victor<sup>39</sup> (1123-1173 C.E.)

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eternal; to science the rational cognition of things temporal” (*De Trinitate*, XII, 25; Cited in Dom Butler, 1967:36-37).

<sup>38</sup> Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141 C.E.) – the predecessor of Richard at the Abbey of St. Victor in Paris – speaks of an “eye of flesh”, an “eye of reason”, and an “eye of contemplation” in his *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei* (“On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith”: I, 10, 2): “[A]nd the soul itself, as if it were in a certain middle place, having the world outside itself and God within itself, had also received an eye with which it could see the world outside itself and those things which were in the world, and this was the *eye of flesh* [the empirical senses]. It had received another eye with which it could see itself and those things which were in itself, and this is the *eye of reason*. It had received still another eye with which it could see God within itself and those things which were in God, and this is the *eye of contemplation* [Richard of St. Victor’s ‘eye of the heart’]. As long, therefore, as it kept these eyes open and uncovered, it saw clearly and discerned rightly, but, after the shades of sin had entered upon it, the *eye of contemplation* indeed was extinguished [at the Fall] so that it saw nothing, but the *eye of reason* was made bleared so that it saw doubtfully. That eye alone which was not extinguished [the ‘eye of the flesh’] remained in its clarity...But the *eye of reason* as long as its light is cloudy cannot have certain judgement, since what does not see clearly discerns doubtfully. Hence it is that the hearts of men more easily agree with themselves in those things which they perceive with the *eye of the flesh* than in those things which they attain by the keenness of the mind and by the sense of reason, since where they are not cloudy in seeing they do not waver in judging. Therefore, man since he has the *eye of the flesh* can see the world and those things which are in the world. Likewise, since he has the *eye of reason* in part, he similarly sees the soul in part and those things which are in the soul. Since indeed he has not the *eye of contemplation*, he is not able to see God and the things that are in God” (1951:167; italics added). It will be noted that in this last sentence Hugh of St. Victor speaks of the fallen soul alone, and does not deny the “eye of contemplation” to all without reservation. In the first of his *Nineteen Sermons on Ecclesiastes*, Hugh distinguishes three “modes of cognition (*visions*) belonging to the rational soul: cogitation, meditation, [and] contemplation” ([1957:90]

“The sun of the intellectual [Universal] world, that inner eye of the heart...” – Richard of Saint- Victor<sup>40</sup>

“God was seen [before the Fall] by a spiritual light, flowing upon man’s intellect from the Divinity.” (St. Thomas Aquinas [1125-1274 C.E.], *De Veritate*; Cited in Dom Butler, 1967:7)

“The soul has two eyes: one inward and one outward. It is the inner eye of the soul that looks into being and takes its being from God without any intermediary. That is its

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the first two of which correspond to the “eye of reason”, whilst the third corresponds to the “eye of contemplation”). Concerning the latter, he distinguishes “two kinds of contemplation: the first is for beginners, and considers creatures; [whilst] the kind that comes later, belongs to the perfect[ed soul], and contemplates [‘sees’] the Creator” (1957:90-91). For the distinction between cogitation (“a rather rambling consideration of many things without purpose” [1979:23]), meditation (the “intent mental activity concentrated upon one thing or purpose, for the gaining of knowledge” [1979:23]), and contemplation, see Richard of St. Victor’s *Mystical Ark* (also known as *Benjamin Major*), especially Book 1, chapters 3 and 4 (1979:155-158); and Wilber (1996:3). Following Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, St. Bonaventure (the great *Doctor Seraphicus* of the Western Church) also makes a distinction between three kinds of knowledge (summarized here by Ken Wilber): “all knowledge is a kind of *illumination*. There is exterior and inferior illumination (*lumen exterius* and *lumen inferius*), which lights the eye of flesh and gives...knowledge of sense objects. There is [also] *lumen interius*, which lights the eye of reason and gives...knowledge of philosophical [i.e. rational] truths. And there is *lumen superius*, the light of transcendent Being which illumines the eye of contemplation and reveals salutary truth” (Wilber, 1996:2-3). Reference must also be made to Book V (sections iv-v) of the *Consolatione Philosophiae* by the Roman philosopher and early Christian martyr, St. Severinus Boethius (480-524 C.E.), where a similar tripartite division of epistemic faculties – (i) sense, (ii) reason, and (iii) ‘angelic’ intelligence (*Intellectus*) – is presented; but with the single exception that ‘he who was the first of Christian scholastics’ interposed a level of (iv) imagination between the empirical and cognitive senses, respectively (See Boethius, 1969:157-163; V. Watts, trans.). The following words of C. S. Lewis (quoted by Watts, 1969:157n) elucidate the crucial difference between the *Intellectus* (the supra-individual intelligence) and the *ratio* (the individual, rational intelligence): “We are enjoying *intellectus* when we ‘just see’ a self-evident truth; we are exercising *ratio* when we proceed step by step to prove a truth which is not self-evident” (1964:157).

<sup>39</sup> Richard was “saluted by Dante as being ‘in contemplation more than human’ (*Paradiso*, XI, 132)” (Zinn, in Richard of St. Victor, 1979:1).

<sup>40</sup> “The eye is the sun of the body, as the heart is the sun of the soul, and the sun is at once the eye and the heart of the sky (Schuon, 1997: 5n).

proper work. The outer eye of the soul is that which is turned toward all creatures and which observes them intently and in the form of images.” – Meister Eckhart (cited in Pietsch, 1979:159)

“There is a power in sight which is superior to the eyes set in the head and more far-reaching than the heavens and the earth.”<sup>41</sup> – Meister Eckhart

“The soul is capable of knowing all things in her highest power.”<sup>42</sup> – Meister Eckhart

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<sup>41</sup> Elsewhere, the Meister maintains that there are three modes of knowledge: (i) the supra-rational knowledge of the *Intellectus*; (ii) the rational knowledge of the mind (*mens*) or ‘understanding’; and (iii) the empirical knowledge of the physical senses: “The soul has something within it [i.e. the *Intellectus*], a spark of supersensual knowledge that is never quenched. But there is also another knowledge in our souls, which is directed toward outward objects: namely [the empirical] knowledge of the senses and the [rational knowledge of the] understanding: this hides that other [supra-rational] knowledge from us. The intuitive, higher knowledge [*sapientia*] is timeless and spaceless, without any here and now” (Cited in Otto, 1957:35).

<sup>42</sup> For Meister Eckhart this “highest power” of the soul is the *Intellectus* (“Intellect”), *scintilla animae*, or *das funkelin der sele* (Latin and German respectively, for the “spark of the soul”). Eckhart also used other terms such as, *in dem höchsten der sele* (“the highest in the soul”), *der sele geist* (“the spirit of the soul”), *das innigeist* (“the inward spirit”), *der grunt* (“the ground” [of the soul]), and *das burgelin* (“the little castle” [See Forman, 1990b:107-110; 1993:705-706]) to designate the *Intellectus*. According to the Meister, the *Intellectus* has five properties: first, it is free from ‘here’ and ‘now’, space and time: “It [the Intellect] becomes detached from here and now. ‘Here and now’ means the same as place and time. *Now* is the minimum of time; it is not a portion of time or a part of time. It is just a taste of time, a tip of time, and end of time. Yet, small though it be, it must go. Again, it [the Intellect] is detached from *here*. ‘Here’ means the same thing as place. The place where I am standing is small, but however small, it must still go before I can see God.” Second, the *Intellectus* has nothing in common with the world: “It [the Intellect] is like nothing [in the world]. A master says God is a being that nothing is like and nothing can become like. Now St. John says: ‘We shall be called children of God’ (John 3.1), and if we are God’s children we must resemble God. How is it then that the master says God is a being whom *nothing* is like? This is how you must understand it: By virtue of being like nothing, this power [the Intellect] is like God. Just as God is like nothing, this power [the Intellect] is like God.” Third, the *Intellectus* is pure (i.e. free of worldly imperfection): “It [the Intellect] is pure and uncompounded. By nature God can tolerate no mingling or admixture. Thus, too, this power [the Intellect] has no mingling or admixture; there is nothing alien in it, nor can anything alien invade it.” Fourth, the *Intellectus* seeks God inwardly: “It [the Intellect] is ever inwardly seeking [God]. God is a being such that He ever abides in the innermost. Therefore the intellect

“[A]nd she [Prudence]...among them [the Four Cardinal Virtues]<sup>43</sup>, in her forehead had three

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goes ever seeking within. But the will goes *out* to seek what it loves.” Fifth, the human *Intellectus* is the very image of God: “Mark this well and remember it: here you have the whole sermon in a nutshell. [The Divine] Image [or Logos] and [the human] image [or intellect] are so fully one and joined, that no difference can be discerned” (Cited in Davies, 1991:136-137). Thus, in summary, Meister Eckhart says that the Intellect is (i) beyond space and time (and therefore of the Universal order); (ii) like nothing in the created world (and therefore supra-formal); (iii) pure and simple (i.e. perfect and unitive); (iv) seeking God inwardly; and (v) an ‘image’ (or ‘likeness’) of God, made for union with Him (See also Davies, 1991:87-95; 134-139; and Pietsch, 1979:157-161 for Meister Eckhart’s views on the Intellect). Rama Coomaraswamy (1991:91-107) has dealt with the related term *synderesis* (“spark of conscience”), in his translation of St. Albertus Magnus’ (St. Albert the Great [1229-1280 C. E.]) *Questio LXXI (De Synderesi)*, which is from the Master of Lauringen’s *Summa Theologiae* (being a summary of scholastic opinion on the *synderesis* up to the twelfth century C. E.). It will be noted that the *synderesis* has its origin with the Church Father St. Jerome (340-420 C. E.), whose gloss on *Ezekiel*, 1:10 reads: “[A] great many hold that according to Plato, a soul is either rational, irascible, or concupiscent, which he calls *logixon*, *thomixon*, and *epithomixon* and refers to these respectively as man-like, lion-like, and bull-like. That part of the soul which is rational and understanding, which deals with thinking and deliberation, and the strength and wisdom of them all, are situated in the organ of the brain. Fierceness, anger and violence are qualities of the lion which are situated in the gall. Further, libido and luxury and all sorts of voluptuousness and cupidity are situated in the liver, which is symbolized by the bull who is used for heavy farm work. There is a fourth aspect of the soul, which is above these three and independent of them. The Greeks call this *sundereson*, which is that spark of conscience in Cain which could not be extinguished from his being. It is this that causes us, when overcome by pleasure or anger, or even sometimes by the appearance of acceptive [sic] reasons, to feel ourselves to have fallen into sin. And this aspect is appropriately assigned to the eagle and is not to be confused with the other three but is for the correction of their errors” (Cited in St. *Albertus Magnus*, 1991:94; R. Coomaraswamy, trans.). The Dominican ‘school’ of St. Albertus Magnus – including his noted pupils Ulrich of Strasburg (c.1225-1277 C. E.) and Meister Dietrich of Freiburg (c.1250-1320 C. E.) – appear to have given the *synderesis* of St. Jerome a more rigorously Intellect-ual – as opposed to moral – meaning (this is particularly evident in the quotations of Meister Eckhart [cited above] on the *Intellectus*; he who was pupil of St. Albertus Magnus at the *stadium generale* in Cologne, before the latter’s death in 1280 C. E. [Davies, 1991:85-95]). In the doctrine of these Dominican scholastics – including Meister Eckhart, who is their crown and their consummation – the *Intellectus*, as pure, supra-individual and Universal Intelligence, is both transcendent center and summit of the human being; who is defined first and foremost as ‘intelligence’, and only secondarily as ‘will’ (See Burckhardt, 1987:91).

<sup>43</sup> The Four Cardinal Virtues are: Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude (See D. Sayers, in Dante Alighieri, 1955:305).



eyes.”<sup>44</sup> (*Purgatoria*, XXIX, 131-132)

“The face of our soul uncovered by opening of the ghostly [i.e. spiritual] eye, (we) behold as in a mirror heavenly joy.” – Walter Hilton ([1340-1396 C.E.]; Gloss on *II Corinthians*, III, 18)<sup>45</sup>

“Open the eye of thy [supra-individual] intelligence and look at Me.” – St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380 C.E.)

“What is more quiet than the single eye?” – *The Imitation of Christ*, III, xxxi [Thomas à Kempis: 1380-1471 C.E.]

“[T]he created soul of man hath...two eyes. The one is the power of seeing into eternity, the other of seeing into time and the creatures... But these two eyes of the soul of man cannot both perform their work at once; but if the soul shall see with the right eye into eternity, then the left eye must close itself and refrain from working, and be as though it were dead. For if the left eye be fulfilling its office toward outward things, that is, holding converse with time and the creatures, then must the right eye be hindered in its working, that is, in its contemplation. Therefore whosoever will have the one must let the other go; for ‘no man can serve two masters.’ ” – *Theologia Germanica*, VII<sup>46</sup>

“Never shall thou arrive at the unity of vision [i.e. beyond the subject-object duality]... but by entering fully into the will of our Saviour Christ, and therein bringing the eye of time into the eye of eternity.” – Boehme (1575-1624 C.E.)

“The divine light...readily enters into the eye of the mind that is prepared to receive it.” – Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683 C.E.)

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<sup>44</sup> “Three eyes”: two of which are physical, whilst the third is the non-physical eye (the *Nous*) that sees eternity; and which may be compared to the ‘frontal eye’ of *Shiva* and the ‘third eye of wisdom’ (*prajñā*) present in much Buddhist iconography (Schuon, 1997:8n; 11; D. Sayers, in Dante Alighieri, 1955:305).

<sup>45</sup> *II Corinthians* III, 18 reads: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

<sup>46</sup> The quotation is from the Susanna Winkworth translation of 1893 (in electronic format, hence the omission of the page number; See <http://www.ccel.org> (Christian Classics Ethereal Library)).

"The light of splendour shines in the middle of the night.

Who can see it? A heart which has eyes and watches." – Angelus Silesius (1624-1677 C.E)

"Two eyes has the soul: one regards time

the other looks towards eternity" – Angelus Silesius (cited in Pietsch, 1979:165).

"The soul, whose heart God wishes to reach,

looks with only one eye – the right one – at the goal" – Angelus Silesius (cited in Pietsch, 1979:165).

"While thou first fastnest the Eye of thy Spirit on the Majesty of God, and then beholdest all Things, as they appear in the Light of the Divine Presence; thou indeed art in Heaven: All Things are as the Angels of God, as Divine Emanations, Divine Figures, and Divine Splendors [sic] circling thee in on every side, and God himself as a Fountain of Glories in the midst of them." – Peter Sterry (1613-1672 C.E.)

"That which enables us to know and understand aright in the things of God [i.e. the *Nous*] must be a living principle of holiness within us." – John Smith the Platonist (1618-1652 C.E.)

"We must shut the eyes of sense, and open that brighter eye of our understandings, that other eye of the soul, as the philosopher [Plotinus] calls our [supra- individual] intellectual faculty, 'which indeed all have, but few make use of it.' " – John Smith the Platonist

"The eyes of our mind can look as easily backwards into that eternity which always hath been, as into that which ever shall be." – William Law (1686-1761 C.E.)

"He who would gain a golden understanding of the word of truth, should have the eyes of his soul opened, and his mind illuminated by the inward light which God has kindled in our hearts from the beginning...Although no man ever has, or ever can, see God with his outward bodily eyes, yet with the inward eyes of the soul He may well be seen and known." – *The Sophic Hydrolith*.

“It is not the eyes that are blind but the hearts.” – *Qur’ān*, XXII, 46

“When the gnostic’s<sup>47</sup> spiritual eye is opened, his bodily eye is shut: they see nothing but Him [God].” – Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī

“I saw my Lord with the eye of my heart, and I said: who art Thou?  
He said: Thou.” – Al-Hallāj (d. 922 C.E.)

“I arrived at Truth, not by systematic reasoning and accumulation of proofs but by a flash of light which God sent into my soul.” – Al- Ghazālī (d. 1111 C.E.)

“ ‘God is most great’<sup>48</sup> is on my heart’s lips every moment.  
The heart hath gotten an eye constant in desire of thee.” – *Dīvāni Shamsi Tabrīz*, XI

“The eye of the heart [Arabic: *‘ayn al-qalb*], which is seventy-fold  
and of which these two sensible eyes are but gleaners...” – Rūmī

“If you wish to see that Face [God],  
Seek another eye. The philosopher  
With his two eyes sees double<sup>49</sup>,

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<sup>47</sup> The term *gnōsis* is used in its strict etymological sense of pure, direct, and immediate spiritual knowledge; and apart from any reference to the school of Gnosticism (See for example, Plato’s *Republic*, 508d for a clear idea of the meaning of this term; See also Schuon, 1990c:67-71 for a Traditionalist elucidation of this term, which “refers to [a] supra-rational, and thus purely intellectual, knowledge of metacosmic realities” [Schuon, 1994b:138; See also, 1995a:18]. G. E. H. Palmer [1990:8; a translator of Schuon’s *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom* and of the *Philokalia*] refers to gnosis as a: “[H]igher knowledge which comes of intuition by the Intellect”; which term, he says, has the same sense as in Plotinus or Meister Eckhart).

<sup>48</sup> In Islam this oft-used sacred formula is known as the *takbīr*, or magnification of God. Evidently, Rūmī employs it here (in his spiritual practice) as an invocatory support for the remembrance of God (*dhikr Allāh*). A *hadīth* (saying) of the Prophet of Islam states: “There is a means of polishing all things whereby rust is removed; that which polishes the heart is the invocation of *Allāh*” (cited in Stoddart, 1985:82). It may be said that the “polishing” of the heart (i.e. the invocation) is the means, with humility (*al-faqr*) and with the help of God (*tawfiq*), for begetting the ‘eye of the heart’ (*‘ayn al-qalb*).

So is unable to see the unity of Truth.” – Shabistarī (d. 1320 C.E)

“Open the ‘eye of the heart’ so that thou canst see the spirit  
and gain a vision of that which is invisible.” – Hātif ([d. 1784 C.E.] Cited in Nasr, 1979:73)

“To see the beauty of Lailā requires the eyes of Majnūn.”<sup>50</sup> – Persian Sufic saying

“The *Atman* is self-luminous and birthless; it is existence, absolute knowledge<sup>51</sup>, the  
eye of the eyes, One without a second.”<sup>52</sup> – *Srimad Bhagavatam*, XI, xx.

“The eye of Knowledge contemplates *Brahman* as It is in Itself, abounding in Bliss...but the  
eye of ignorance discovers It not, discerns It not, even as a blind man perceives not the sensible  
light.” – Shrī Shankarāchārya (*Ātmā-bodha*, cited in Guénon, 1999:151)

“The Yogī, whose intellect [Sanskrit: *Buddhī*] is perfect, contemplates all  
things as abiding in himself and thus, by the eye of Knowledge (*Jñāna- chakshus*), he  
perceives that everything is *Ātmā*.” – Shrī Shankarāchārya<sup>53</sup>

“The nature of the one Reality [*Brahman*] must be known by one’s own clear spiritual

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<sup>49</sup> The term “philosopher” designates in this instance, not Plato’s philosopher (i.e. a “lover of wisdom”), but the person having recourse to reason alone (“sees double”, i.e. with the duality of the *ratio-nal* faculty). Frithjof Schuon distinguishes clearly between the metaphysician and the philosopher in the following passage: “[P]hilosophy proceeds from reason (which is a purely individual faculty), whereas metaphysic proceeds exclusively from the [supra-individual] Intellect [*Nous*]” (1993:xxix). For a perspicacious rendering of the two senses of the term “philosopher” – ‘Platonic’ or not, see Schuon (1981a:115-128).

<sup>50</sup> In Sufi exegesis, Lailā symbolizes the Divine Essence (*al-Dhāt*) whilst Majnūn (a madman) symbolizes the wisdom that is ‘folly in the eyes of the world’. The “eye of Majnūn” is the ‘eye of wisdom’ that truly sees God.

<sup>51</sup> “Absolute knowledge”: that is, unitive, non-dual, immediate knowledge; as opposed to relative knowledge which is multiple, dual, and mediate.

<sup>52</sup> The non-dual nature of the “eye of eyes” is again postulated.

<sup>53</sup> The great master of Hindu *jñāna* gives expression here, to the supra-individual and Universal character of the “eye of knowledge” (*jñāna chakshus*) in saying that all things abide *within* the yogī. In other words, the subject-object duality is transcended in the “eye of knowledge” because its Universal nature – which is beyond the modalities of space and time – *is* both the subject and the object. See Schuon (1995:15) above.

perception; it cannot be known through a *pandit* (learned man) [alone].” – Shrī Shankarāchārya  
(Cited in Huxley, 1946:12)

“God gives one divine eyes; and only then can one behold Him.” – Shrī Rāmakrishna (1836-1886 C.E.)

“Lighting the lamp of Knowledge in the chamber of your heart,  
Behold the face of the Mother, Brahman’s Embodiment.” – Hindu Song

“I am blind and do not see the things of this world; but when the light comes from Above, it enlightens my Heart and I can see, for the Eye of my Heart (*Chante Ishta*) sees everything; and through this vision I can help my people. The heart is a sanctuary at the Center of which there is a little space, wherein the Great Spirit (*Wakantanka*) dwells, and this is the Eye. This is the Eye of *Wakantanka* by which He sees all things, and through which we see Him. If the heart is not pure, *Wakantanka* cannot be seen, and if you should die in this ignorance, your soul shall not return immediately to *Wakantanka*, but it must be purified by wandering about in the world. In order to know the Centre of the Heart in which is the Mind of *Wakantanka*, you must be pure and good, and live in the manner that *Wakantanka* has taught us. The man who is thus pure contains the Universe within the Pocket of his Heart (*Chante Ognaka*).” – Black Elk (d. 1950 C.E.)<sup>54</sup>

“Eye of the soul”, “eye of the heart”, “eye of the mind”, “eye of the Spirit”, “eye of knowledge”, “eye of understanding”, “divine eye”, “spiritual eye”, “inward eye”, “single eye”, “right eye”, “eye of the eye”: so many ‘eyes’ seeing the intelligible (Universal) world of the Forms (*topos hyperouranios*, literally: “a place above the heavens”; See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247c) – the Divine realm. This unanimity of witness, claim the Traditionalists, is evidence enough of a supra-individual and Universal faculty capable of direct knowledge of the world of the Forms (or of the Spirit) through metaphysical

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<sup>54</sup> The foregoing quotations are to be found in Perry (1991:754; 758; 816-820) unless otherwise stated. Full bibliographical details of the quotations may be found in the “Index of Sources” (Perry, 1991:1057-1144).

intellection<sup>55</sup>. This epistemic faculty, say the Traditionalists, is the *Nous*<sup>56</sup> of the Platonic (and Neo-Platonic) philosophers; the *Intellectus*<sup>57</sup> of the medieval Christian theologians; the *Buddhi*<sup>58</sup> of Hindu *Advaita Vedānta*; and the '*Aql* of Islamic Sufism<sup>59</sup> (Stoddart, 1994:10; 12n; 1998:36).

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<sup>55</sup> According to Plato (*Phaedo*, 76), the *Nous* is capable of direct knowledge (*episteme*) of the transcendent Forms (*eidos*) by virtue of their pre-terrestrial kinship (*syngeneia*). In other words, the *Nous* is of the same nature as the transcendent Forms; which *adaequatio* allows the one to know the other (See Louth, 1981:2-3); and this is the meaning of the saying of Christ: "No man hath ascended up to Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven" (*St. John*, III, 13).

<sup>56</sup> See Louth (1981:xv-xvii) for an exposition of the Greek term *Nous* (the 'higher' Mind) in its traditional acceptance.

<sup>57</sup> The contemporary meaning of the word "intellect" differs from its medieval acceptance. St. Thomas Aquinas – 'Angelic Doctor' of the Latin Church and a pole of orthodoxy – presents the medieval (and Traditionalist) understanding of the distinction between "intellect" and "reason": "To understand (*intelligere*) is to apprehend an intelligible truth simply [i.e. unitively, or 'without parts' – beyond subject and object]; to reason (*ratiocinare*) is to proceed from one understanding to another [i.e. by dualistic comparison]. Ratiocination is compared to intellection as motion to rest, or as acquiring to having. One is a process; the other is an achievement." (*Summa Theologica*, IA, 79, 8, cited in Cutsinger, 1987:24). And St. Thomas again: "*Ratio* designates a certain discursiveness by which the human soul from knowing one thing comes to know another; *intellectus*, however, seems to designate a simple and absolute knowledge [*intellectus vero simplicem et absolutam cognitionem designare videtur*] (without any motion or discursiveness, immediately in the first and sudden apprehension) [*sine aliquo motu vel discurso, statim in prima et subita acceptione*] (*De Veritate*, qxv, aI, cited in Guénon, 1995a, 293n;). It should be noted that intellection is in "rest" and "without motion" because – by "immediate" apprehension – it has already "achieved" its object; which it *is*. To recapitulate: "intellect" in the modern sense corresponds approximately to "reason" in the medieval sense.

<sup>58</sup> See René Guénon (1999a:47-50) for an exposition of *Buddhi* in the tradition of *Advaita Vedānta*, whose nature of direct contemplation of transcendent Reality is affirmed in this *shloka* of the *Bhagavad Gīta* (II, 44): "The Intellect (*Buddhi*) is steadily bent on contemplation (*samādhi*) [of the Self]" (Based on the translations of A. Besant, 1998:33; and S. Radhakrishnan, 1995:117-118). The *Bhagavad Gītā* (III, 42) also explicitly affirms the three degrees of (i) empirical; (ii) rational; and (iii) *Intellect-ual* knowledge (discussed above) in the following verse: "It is said that the [empirical] senses are powerful. But beyond the senses is the mind [*manas*], [and] beyond mind is [the] Intellect [*Buddhi*]" (1994:35-36; Shri Purohit Swami, trans.).

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<sup>59</sup> See S.H. Nasr (1979:65-74) and Izutsu (1983:17-18; 22) for an elucidation of the 'pure Intellect' (*'aql mujarrad*) in Islamic philosophy and Sufism; and Frithjof Schuon (1997:3-12) for a discussion of the "eye of the heart."

## Chapter 2: The Knower and the Known in Metaphysical Intellection.

“The division into knower, knowing, [and] known, exists not in the higher Self [*Ātmā*].”

(Shrī Shankarāchārya, *Ātmā-Bodha*, 40; C. Johnston translation).



Allusion has been made above to the unitive nature of the knowledge (*gnōsis*) apprehended by the *Nous* in metaphysical intellection (*noēsis*); that it apprehends its object as ‘within’ itself (Shrī Shankarācharyā); and that it ‘possesses’ its object while yet being at ‘rest’ (St. Thomas Aquinas). It may, too, have been noted that certain of the above authors (e.g. Hermes, Meister Eckhart, and Black Elk) identify their own ‘eye of knowledge’ (*Nous*) with the ‘Divine Eye’<sup>60</sup> – ideas no doubt provocative and perhaps even scandalous to some. How is this to be explained? The *Nous* – it has been said – is a faculty of the Universal order that exists beyond space and time;<sup>61</sup> by which fact it transcends the dualistic limitations of subject and object, knower and known. In the *Nous* the subject *is* the object, and the knower *is* the known (Schuon, 1995a:15). Or, as James Cutsinger expresses it:

The intellect [*Nous*] is its own outside...[It] is in [the] back of the very distinction between subject and object, inside and outside, mind and body. They are contained in it, so that it cannot be [reduced]...to either one of them (1997:29-30).

And this leads into the identity of ‘essence’ between the aforesaid *Nous* and the ‘Divine Eye’; for just *because* the *Nous* is a Universal (i.e. ‘omnipresent’) faculty, it is identified with its ‘ultimate’ object, which latter is the Divinity. The *Nous*, says Frithjof Schuon, “is a ray...[that] emanates from God” (1984a:93), and prolongs “the principal realities [of the Divine order]...in [metaphysical] intellection [i.e. *noēsis*]” (1981b:17); by virtue of

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<sup>60</sup> Note also this saying of Meister Eckhart: “There is something in the soul that is uncreate and uncreatable; if the whole soul were so it would be uncreate and uncreatable; and this is the Intellect” (*Aliquid est in anima quod est increatum et increabile: si tota anima esset talis, esset increata et increabilis, et hoc est Intellectus*) (Cited in Schuon, 1997:7n). Here Meister Eckhart affirms the identity of ‘essence’ between the uncreated Divine Intellect (Logos) and the created (but still supra-individual, Universal and ‘other-worldly’) human intellect.

<sup>61</sup> Or *nāma* and *rūpa* (“name” and “form”), as the Hindu’s would say.

which, he says, it is “not other” (Schuon, 1975:210) than the Divinity – and this by a “filiation of essence” (Schuon, 1990a:24). Schuon explains further:

The way of Union [or ‘non-duality’]...by no means signifies that the servant as such [i.e. the individual] unites himself to the Lord as such [i.e. the Personal God], or that man [*qua* individuality] ends by identifying himself with God [*qua* Person]. It signifies that *that* something which in man...[is] beyond his individual[ity]...[and which] is already potentially and even virtually Divine, namely the pure Intellect [*Nous*], withdraws from the “subject-object” complementarism and resides in its own transpersonal being, which, never entering into this complementarism, is no other than the [Supreme] Self [*Ātmā*]. To the objection that the Self is the object of human intelligence, and that in consequence it fits perfectly into the “subject-object” polarity, it must be answered that it is only the notion of the Self which is such an object<sup>62</sup>, and that the existence of this notion proves precisely that there is in the human mind something which already is “not other” than the Self; it is in virtue of this mysterious inward connection with the Self that we are able to conceive the latter objectively. If this something *increateum et increabile*<sup>63</sup> were not within us, it would never be possible for us to escape, at the centre of our being, from the “servant-Lord” polarity (1975:210; See also 1987:171-172).

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<sup>62</sup> This point is unheeded by the Deconstructionists – for whom *all* is language – and who confuse the notion of a thing (i.e. language) with the thing in itself (i.e. the reality or meaning to which the language refers). In the Buddhist idiom this is to confuse the ‘finger pointing at the moon’ with the moon itself – the very definition of ignorance! The Taoist sage Chuang Tzu expresses the same idea thus: “The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you’ve gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit; once you’ve gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words [or language] exist because of meaning [i.e. the ‘reality’ to which language points]; once you’ve gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?” (ch.26, 1968:302; B. Watson, trans.). Frithjof Schuon expresses the reality of the situation as follows: “Men of rationalizing disposition are obsessed with ‘thoughts’; they see concepts and not ‘things’; hence their inept criticisms of inspired and traditional doctrines. Such men perceive neither the realities of which these doctrines treat, nor the unexpressed things that are there taken for granted” (1987:10).

<sup>63</sup> “Uncreate and uncreatable”. Schuon inserts, at this point, a footnote to his text: “*Et hoc est Intellectus* (Eckhart).” That is: “and this is the Intellect ([saying of Meister] Eckhart)”.

This purely esoteric idea of Union (known as *advaitavāda*, or *tad ekam*<sup>64</sup> in the Hindu *Advaita Vedānta*, and *wahdat al-shuhūd*<sup>65</sup> in Islamic Sufism) affirms the ultimate oneness or non-duality of Knowledge in the Intellect.<sup>66</sup> Schuon clarifies the non-dualist position

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<sup>64</sup> The perspective of 'non-dual' perception (*advaitavāda*) is contained in the following passage from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*: "The knowledge by which the one Imperishable Being is seen in all existences, undivided in the divided, know that that knowledge is of 'goodness' [*sāttvikam*]"; by contrast, the 'dual' perception of the collectivity (of believers) is characterized as follows: "The knowledge which sees multiplicity of beings in the different creatures, by reason of their separateness, know that that knowledge is of the nature of 'passion' [*rājasam*]"; but "that which clings to one single effect as if it were the whole, without concern for the cause, [and] without grasping the real [i.e. those who are atheists and materialists]...is declared to be of the nature of 'dullness' [or 'darkness' *tāmasam*]" (XVIII, 20-22; S. Radhakrishnan, trans.); See René Guénon (1999a) for a metaphysical exposition of the *Advaita Vedānta* doctrine in Hinduism; See also Frithjof Schuon (1987:99-130) for a comparison of the non-dualism of the *Advaita Vedānta* with the *wahdat al-wujūd* of Islamic Sufism. In its rigorously 'non-dualistic' perspective, unitive 'knowledge' pertains to the Divine pole *Chit* (Consciousness-Knowledge-Light) whilst unitive 'being' pertains to the Divine pole *Sat* (Being-Reality-Power). Importantly, their union (or 'non-duality') is consummated in *Ānanda* (Bliss-Happiness-Love-Union). *Sat*, *Chit*, and *Ānanda*, it will be recalled, are "the three internal dimensions or hypostases of the Supreme Principle, *Brahma[n]*" (Stoddart:1993:20). According to Frithjof Schuon (1981a:45n; 1981a:45n; and 1981b:237), the Islamic equivalents of the Vedāntine ternary *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* are *Wujūd-Shuhūd-Hayat* (Being-Consciousness-Life) or *Qudrah-Hikmah-Rahmah* (Power-Wisdom-Radiating Goodness/Beauty). It bears repeating that in the Supreme Principle 'being' and 'knowing' are ultimately one (or 'non-dual'); it is only in a 'return' to language (necessarily dualistic) that the 'subject' (knowing) or 'object' (being) point-of-view is unavoidably adopted.

<sup>65</sup> *Wahdat al-shuhūd* may be translated variously as "Unity (or Oneness) of Knowledge", "Unity of Consciousness", or "Unity of Witness/Vision". It is perhaps less well known than *Wahdat al-wujūd*, which has variously been rendered as "Unity of Existence", "Oneness of Being", or "Supreme Identity". The two perspectives are complementary: with the former, the stress is placed upon the Absolute Subject-as-Knower (*wahdat al-shuhūd*); whilst with the latter the stress is placed upon the Absolute Object-as-Being (*wahdat al-wujūd*). Ultimately, the two are resolved in their common essence, which is none other than the 'non-dual' Divine Essence (*al-Dhāt*). See Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1987:338) for an explication of these two perspectives in Islamic Sufism. See also Martin Lings (1993:121-130) for an account of the "Oneness of Being" in Islamic Sufism. Toshihiko Izutsu (1983:1-283) provides an elucidation of *wahdat al-wujūd* according to the metaphysics of Ibn al-'Arabī – the *Shaykh al-Akbar*; as also a lucid exposition of the 'non-dualistic' nature of Philosophical Taoism (*Tao Chia*) according to its founders Lao-Tzu and Chuang Tzu (1983:287-466), and is to be particularly recommended for its close analysis of textual and linguistic

material, as well as for its reliance upon traditional sources of commentary. The non-dual perspective is present within Philosophical Taoism (*Tao Chia*) in sayings such as the following: “The true Sage brings all the contraries together and rests in the natural Balance of Heaven [i.e. at the non-dual ‘point’ that resolves all duality]” (Chuang Tzu, ch.2; Cited in Perry, 1991:835); “Only the truly intelligent understand...[the] principle of the identity of all things. They do not view things as apprehended by themselves, subjectively; but transfer themselves into the position of the things viewed [thereby overcoming the subject-object duality]. And viewing them thus they are able to comprehend them [non-dualistically]...this is Tao” (Chuang Tzu, ch2; Cited in Perry, 1991:861); and “There is in reality neither truth nor error, neither yes nor no, nor any [dualistic] distinction whatsoever, since all – including the contraries – is One” (Chuang Tzu, ch.2; Cited in Perry, 1991:979). See also Izutsu (1994:66-97) for a ‘meta-philosophical’ (or metaphysical) comparison of *Advaita Vedānta*, *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, Philosophical Taoism, and Islamic Sufism – all concerning the doctrine of ‘non-duality’. In *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, heretofore mentioned only in passing, the ‘non-dual’ perception of reality is attained in *prajñā* (wisdom) or *samādhi* (“a nondualistic state of consciousness in which the consciousness of the experiencing ‘subject’ becomes one with the experienced ‘object’ ” [Diener *et al.*, 1991:182]); and which is succinctly expressed in the celebrated words of the *Bodhisattva* of Compassion, *Avalokiteshvara*, in the *Mahā-Prajñā-Pāramitā-Hridaya-Sutra* (“The Great Wisdom Perfection Heart Sutra”): “[Here O] *Shariputra* [foremost disciple of the historical Buddha Siddhartha Gautama], form [*rūpa*] is no other than emptiness [*śūnyatā*], emptiness no other than form. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form” (Waddell, 1996:91; See Diener *et al.*, 1991:203 for an authoritative definition of *śūnyatā*, which is “equated with the Absolute” in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, and does *not* signify a literal ‘nothing.’ In this regard, the remark of the Sixth patriarch of Zen Buddhism may well be recalled: “When you hear...talk of the Void [*śūnyatā*], do not fall into the idea of vacuity[!]” [Hui-Nēng (637-713 C.E.), cited in Perry, 1991:725]). This saying of the *Bodhisattva* of Compassion means that *nirvāna* is *samsāra*, and that *samsāra* is *nirvāna* – a most concise and elliptical expression of Buddhist ‘non-duality’. The perspective of non-dualism is represented most directly within Christianity by such luminaries as St. Dionysius the Areopagite, Meister Eckhart, and Angelus Silesius (many of whose sayings appear in the quotations listed). See Perry (1991:978-986) on the universal provenance of the non-dual thesis of the nature of reality.

<sup>66</sup> The doctrine of the ‘oneness of knowledge’ is further elucidated by Frithjof Schuon in the following passages: “[T]he Intellect...is only ‘human’ to the extent that it is accessible to [the human being]...but it is not so in itself [in which case it is]...*increateus et increabile* (Meister Eckhart) [uncreate and uncreatable, i.e. Divine]” (Schuon, 1984a:93); “The Intellect, in a certain sense, is ‘divine’ for the mind and ‘created’ or ‘manifested’ for God: it is [thus]...necessary to distinguish between a ‘created Intellect’ and an ‘uncreated Intellect’, the latter being the Divine Light and the former the reflection of this Light at the center of [universal] Existence; ‘essentially’, they are One, but ‘existentially’, they are distinct, so that [it could be said]...that the Intellect is ‘neither divine nor non-divine’...[The Intellect], while being ‘crystallized’ according to different [ontological] planes of reflection, is none the less ‘divine’ in its single essence”

as follows:

[The] Intellect, which is One [or non-dual], presents itself in three fundamental aspects...first, the Divine Intellect, which is Light and pure Act; secondly, the [macro]cosmic [or Universal] Intellect, which is a receptacle or mirror in relation to God and light in relation to man; and thirdly, the human [or microcosmic] Intellect, which is a mirror in relation to both of the foregoing and light in relation to the individual soul...[But] intelligence as such – whether it be the intelligence of a man conforming to truth or that of a plant causing it irresistibly to turn towards the light – ‘is’ the Intelligence of God; intelligence is only ‘human’ or ‘vegetable’ in relation to specific [degrees of ontological] limitation” (1990a:65-66; See also Schuon, 1987:141; 1993a:55-57; 1994b:178; and H. Smith, 1993:6).

The question must now be asked: is the non-dualistic knowledge conferred in “metaphysical intellection” (Schuon, 1995a:41) of the same nature as the mystical experience? Here it is to be noted that the Traditionalist school show themselves rather averse to the use of such terms as “mystic”, “mystical”, and “mysticism”; for as Frithjof Schuon says, the terms readily “lend themselves...to misuse by being applied to everything inward or intuitive at whatever level [i.e. the psychic, or the spiritual]” (1975:2), in addition to suggesting something that is merely subjective or irrational<sup>67</sup>.

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(Schuon, 1990a:80). It must be emphasized that the ‘essential’ (or ‘principal’) unity of the Divine and the human Intellect is in no wise a ‘substantial’ (or quasi-material) identity. In this regard, Frithjof Schuon maintains that the saying of Meister Eckhart – “There is something in the soul that is uncreate and uncreatable...and this is the Intellect” – is erroneous “when not regarded as elliptical...by reason of the fact that it seems to affirm a pure and simple immanentism [i.e. the human being as individual ‘is’ God]. In reality [however] it implicitly affirms the created intellect as the vehicle of the uncreated Intellect, but it does not put this into words since spiritual vision is ‘vertical’ and ‘essential’ and not ‘horizontal’ and ‘analogical’ ” (1987:171). The same principle, says Schuon, may be applied to the Hindu saying from the *Advaita Vedānta*: “He [the delivered one] is *Brahman*” (i.e. *Cit* – the Divine Intellect).

<sup>67</sup> In this connection, the term “mystical experience” has the disadvantage of suggesting a merely personal and subjective state susceptible of no matter what illusion, or delusion; whereas the Intellect (*Nous*) and metaphysical intellection (*noēsis*) suggest – or should suggest – a rigorously ‘objective’ apprehension of

According to Schuon, in the “German [language] the word *Mystik* has the [acceptable] meaning of spirituality whereas *Mystizismus* means only a play of fantasies...[whilst] in French *Mystique* refers to true and *Mysticisme* refers to false mysticism” (1987:89n)<sup>68</sup>. In addition, says Schuon, the term “mysticism”, being of European provenance<sup>69</sup>, thereby has the drawback of suggesting a particular type of esotericism characteristic of the West: namely a love-based mysticism (Hindu *bhakti-mārga*) – often of an individualist and sentimentalist kind<sup>70</sup> (See Schuon, 1979b:187-206) – largely devoid of elements of a purely ‘intellectual’ order, i.e. elements pertaining to the Intellect and to metaphysical intellection; which last characterize the way of knowledge (Hindu *jñāna-mārga*) properly so-called<sup>71</sup> (Schuon, 1975:2-3; 1987:89n; and Burckhardt, 1995a:21-22).<sup>72</sup>

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supra-formal degrees of Reality (Celestial or Divine), to which they are fully adequate (Latin: *adaequatio*) epistemologically.

<sup>68</sup> “[The term] ‘mysticism’...may [conceivably] be applied to [amongst other things] the unintelligible statements of an illogical speaker, the strained visions of a schizophrenic, hallucinations or drug-induced visions, the spiritual visions of a Julian of Norwich or a Mechtilde of Magdeburg, and the quiet experiences of a divine ‘darkness’ or emptiness as described by a Meister Eckhart or a Zen *roshi*” (Forman, 1990a:5).

<sup>69</sup> The word “mysticism” derives from the Old French *mystique*, itself from the Latin, which in turn is from the Greek *mustikos* (*mustēs*, initiated person, from *muō*, to close the eyes or lips) (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The lips of the initiate were sealed for two reasons: firstly, to illustrate the ineffability of the supra-rational knowledge of the Divinity attained in the ‘mysteries’; and secondly, not to “give...that which is holy [knowledge of the Divinity] unto the dogs [the exotericists]”; neither to cast the ‘pearls’ of sacred knowledge before the exotericist ‘swine’ (*St. Matthew*, VII, 6; See Lord Northbourne, 1963:9-11).

<sup>70</sup> According to Titus Burckhardt, “the word ‘mysticism’ – and also the word ‘mystical’ – has been abused [vis-à-vis its etymological meaning, given above] and extended to cover religious manifestations which [as opposed to authentic mysticism] are strongly marked with individualistic subjectivity and governed by a mentality which does not look beyond the horizons of exotericism” (1995a:21).

<sup>71</sup> “It is interesting to note”, says William Stoddart, “that, historically speaking, Christian mysticism has been characterized in the main by the ‘way of love’, whereas Hindu mysticism (like Islamic mysticism) comprises both the ‘way of love’ and the ‘way of knowledge’. Those who, by way of exception, have manifested the ‘way of knowledge’ in Christianity include such great figures as Dionysius the Areopagite, Meister Eckhart and Angelus Silesius. It is precisely the writings of ‘gnostics’ or *jñānins* such as these that

Nevertheless, say the Traditionalists, the word “mysticism” has a legitimate acceptance if it refers – as it did for the Fathers of the early Church such as Clement of Alexandria

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have tended to cause ripples in the generally devotional or ‘bhaktic’ climate of Christianity” (1993:51; See also Schuon, 1993a:138-143).

<sup>72</sup> The Traditionalist school more readily speaks of “esotericism” than of “mysticism” (it should be noted that the terms “esotericism” and “esoterism” are more or less interchangeable in Traditionalist circles; See Stoddart, 1985:17 on the usage of these two terms); which former term has the advantage of being less restrictive in meaning than the term “mysticism”. “[E]soterism”, says Frithjof Schuon, “coincides with...gnosis [Hindu: *jñāna*; the ‘way of knowledge’]”, whilst also incorporating within its scope the subordinate “dimension of volitive and emotional mysticism of the type of Hindu *bhakti* [the ‘way of love’]” (1975:2), whereas the term “mysticism” appears to make the ‘way of love’ normative in relation to the ‘way of knowledge’ (Burckhardt, 1995a:21-22). Esotericism, it must be said, designates the ‘inward’ dimension of religion (i.e. its ‘spirit’, or ‘heart’), in contradistinction to its ‘outward’ complement (i.e. the ‘letter’, or the ‘body’), which is “exotericism” (cf. *II Corinthians*, III, 6). William Stoddart has summarized the relationship between exotericism and esotericism as follows: “[T]he outward religion, or ‘exoterism’...may be likened to the circumference of a circle. The inner Truth, or ‘esoterism’, that lies at the heart of the religion...may be likened to the circle’s center. The radius proceeding from circumference to center represents the mystical or ‘initiativ’ path...that leads from outward observance to inner conviction, from belief to vision” (1985:20). Within the major religious traditions, this exoteric-esoteric distinction manifests (roughly) as follows: Judaism (*Talmud/Qabbalah*); Islam (*Sharī’ah/Tarīqah*); Buddhism (*Theravāda/Mahāyāna*); the Chinese Tradition (Confucianism/ Philosophical Taoism [*Tao Chia*]). In Christianity (as in Islamic *Shī’ism*) a providential ‘mixing’ of the exoteric and esoteric domains has occurred (symbolized – at the time of the death of Christ – by the rending of the veil of the Temple such that the boundary between the [exoteric] main building and the [esoteric] Holy of Holies was removed; cf. *St. Matthew*, XXVII, 61); by which fact it may be described as having an “eso-exoteric” structure (Pallis, 1999:117; 140; See also Schuon, 1993a:126-148; and R. Coomaraswamy, 1999b:113-116 for a discussion of this point). In Hinduism the distinction between the exoteric (*karma-mārga*) and esoteric (*bhakti-mārga*, and especially *jñāna-mārga*) modalities of religion is represented in the scriptural (*sruti*) distinction between the lower knowledge (*aparā vidyā*) of ritual and legal concerns; and the higher knowledge (*parā vidyā*) of *Brahman* (cf. *Mundaka Upanishad*, I, I, 4-6; See Deutsch, 1973:81-97; and Stoddart, 1991:90-91; 1993:49-53; For a fuller discussion of the exoteric-esoteric distinction within religion, see Schuon, 1993a:7-60; 138-139; Guénon, 1999b:9-19; 1999c:21-26; 2000:158-167; Lord Northbourne, 1963:9-11; Stoddart, 1979:215-217; 1985:19-21; Pallis, 1999:117-145; and Nasr, 1989:76-78).

(160-217 C.E.), Origen, St. Basil (329-379 C.E.), St. John Chrysostom (347-407 C.E.), and St. Dionysius the Areopagite – to a *gnōsis* attained in the ‘mysteries’<sup>73</sup> (Burckhardt, 1995a:21; Schuon, 1993a:137-138; 143-144; 159-163; 1999:45n; and G.E.H. Palmer, in Schuon, 1990a:30n); which *gnōsis* incorporates both an element of (i) direct knowledge of the Divinity by the Intellect; and (ii) an existential union of the contemplative soul with the said Divinity (Schuon, 1994b:179-180; 1995a:15; 18; 20-21; 151-154; 1997:173-175; Stoddart, 1991:89-90).<sup>74</sup> It will now be seen that the first sense of the term *gnōsis* refers to the direct knowledge of the Intellect through “metaphysical intellection” (Schuon, 1995a:41)<sup>75</sup>; whereas the second sense of the term *gnōsis* refers to the

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<sup>73</sup> The term ‘mysteries’ here denotes esoteric knowledge of the Divinity – in whatever orthodox religious tradition it may occur – and does not refer exclusively to the Greek ‘mysteries’ at Delphi or Eleusis, or to the Christian ‘mysteries’ of, for example, the Trinity or transubstantiation.

<sup>74</sup> Frithjof Schuon has defined the words “mystical” and “mysticism” in accordance with this dual understanding of the term *gnōsis*. They refer, he says, to a “supra-rational communication [by both the Intellect, and the contemplative soul] with Divinity” (Schuon, 1987:89n); and again, to an “inward contact (other than the purely mental [i.e. by the supra-mental Intellect, and the contemplative soul]) with realities that are directly or indirectly Divine” (Schuon, 1975:2; See also Schuon, 1975:204n). These last words – it will be noted – emphasize the innumerable degrees and modalities of contemplative union.

<sup>75</sup> “[Metaphysical] intellection is not the whole of gnosis, which includes the mysteries of union [i.e. spiritual realization through the ‘mystical path’ and the ‘mystical experience’] and opens out directly onto the Infinite... Total gnosis goes immensely beyond all that appears in man as intelligence [i.e. the Intellect and reason] precisely because it is an incommensurable mystery of ‘being’... [This is] the whole difference between vision and realization; in the latter, ‘seeing’ becomes ‘being’ and our existence is transmuted into light” (Schuon, 1994b:180; See Stoddart, 1991:89-90); and “[T]he intellect, which is a mirror [that reflects transcendent Reality], must not be confused with spiritual realization, thanks to which our being, and not merely our thought, participates in the [transcendent] objects which the mirror reflects. The mirror [i.e. the intellect] is horizontal, while realization is vertical” (Schuon, 1995a:20). Frithjof Schuon, however, warns against the dangers of an anti-metaphysical “‘realizationism’ or ‘ecstatism’”: namely the mystical prejudice – rather widespread in India – which has it that only ‘realization’ or [mystical] ‘states’ count in spirituality. The partisans of this opinion oppose ‘concrete realization’ to ‘vain thought’ and they too easily imagine that with ecstasy all is won; they forget that without the doctrines – beginning with the Vedanta! – they



“ontological transmutation” (Schuon, 1994b:180) of the ‘being’ through the “mystical path” and the “mystical experience”<sup>76</sup> (Stoddart, 1991:90); and that whilst metaphysical intellection is concerned with transcendent and “universal realities considered objectively”<sup>77</sup> (Schuon, 1975:204n), mystical experience is concerned with those same transcendent and “universal realities ...considered subjectively”<sup>78</sup>, that is, in relation to the contemplative soul” (Schuon, 1975:204n).

To recapitulate: for the Traditionalist school a subtle distinction exists between (i) the metaphysical intellection (*noēsis*) of the Intellect (*Nous*); and (ii) *gnōsis*: the former refers to a unitive knowledge of transcendent Reality that is altogether beyond the scission of subject and object (Schuon, 1995a:15); whilst the latter, in addition to referring to this aforesaid supra-rational knowledge, *also* includes the existential realization of this transcendent Reality through an “ontological transmutation” of the whole being (and not merely the supra-individual intelligence) via the “mysteries of union [i.e. by ‘mystical

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would not even exist [for how would they know what to realize?]; and it also happens that a subjective realization – founded on the idea of the immanent ‘Self’ – greatly has need of the objective element that is the Grace of the personal God, without forgetting the concurrence of [the religious] tradition” (1995b:9). It should also be recalled that whilst the intellect is “horizontal” in relation to spiritual realization, the reason – and indeed all the faculties of the individual soul, i.e. intuition, memory, imagination, will, and sentiment – are “horizontal” in relation to the supra-individual Intellect.

<sup>76</sup> The mystical experience typically denotes: (i) phenomena of grace such as visions, auditions, raptures, ecstasy etc. (See Schuon, 1981b:211-218 for an elementary criteriology of celestial apparitions [visions]; as also for details on ecstasy; See also Schuon, 1987:133 on the question of auditions); and (ii) inward contemplative states such as *nirvikalpa samādhi*, *mushinjo*, *gezucket* etc. (Forman, 1990a:5-7; 98-120).

<sup>77</sup> Metaphysics is the “doctrine concerning God or Ultimate Reality” (Stoddart, 1991:90); and “Mystical doctrine”, says William Stoddart, “is one and the same as metaphysics or mystical theology” (Stoddart, 1991:90).

<sup>78</sup> “Subjectively”: i.e. pertaining to the subject, and not necessarily to a lack of objectivity.

experience’]” (Schuon, 1994b:179-180; See also, 1995a:18; 20-21). Thus, *noēsis* refers to the direct ‘knowing’, ‘vision’, or ‘contemplation’ of the Truth in metaphysical intellection; whereas *gnōsis* refers to this, as *also* to ‘being’, ‘realizing’, or attaining to ‘union’ with that Reality in the mystical experience. Or in other words, *noēsis* refers to “know[ing] That [transcendent Reality] which alone is”; whereas *gnōsis* refers to this, as *also* to being “That [immanent Self] which alone knows” (Schuon, 1995a:154; See also Schuon, 1994b:180; 1995a:151-154; 1997:173-175; and Stoddart, 1991:89-90 for a fuller elucidation of the above distinction).<sup>79</sup>

It is only in the ‘way of knowledge’<sup>80</sup>, however, that *both* metaphysical intellection (‘knowing’) and mystical experience (‘being’) play an operative role; for in the ‘way of love’ – where the pure intelligence (*Nous*, or *Intellectus*) is reduced to reason (*ratio*) –

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<sup>79</sup> This same distinction is present within *Mahāyāna* Buddhism as: *dhyāna*, or contemplative ‘vision’; and *prajñā*, or realizational union – the fifth and sixth of the ‘transcendental virtues’ (*pāramitās*), respectively (Schuon, 1993b:138-143; and Stoddart, 1998:61). In the Hindu *Advaita Vedānta*, contemplative ‘vision’ corresponds to *viveka* (discrimination between the Real and the illusory); whilst realizational union corresponds to *samādhi* (See the *Vivekachudamani* of Shri Shankarāchārya [1994:15; C. Johnston trans.]). In the Christianity of St. Dionysius the Areopagite (traditionally, the disciple of St. Paul [1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.]; See *Acts*, XVII, 34), contemplative ‘vision’ corresponds to *photismos* (‘illumination’); whilst realizational union corresponds to *henosis* (‘union’ with the Divinity; See Louth, 1981:163n). In Islam, contemplative ‘vision’ corresponds to the Sufi station (*maqām*) of the “eye of certainty” (‘*ayn al-yaqīn*’); whilst realizational union corresponds to the station of the “truth of certainty” (*haqq al-yaqīn*; See Abū Bakr Sirāj ad-Dīn, 1992:1-11; 17-19 for an explication of these two degrees of knowledge [*ma’rifah*] in Islamic Sufism). The term *gnōsis* – of Greek provenance, and used by early Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria (c.150-220 C.E.) – has the following approximate equivalents in other religious traditions: *jñāna* (Hinduism); *prajñā* (Buddhism); *hokhmah* (Judaism); *sapientia* (Latin Christianity); *ma’rifah* (Islam) (See Nasr, 1989:1-64).

<sup>80</sup> The ‘way of knowledge’ (Hindu: *jñāna-mārga*; Islamic: *ma’rifa*) refers to the ‘non-dualistic’ perspective of *gnōsis* as manifest in no matter which of the intrinsically orthodox religions of the world.

access to direct transcendent knowledge is through the grace of the mystical experience alone<sup>81</sup> – and not through the certitude conferred by metaphysical intellection<sup>82</sup> of the

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<sup>81</sup> “In the path of love (the Hindu *bhakti-mārga*, the *mahabbah* of Sufism), the speculative faculty [i.e. the Intellect, whose function is ‘to contemplate transcendent Realities’ (Schuon, 1997:128)] – which by definition is of the intellectual order – does not play a preponderant part, as is the case in the way of knowledge ([the Hindu] *jñāna-mārga*, [the] *ma’rifah* [of Sufism]); the ‘lover’ – the *bhakta* – must obtain everything by means of love and by Divine Grace [i.e. by ‘mystical experience’]” (Schuon, 1997:125; See also Schuon, 1979b:187-206; 1995b:79-86). This limitation of the intelligence by the *bhakta*, is explained by Frithjof Schuon as follows: “[I]n order to love [as the *bhakta* is inclined by nature], one must limit, or rather, one must direct one’s attention to one sole aspect of Reality, the consideration of integral Truth [by the disinterested Intellect] being more or less incompatible with the subjectivism of an exclusivist love...in short, the perspective of the *bhakta* comprises inevitable limitations due to the subjective and emotional character of the ‘bhaktic’ method” (1997:126). Consequently, “in matters of doctrine, the *bhakta* has nothing to resolve by means of the intelligence alone, it is the entire religion that ‘thinks’ for him, by means of all the symbols – scriptural and other – it possesses” (Schuon, 1997:126). Now, the ‘way of knowledge’ is sovereign in relation to the ‘way of love’ because “the goal of spiritual realization cannot go beyond the span of the field of vision [of a particular perspective], just as in an equilateral triangle the height of the apex depends on the length of the base; [now] *bhaktic* doctrine cannot lead as if by chance to the goal envisaged by *jñāna*; an anthropomorphic and individualist ‘mythology’ or a ‘passional’ mysticism excludes a final objective lying beyond the cosmic realm [i.e. beyond supra-formal manifestation: the realm of the Angels, of the Spirit, and of the Celestial Paradise]” (Schuon, 1995a:20-21). The more limited *bhaktic* span of vision is explained by William Stoddart as follows: “In the Way of Love, God is envisaged at the level of ‘Being’ [i.e. the personal God: Creator, Sustainer, Judge etc.]; this has as consequence that, however sublime the mystic’s state, Lord and worshipper remain distinct [See Schuon, 1975:209-216 where the irreducible distinction between the servant and the Lord is elucidated; and also 1987:170-171]. In the Way of Knowledge, on the other hand, God is envisaged as ‘Beyond Being’ [i.e. as the ‘unconditioned’ supra-personal Divinity: the Absolute, Infinite, Perfection ever beyond the limiting realm of words]; at this level, it is perceived that Lord and worshipper share a common essence, and this opens up the possibility of ultimate [and not merely partial] Divine Union” (1991:91; See also Schuon, 1990a:38-55; 1997:121-133; and Stoddart, 1979:222-223 on the distinction between the ‘way of knowledge’ and the ‘way of love’; See also Appendix 1 on the crucial distinction – particular to the ‘way of [non-dualistic] knowledge’ – between ‘Beyond Being’ and ‘Being’). This – in summary form – is the traditional argument for the superiority of the non-dualistic ‘way of knowledge’ over against the dualistic ‘way of love’ (and *a fortiori* the exotericist ‘way of works’).

Intellect. This difference of perspective – between a mysticism of ‘love’ (Hindu: *bhakti-mārga*) and a mysticism of ‘knowledge’ (Hindu: *jñāna-mārga*) – is illustrated in the following event from the life of Ramakrishna, the great Hindu saint of *bhaktic* orientation: “The saint”, says Frithjof Schuon, “wished to understand the identity between gold and clay [mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, VI, 8]”:

...every morning, for many long months, I [i.e. Ramakrishna] held in my hand a piece of money and a lump of clay and repeated: *gold is clay and clay is gold*. But this thought brought no spiritual work into operation within me; nothing came to prove to me the truth of such a statement. After I know not how many months of meditation, I was sitting one morning at dawn on the bank of the river, imploring our Mother [*Kālī*] to enlighten me. All of a sudden the whole universe appeared before my eyes clothed in a sparkling mantle of gold...Then the landscape

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<sup>82</sup> A question may legitimately be asked: If metaphysical intellection provides “absolute certainty” (Schuon, 1995a:21), why is there ever any disagreement amongst proponents of the ‘way of knowledge’? The Traditionalist answer is provided by Frithjof Schuon, who notes that “intellectual intuition [i.e. absolute certainty] may operate only within certain ‘dimensions’ of the spirit, according to given modes or within given domains; [i.e.] the intelligence may be centered [only] on some particular aspect of the real” (1995a:21). This ‘restriction’, says Schuon has three possible causes: “[i] lack of intelligence, [ii] lack of information and [iii] lack of virtue” (1995a:21). In the first instance, a lack of intellectual ‘plasticity’ prohibits the intelligence from operating ‘fluidly’ within a particular field; in the second instance, a lack of factual information compromises the judgement of the intelligence on a particular matter; and in the third instance, a moral defect (i.e. a fault of character) on the “periphery of the intellective subject” (Schuon, 1995a:21) “burdens” or “falsifies” the intellectual pronouncement (Schuon, 1995a:21-22; See also 1994a:15). Now, it should be noted that the first cause applies less directly to representative practitioners of the ‘way of knowledge’, than it does to practitioners of the ‘way of love’ and the ‘way of works’; and the third cause cannot – by definition – apply to the innumerable saints (of whatever intrinsically orthodox tradition) who have attained to the spiritual degree of primordial perfection. It is, above all, by the second cause that disagreement has arisen amongst metaphysicians of the past: here, however, it is within the altogether relative domain of the contingent application of principles, where indeed “a man may always be ignorant of facts”; but the disagreement can never apply to “the plane of pure principles which alone have an absolutely decisive bearing” (Schuon, 1994b:179n-180n). It is this relative ignorance of facts that, for example, explains the negative attitude of Shri Shankarācharyā vis-à-vis Buddhism (See Schuon, 1990c:135-136), and of St. Bernard (1091-1153 C.E.) – he who preached the second Crusade – vis-à-vis Islam (See Schuon, 1993a:36-37).

took on a duller glow, the colour of brown clay... And while this vision engraved itself deeply on my soul, I heard a sound like the trumpeting of more than ten thousand elephants who clamoured in my ear: *clay and gold are but one thing for you*. My prayers were answered, and I threw far away into the Ganges the piece of gold and the lump of clay (Romain Rolland, *La vie de Ramakrishna*; Cited in Schuon, 1993a:139n-140n; See also 1997:125n).

Now, according to Schuon, “instead of starting out from a metaphysical datum that would have enabled him [Ramakrishna] to perceive the vanity of riches, as a *jñānin* [such as Shri Shankarāchārya] would have done”, the *paramahansa*<sup>83</sup> of Dakshineswar “kept praying to [the goddess] *Kālī* to cause him to understand this identity by revelation [i.e. by a mystical experience]” (1993a:139n). And it is herein that the distinctive difference between the *bhaktic* and the *jñānic* “spiritual epistemology” (Schuon, 1986:9) becomes evident: the former admits of a transcendent knowledge only in the grace of a mystical experience that penetrates the very ‘being’ of the person – apart from the knowledge disclosed in Revelation; whilst the latter allows of a direct, and immediate supra-rational knowledge of Divinity by the Intellect and metaphysical intellection; in addition to the said Revelation, and the mystical experience<sup>84</sup> (Schuon, 1995a:38-39; 1997:125-130).

This doctrine of the non-duality of Knowledge – associated with the ‘way of knowledge’, and based primarily on the direct apprehension of the Intellect and

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<sup>83</sup> *Paramahansa* is “an honorific title for *gurus* and advanced *yogīs*”, meaning “supreme swan” – a symbol of “the highest spiritual accomplishment [of] a perfectly liberated one” (Werner, 1994:118).

<sup>84</sup> In the ‘way of knowledge’, the mystical experience (within the setting of a traditional and orthodox ‘mystical path’) plays the role of an existential ‘verification’ and ‘realization’ – by the contemplative soul – of that Reality which the Intellect has directly apprehended in metaphysical intellection (Stoddart, 1991:90). And this is the aforesaid movement from metaphysical ‘vision’ to mystical ‘realization’, i.e. from ‘knowing’ to ‘being’ (See Schuon, 1994b:180-183).

metaphysical intellection – is attested to in numerous texts from the most diverse religious traditions. Following is a list of quotations<sup>85</sup> from the ‘Egyptian’, Greek, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions, respectively, such as affirm the ultimate identity of the knower and known in the higher knowledge of metaphysical intellection:

“If then you do not make yourself equal to God, you cannot apprehend God; for like is known by like.” – Hermes

“God is like none else, wherefore none can know him thoroughly from a likeness.”<sup>86</sup> – Antisthenes (fl. 400 B.C.E.)

“Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike, and never can the soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful.” – Plotinus

“God is His own brightness and is discerned through Himself alone...The seekers for truth are those who envisage God through God, light through light.” – Philo (fl. late 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E.)

“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the

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<sup>85</sup> Taken from Perry (1991).

<sup>86</sup> To know God from a “likeness” is to know Him by the dualistic process of *ratio-nality* alone (i.e. God is ‘known’ by comparing him to a ‘likeness’ that is already known). But this is not to know him “thoroughly” – i.e. *without* ‘likeness’ and directly in the *Nous*, or *Intellectus*. For St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *cataphatic* theology (the ascription of ‘likenesses’ to God) is preparatory for the more advanced *apophatic* theology (the withdrawal of ‘likenesses’ from the *Deus absconditus*). In the *Celestial Hierarchy*, he expresses this distinction as follows: “[I]n things divine, affirmation is less right and negation more true” (cited in Burckhardt, 1995:46). These two perspectives may be found, respectively, in his *The Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology* (1987:47-141). The rationale behind the *apophatic* form of theology is that the Divinity in Its Innermost Essence is without any restriction whatever; and to ascribe names and qualities to It, is to limit Its very Illimitability (or Infinitude). See Perry (1991:975-978) on the universal provenance of the *via negativa*.

Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”<sup>87</sup> – *St. Matthew*, XI, 27

“He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.” – *St. John*, VIII, 47

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” – *St. John*, XIV, 26

“When he, the Spirit of Truth,<sup>88</sup> is come, he will guide you into all truth.” – *St. John*, XVI, 13

“The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”<sup>89</sup> – *I Corinthians*, II, 11

“Therefore, if God’s essence is to be seen at all, it must be that the intellect sees it through the divine essence itself; so that in that vision the divine essence is both the object and the medium of vision.” – St. Thomas Aquinas

“Knowledge comes about insofar as the object known is within the knower.” – St.

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<sup>87</sup> “In the perspective of gnosis, Christ, ‘Light of the world’, is the universal [and Divine] Intellect, [whilst] the Word [i.e. the Logos] is the ‘Wisdom of the Father’ [*Sophia*]. Christ is the Intellect of microcosms...the Intellect in us [i.e. as the ‘Eye of the Heart’] (‘The Word was the true Light, which lighteth every man...’ – John, I, 9) as well as the Intellect...in God” (Schuon, 1990a:105). The saying “neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him”, means that the Son allows the human being to know the Father by illumination of the ‘Eye of the Heart’. In other words, the Divine Intellect (or Wisdom – the Son) illuminates the human Intellect and allows it to know God (the Father). The eighth Beatitude of the Sermon of the Mount – “blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (*St. Matthew*, V, 8) – will be recalled here.

<sup>88</sup> The *Paraclete*, or Comforter – the Holy Spirit (See *St. John*, XIV, 26, below). In terms of Christian gnosis, the Holy Spirit is both the Uncreated and created Intellect, i.e. the Divine Intellect and human Intellect, respectively (See Frithjof Schuon, 1997:7n; and Titus Burckhardt, 1995:24n).

<sup>89</sup> St. Paul adds, however, that “God has revealed them [‘the things of God’] unto us by his Spirit”; and that humanity has received “the Spirit which is of God; that [they]...might know...[the] spiritual things...of God” (*I Corinthians*, II, 10-13). This is clear evidence of the non-dual knowledge of God by participative ‘illumination’ from God.

Thomas Aquinas

"To rise up to this intellect and to subject oneself to it means to be united with God. To be unified, or to be one with it [the Intellect], is to be one with God; for God is one, being pure intellect" – Meister Eckhart (cited in Pietsch, 1979:160).

"The eye that I see God with is the same eye God sees me with. My eye and God's eye are one and the same." – Meister Eckhart (Cited in Loy, 1988:38)

"The knower and the known are one. Simple people imagine that they should see God, as if He stood there and they here. This is not so. God and I...are one in knowledge." – Meister Eckhart (Cited in Huxley, 1946:19)

"God is intelligence occupied with knowing itself." – Meister Eckhart

"He who knows the Truth,<sup>90</sup> knows that I am speaking the truth." – Meister Eckhart

"...That Supreme Deity who alone doth perfectly behold Himself." – Dante (*Il Convito*, II, IV, 1)

"There [in Heaven, or Paradise] what we hold by faith shall be beheld, not demonstrated, but self-known in fashion of the initial truth which man believeth." – Dante (*Paradiso*, II, 43)

"O Light eternal who only in thyself abidest, only thyself dost understand, and self-understood, self-understanding, turnest love on and smilest at thyself!" – Dante [1265-1321 C.E.] (*Paradiso*, XXXIII, 124)

"And thus shalt thou know knittingly, and in a manner that is marvellous, worship God with himself." – *The Epistle of Privy Counsel*, IV

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<sup>90</sup> This is the Absolute Truth of which Meister Eckhart could say: "What is truth? Truth is something so noble that if God could turn aside from it, I could keep to the truth and let God go." (1996:3 [ed. D. O'Neal]). He added, however, that the question does not arise, because God *is* Truth.



“Wot thou well God alone knows Himself.” – Richard Rolle (d. 1349)

“Thus saith the prophet: *Domine, in lumine tuo videbimus lumen*. Lord, we shall see Thy light by Thy light (*Psalms*, XXXVI, 9).” – Walter Hilton

“God can be known only by God.”<sup>91</sup> – *Theologia Germanica*, XLII.

“Nothing but truth itself can be the exact measure of truth.” – Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464 C.E.)

“God alone knows Himself.” – Nicholas of Cusa

“But he who is not true himself will not see the truth.” – Paracelsus (1493-1541 C.E.)

“God then alone most perfectly and substantially enjoyeth Himself in the contemplation

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<sup>91</sup> See also: “The Perfect [i.e. God] cannot be apprehended, known, or expressed by any creature as creature” (ch.1). These sayings of the anonymous author of the *Theologia Germanica* (14<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) appear to deny any possibility of divine knowledge to the human being. Elsewhere, however, the anonymous Frankfurter provides what is a most essential key for the interpretation of those many sayings (listed here), which ostensibly make of unitive knowledge a Divine prerogative alone: “God, who is the highest Good, willeth not to hide Himself from any, wheresoever He findeth a devout soul, that is thoroughly purified from all creatures. *For in what measure we put off the creature, in the same measure are we able to put on the Creator*; neither more nor less” (chapter 1; italics added). In other words, the “creature as creature” (i.e. as individual) cannot know God; but insofar as the creature is effaced there is only the Divinity, and whatsoever is predicated of the Divinity must also be predicated of the “creature...[who has] put off the creature.” Frithjof Schuon points out that when certain texts “speak only of the uncreated [Divine] Intellect [they] always imply the other [i.e. the created human intellect] ...implicitly” (1997:7n), such that “the Divine Intellect [then] takes possession of, or replaces, the human Intellect” (Schuon, 1975:211); and, speaking of a “Sufi saying...[that] ‘*Allāh* is known to Himself alone’ ”, Schuon remarks that “while it apparently excludes man from a direct and total knowledge [of the Divinity, it] in reality enunciates the essential and mysterious divinity of pure Intellect” (1984a:93); which exegesis, says Schuon, is based upon an oft-quoted *hadīth*, that “‘He who knows his soul knows his Lord’ ” (1984a:93). This kind of ellipsis, says Titus Burckhardt serves as “a safeguard against a [possible] ‘luciferian’ confusion of the [created] intellectual organ [the *Nous-Intellectus*] with the [uncreated] Divine Intellect” (1995a:25n). This is a most crucial point in the correct understanding the texts listed here.

of Himself, which is the *Beatifical Vision* of the most beautiful, the most blessed *Essence of Essences*. This *Act of Contemplation* is an Intellectual and *Divine Generation*, in which the Divine Essence, with an eternity of most heightened Pleasures, eternally bringeth forth it self, within it self, into an *Image* of it self.”<sup>92</sup> – Peter Sterry

“...That ineffable light whereby the Divinity comprehends its own essence, penetrating all that immensity of being which itself is.” – Peter Sterry

“It is impossible to know any thing of God aright by the *Natural Image*, except you have first the *Spiritual Image*, which is God himself form’d in your Souls.” – Peter Sterry

“He only is able to declare with spirit and power any truths or bear a faithful testimony of the reality of them who preaches nothing but what he has first seen and felt and found to be true by a living sensibility and true experience of their reality and power in his own soul.” – William Law

“So coin not similitudes for Allāh.”<sup>93</sup> Lo! Allāh knoweth; ye know not.” – *Qur’ān*, XVI, 74

<sup>92</sup> The element *Ānanda* (Bliss-Happiness-Love-Union) is here particularly evident.

<sup>93</sup> It is to be noted that the Divinity speaks here in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. This Divine injunction may appear as somewhat paradoxical, for the *Qur’ān* is replete with mention of “similitudes” – in the form of the Divine Names or Qualities. The paradox is resolved, however, by having recourse to the (metaphysical and esotericist) distinction within the Divine order, between the Divine Essence (*al-Dhāt*) and the Divine Qualities (*as-Sifāt*): the former is absolutely ‘unconditioned’ and has no ‘likeness’ whatsoever, whilst the latter (for example, the Divine Quality *ar-Rahīm* – the Merciful, or *al-Karīm* – the Generous) may be known by ‘symbolic transposition’. That is, in this ‘lower’ world mercy and generosity represent a ‘likeness’ of the Infinite Mercy and Generosity of the Divinity in the world ‘above’. The Divine Essence, however, is beyond all Divine Qualities and, thereby, beyond all ‘likenesses’. Thus, the Divine injunction to “coin not similitudes for Allāh” is an ‘invitation’ to go beyond the degree of the Divine Qualities to the Divine Essence Itself (See Appendix 1). In Christian terms, this corresponds to passing beyond the *cataphatic via affirmativa* of the Divine Qualities (or ‘Energies’), in order to ‘realize’ the *apophatic via negativa* of the Divine Essence. In Hinduism a distinction is made between *Nirguna Brahman* (‘without qualities’) and *Saguna Brahman* (‘with qualities’) (See Burckhardt, 1983:xiii-xvii; 1995:55-57; 115; ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jīlī, 1983:3-8; 12-16; Stoddart, 1993:15-16; and Huxley, 1946:29-44 for an elucidation of this

"I know God by God,"<sup>94</sup> and I know that which is not God by the light of God." – 'Ali (600-661 C.E.)

"They (the Sufis) are agreed that the only guide to God is God Himself." – Al-Kalābādhī (d. c. 1000 C.E.)

"He (Dhu 'l-Nūn al-Misrī [d. 859 C.E.]) said, 'Real knowledge is God's illumination of the heart with the pure radiance of knowledge,' i.e. the sun can be seen only by the light of the sun." – 'Attār (d. 1229)

"He knows Himself by Himself." – Ibn al-'Arabī (Cited in Burckhardt, 1995a:28)

"[T]he knower and that which he knows are both one...[the] seer and seen are one." – Ibn al-'Arabī (1976:17)

"When the spirit became lost in contemplation, it said this:

'None but God has contemplated the beauty of God.' " – *Dīvāni Shamsi Tabrīz*, XXIII

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distinction in *Divinis*). It will be recalled that to know the Divinity by "similitude" (or likeness) is to know It (at the level of Divine Qualities) through the indirect and dualistic rational faculty alone; whilst to know the Divinity without "similitude" (or likeness) is to know It (at the level of the Divine Essence) directly in the *Nous-Intellectus*.

<sup>94</sup> "Platonic recollection [*anamnesis*] is none other than the participation of the human Intellect in the ontological insights of the Divine Intellect; this is why the Sufi is said to be '*ārīf bi' Llāh*', 'knower by [or through] *Allāh*', in keeping with the teaching of a famous *hadīth* [*qudsī*] according to which God is the 'Eye wherewith he (the Sufi) seeth'; and this explains the nature of the 'Eye of Knowledge', or the 'Eye of the Heart' " (Schuon, 1981b:233). The *hadīth qudsī* refer to extra-*Qur'ānic* sayings of the Divinity, and are to be distinguished from the *hadīth shurafā* (noble sayings), where the Prophet of Islam speaks only as a human individual (See Abū Bakr Sirāj ad-Dīn, 1992:3n). The full text of the abovementioned *hadīth qudsī* reads: "Nothing is more pleasing to Me [God], as a means for My slave to draw near unto Me, than worship which I have made binding upon him [i.e. obligatory actions]; and My slave ceaseth not to draw near unto Me with added devotions of his free will until I love him; and when I love him I am the Hearing wherewith he heareth and the Sight wherewith he seeth and the Hand whereby he graspeth and the Foot whereon he walketh" (Bukhārī, *Riqāq*, 37, cited in Lings, 1981:74). This is the very definition of the "Supreme Identity" or Union.

“The proof of the sun is the sun: if thou require the proof do not avert thy face!” – Rūmī

“His [God’s] eye for mine, what a goodly recompense!” – Rūmī (Cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1989:53)

“Only when thou realizest that thou art That which knows, will knowledge be truly thine; and then thy certitude will have no further need of confirmations, for the quality (*as-sīfa*) is inseparable from its subject” – Jīlī

“Whosoever is wise derives his wisdom from the Divine wisdom. Wherever intelligence is found it is the fruit of the Divine intelligence.” – Jāmī (d. 1492 C.E.)

“He is the unseen Seer, the unheard Hearer, the unthought Thinker, the uncomprehended Comprehensor. Other than He there is no seer. Other than He there is no hearer. Other than He there is no thinker. Other than He there is no comprehensor. He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.” – *Bṛihad-Āraṇyaka Upanishad*, III, vii, 23

“O Supreme Being, O Source of beings, O Lord of beings, O God of gods, O Ruler of the universe, Thou Thyself alone knowest Thyself by Thyself.” – *Bhagavad Gita*, X, 15

“*Brahman* knows *Brahman*, and is established in Its own Self.” – *Yoga Vasishta*.

“Knowledge is seeing the oneness of the Self [*Ātmā*] with God.” – *Srimad Bhagavatam*, XI, xii

“The division into knower, knowing, known, exists not in the higher Self [*Ātmā*].” – Shṛī Shankarāchārya (1994:115 [*Ātmā-bodha*, 40])

“Just as one light does not depend on another in order to be revealed, so, what is one’s own nature does not depend on anything else (i.e., being of the nature of Knowledge the Self does not require another knowledge in order to be known).” – Shṛī Shankarāchārya

“If someone asks you what ghee is like, your answer will be, ‘Ghee is like ghee.’ The only analogy for *Brahman* is *Brahman*.”<sup>95</sup> – Shrī Rāmākrishna

“The Self [*Ātma*] is self-effulgent. One need give it no mental picture... The thought that imagines is itself bondage, because the Self is the Effulgence transcending darkness and light [i.e. the Self is ‘non-dualistic’ whilst the mind – or thought – is ‘dualistic’]; one should not think of it with the mind. Such imagination will end in bondage, whereas the Self is spontaneously shining as the Absolute. This enquiry into the Self<sup>96</sup> in the form of devotional meditation, evolves into the state of [non-dualistic] absorption of the mind into the Self and leads to Liberation.” – Shrī Rāmāna Mahārshi

“A Buddha alone is able to understand what is in the mind of another Buddha.” –  
*Aggana Suttanta*

“By no one may the Innate be explained,  
In no place may it be found.”<sup>97</sup> – *Hevajratrastra*, I<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *Brahman* is All-in-All or Infinite. Consequently, nothing is able to stand outside of It, in order to objectivize, or describe It. Concerning *Brahman*, it may be recalled that Shrī Shankarāchārya says – in his *Stanza on the Yellow Robe* (for *sannyāsīs*, or renunciates) – “Singing *Brahma[n]*, the word of Deliverance, meditating uniquely on ‘I am *Brahma[n]*’ [*aham Brahmāsmi*], living on alms and wandering freely, blessed, certainly, is the wearer of the ochre robe” (cited in Schuon, 1995a:125n).

<sup>96</sup> The Mahārishi here alludes to the spiritual method he advocated, of enquiry into the Self (*ātmā-vichara*, taking the form: “Who am I?”). Evidently, for the practitioner of *Advaita Vedānta*, the “I” is neither the body nor the mind, but the Self (*Ātmā*). See, for example, Shrī Rāmāna Mahārshi (1985:7-91 [ed. D. Godman]; 1996:111-139; 1997:17-47 [ed. A. Osbourne]) for an exposition of Self-enquiry.

<sup>97</sup> It may not “be found” (i.e. known) in *any* one place because It is *beyond* every place by virtue of Its transcendence and absoluteness; but it may indeed “be found” (i.e. known) because it is *in* every place by virtue of Its immanence and infinitude. This idea is also expressed in the following extracts: “God, in the *holy Tongue*, they call/ The Place that filleth *All in all*” (Robert Herrick, cited in Perry, 1971:784); and “Tung Kuo Tzu asked Chuang Tzu: ‘Where is the so-called *Tao*?’ Chuang Tzu said: ‘Everywhere.’ The former said: ‘Specify an instance of it.’ ‘It is in the ant.’ ‘How can *Tao* be anything so low?’ ‘It is in the panic grass.’ ‘How can it be still lower’... ‘It is in excrement.’ To this Tung Kuo Tzu made no reply. Chuang Tzu said: ‘Your question does not touch the fundamentals of *Tao*. You should not specify any

“God alone knows Himself”, “*Brahman* knows *Brahman*”, “God can be known only by God”, “*Allāh* knoweth; ye know not”, “the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God”: on a cursory reading these sayings ostensibly reserve all knowledge of the Divinity for the Divinity alone. Divine Knowledge, it would appear, is an exclusively Divine prerogative and not a human possibility<sup>98</sup> (Schuon, 1997:7n; Burckhardt, 1995a:23-25). However, as the anonymous author of the *Theologia Germanica* says: “For in what measure we put off the creature, in the same measure are we able to put on the Creator...” (ch. 1). This means that when the creature has become entirely effaced

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particular thing. There is not a single thing without *Tao*’ ” (*Chuang Tzu* [ch. 22, Fung Yu-Lan trans.], cited in Lings, 1993:128n).

<sup>98</sup> The foregoing quotations are from Perry (1991:749-760), unless otherwise stated.

<sup>99</sup> It will be recalled, for instance, that when Meister Eckhart explicitly identified the Divine and the human Intellect in the following saying: “There is something in the soul that is uncreate and uncreatable; if the whole soul were so it would be uncreate and uncreatable; and this is the Intellect” [*Aliquid est in anima quod est increatum et increabile: si tota anima esset talis, esset increata et increabilis, et hoc est Intellectus*] (Cited in Schuon, 1997:7n), he was condemned by the ecclesiastical authorities as “evil-sounding, rash and suspect of heresy” (from the Bull *In Agro Dominico* [“In the Lord’s Fields”], cited in Davies, 1994:xv; See Colledge and McGinn, 1981:77-81 for the text of the infamous Bull, which lists the 28 offending articles; See also Colledge and McGinn, 1981:71-77 for selections from Meister Eckhart’s Defense) and excommunicated from the Church (See Colledge and McGinn, 1981:12-23; and Davies, 1991:27-50; 1994:xi-xvii for an account of the Eckhart trial). The intrinsic – though thoroughly esotericist – orthodoxy of Meister Eckhart, however, is today beyond doubt (See Davies, 1994:xvii): “It is common knowledge”, says Frithjof Schuon, “that certain passages from Eckhart’s works that went beyond the theological [i.e. exotericist] point of view, and were therefore outside the competence of the religious authority as such, were condemned by this authority...[T]his verdict was nevertheless justifiable on [exotericist] grounds of expediency...[and] Eckhart only retracted in a purely principial manner, through simple obedience and before even knowing the papal decision; consequently his disciples were not disturbed by his retraction any more than they were by the Bull itself...[The] Blessed Henry Suso [1300-1366 C.E.] had a vision after Eckhart’s death of the ‘Blessed Master, deified in God in a superabundant magnificence’ ” (Schuon, 1993a:39n; See also 1987:171; and H. Smith, 1981:xi-xvi).

(*vacare Deo*) there is only the Divinity. As such, the creature does not know the Divinity *qua* creature, but *qua* Divinity. The ultimate oneness, or non-duality, of Reality means that the sole Knower is the Divinity *alone* (“Other than He [*Brahman*] there is no Comprehensor”); but the effaced creature is ‘not other than’ the Divinity (“*aham Brahmāsmi*” – “I am *Brahman*”) and therefore is one with the sole Knower (“He [*Brahman*] is your Self [*Ātmā*]”) (Schuon, 1975:211; 1997:7n).

Some of the above-quoted sayings, however, adopt a less rigorously ‘non-dualistic’ form of expression and are for that reason more accessible to the individual (i.e. rational) intelligence: “Whosoever is wise derives his wisdom from the Divine wisdom,” “Lord, we shall see Thy Light by Thy Light,” “When he, the Spirit of Truth has come, he will guide you into all truth,” “Real knowledge is God’s illumination of the heart with the pure radiance of knowledge,” “The seekers for truth are those who envisage God through God, light through light,” “I know God by God,” “Only when thou realizest that thou art That which knows, will knowledge be truly thine.” Here the *Nous-Intellectus* of the effaced creature participates in the knowledge of the Divine *Nous-Intellectus*<sup>100</sup> through a kind of ‘infusion’ or ‘illumination’<sup>101</sup>; which *gnōsis* – says Frithjof Schuon – “is...[the] participation [of the human being] in the ‘perspective’ of the Divine Subject [or Intellect]

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<sup>100</sup> The Divine Intellect has a universal provenance and bears the following names in the major religious traditions of the world: Judaism: *Hokhmah*; Christianity: *Logos/Sophia*; Islam: *Shuhūd/Hikmah/Qalam*; Hinduism: *Cit*; Buddhism: *Prajñā*.

<sup>101</sup> This is the epistemological doctrine of the early Church Father, St. Augustine: “The incorporeal soul is...illuminated by the incorporeal light of the simple [i.e. unitary] Wisdom of God” (*De Civitate Dei* [The City of God], XI, 10); and: “...that Light...whereby the soul is so enlightened that it beholds all things truly...[by] the intellect (*veraciter intellecta*)...that Light is God” (*De Genesi ad Litteram*, XII, 31 [59]; Cited in Butler, 1967:38-39).

which...is beyond the separative polarity, 'subject-object' " (1990a:76). The two perspectives (as described above) may thus be summarized as follows: either (i) the effaced creature knows the Divinity by attaining to union with It; or, (ii) the *Nous-Intellectus* knows the Divinity by direct illumination *from* the Divinity (See Schuon, 1981b:233; 1993a:xxx; 1995a:15; 81-82 for an exposition of the 'non-duality' of knowledge). Evidently, in both instances there is a unity (or non-duality) of knowledge.



Part II: The Traditionalist Spiritual Anthropology:

Chapter 3: 'Duo Sunt in Homine.'

"There are two (realities) in the human being: the spiritual nature and the corporeal nature."

*[Dicendum quod in homine duo sunt: scilicet natura spiritualis et natura corporalis.]*

(St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part II [Second Part], Question 26, Article 4; author's translation).

Thus far, the most diverse traditional texts have borne testimony to a supra-rational and Universal intelligence capable of knowing the Divinity *through* the Divinity. This epistemic faculty, it has been said, is variously called by such names as *Nous*, *Intellectus*, '*Aql*, or *Buddhi*. Further, it has been said that this epistemic faculty transcends the purely individual aspect of the human being; and this, indeed, is the basis of the traditional notion of the tripartite division of the human being into body, soul, and Spirit-Intellect.<sup>102</sup> Summarizing the "spiritual anthropology" (Schuon, 1982b:76)<sup>103</sup> of the Western tradition, William Stoddart (1986:19-21; 1994:10; See also Schuon, 1976:198-206; Guénon, 1991:75-81; and R. Coomaraswamy, 1999a:37-50), presents the human being as possessing three degrees:

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<sup>102</sup> For the Traditionalists, the Intellect is synonymous with the Spirit, of which it is the knowing faculty. "The pure Intellect," says Frithjof Schuon, "[is] the intuitive and infallible faculty of the immanent Spirit" (1986:3); and "The Intellect is the Spirit in man" (1994b:121; See also Stoddart, 1994:12n). It may be said that if the Spirit refers more to 'being', the Intellect will then refer more to 'knowing' – however, both are evidently supra-individual and Universal in nature (See Burckhardt, 1987:186). It will be recognized that Hugh of St. Victor's three epistemic faculties – the "eye of flesh", the "eye of reason", and the "eye of contemplation" – correspond, respectively, to the three degrees of body, soul, and Spirit-Intellect, such that the tripartite Traditionalist "spiritual epistemology" (Schuon, 1986:9) directly reflects its tripartite "spiritual anthropology". This view is corroborated by Frithjof Schuon in the following statement: "The knowledge which man...can enjoy is at the same time animal, human and Divine. It is animal in so far as man knows through the senses; it is human when he knows by reason; and it is Divine in the contemplative activity of the intellect" (1987:146).

<sup>103</sup> According to Frithjof Schuon a "spiritual anthropology" is a "science of man [*anthropos*, i.e. of the human being, and not of the male (*vir*) gender alone]" (Schuon, 1982b:76). "To speak of a 'spiritual anthropology' ", says Schuon, "is already a pleonasm – [for] to say man [*anthropos*] is to say spirit – but it is justified in a world which, having forgotten the divine, no longer can know what is human" (1982b:76; See also A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1977b:333-378 on the traditional 'pneumatology'). In other words, in the Traditionalist view, contemporary psychology inadequately limits itself to the corporeal (body) and subtle (soul) degrees of the human individuality alone; and this because it denies – *a priori* by its limitative epistemological methodology – the transcendent realm of the Spirit, and *a fortiori* the realm of the Divinity.

<b>English:</b>	<b>Greek:</b> <sup>104</sup>	<b>Latin:</b>
Spirit (Intellect)	<i>Pneuma (Nous)</i>	<i>Spiritus (Intellectus)</i>
soul	<i>psyche</i>	<i>anima</i> <sup>105</sup>
body	<i>soma</i>	<i>corpus</i>

In Judaism the three 'anthropological' degrees are: *Ruah/Metatron/Hokhmah* (Spirit/Intellect); *nefesh* (soul); and *basar* or *geshem* (body)<sup>106</sup>. In Islam, the abovementioned

<sup>104</sup> The tripartite "spiritual anthropology" is represented by St. Paul in the following passage: "...and the very God of peace sanctify you *wholly*...[in] spirit [*pneuma*] and soul [*psyche*] and body [*soma*]" (1 *Thessalonians*, V, 23).

<sup>105</sup> Dante Alighieri, whose *Divine Comedy* is a masterly summation of the contemplative tradition within medieval Christianity, distinguished between the 'vegetative', 'animal', and 'rational' aspects of the soul within the human being. The 'vegetative' soul (*anima nutritiva*, or *anima vegetativa*) was thought to be responsible for the basic functions of life such as nutrition, growth, and generation; the 'animal' soul (*anima sensitiva*) for the sense and appetitive functions; and the 'rational' soul (*anima rationalis*) for reason and language (See Dante Alighieri, 1955:264-265 [Canto XXV, lines 34-78]; 269; See also R. Coomaraswamy, 1999a:47). This microcosmic schema (represented in parenthesis below) reflects the macrocosmic doctrine of the four grades of created reality (the so-called Great Chain of Being): the 'mineral' (body); 'plant' (vegetable soul); 'animal' (animal soul); and 'human' (rational soul) orders, respectively. The distinctive qualities of each of the degrees of reality may be summarized as follows: mineral = inanimate; plant = life; animal = (sense) consciousness; human = reason, self-consciousness, reflection (Schumacher, 1995:25-35).

<sup>106</sup> According to a more detailed *Qabbalistic* "spiritual anthropology" (with rather a different terminological schema), the four elements of the corporeal realm (fire, air, water, earth) and their quintessence (*avir*: 'ether'), have their principle and reflection in the individual, subtle (psychic) level. These are: "*nefesh* (literally: 'vitality'), the 'animal soul'; *ruah* (literally: 'air' or 'wind'), the 'mental soul'; *neshamah* (literally: 'breath'), the spiritual 'sacred soul'; and *hayah*, the (eternally) 'living soul'. These four [subtle] elements issue from a single undifferentiated 'quintessence': *yehidah*, the 'one (divine) soul', which...in its spiritual nature [is identified] with *metatron*" (Schaya, 1971:123-124). According to yet another schema from the *Qabbalistic* text called the *Liqqutei Amarim* (by the Hasidic Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi [1745-1815 C.E.]), the intermediate level of the soul "consists of [the] *nefesh*, *ruah* and *neshamah*...[which] naturally desire and yearn to separate [themselves]...from the body in order to unite with...[their] origin and source [which is] in God...[T]his nature stems from the [supra-individual

three degrees have their correspondence in the terms: *ar-Rūh/al-‘Aql*<sup>107</sup> (Spirit/ Intellect); *an-nafs* (soul, or ego)<sup>108</sup>; and *al-jism* (body) (Stoddart, 1986:19; See also, Schuon,

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epistemic] faculty of *hokmah* [the *Nous-Intellectus*] found in the soul, wherein abides the [divine] light of the blessed *En Sof* [the supra-personal Divinity]” (Cited in Nasr, 1989:10; See also 51).

<sup>107</sup> The direct and unitive nature of the knowledge of the ‘*Aql*’ is affirmed in the following remark by S. H. Nasr: “The Arabic word for intellect *al-‘aql* is related to the [root] word [‘*ql*,] ‘to bind’, for it is that which binds man to his Origin” (Nasr, 1989:12; See also Nasr, 1979:65). Drawing on the work of his Neo-Platonic predecessors Al-Kindī [d.c.866] and more especially, Al-Fārābī [c.870-950], Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna [980-1037 C.E.]) – master of the Muslim Peripatetic (*mashshā’ī*) philosophers – outlined the different degrees of the ‘*aql*’ in his treatises *Kitāb al-Shifā’* (“The Book of Healing”), *Kitāb al-Najāt* (“The Book of Salvation”), and *Kitāb al-ishārāt wa’l-tanbīhāt* (“The Book of Directives and Remarks”); and which is summarized by S. H. Nasr as follows: “Ibn Sīnā distinguishes between the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa’‘āl*) which is universal and independent of the individual and the intellectual function within man. Each human being possesses intelligence in virtuality. This is called material or potential intelligence (*al-‘aql bi’l-quwwah*). As the human being grows in knowledge the first intelligible forms are placed in the soul from above and man attains to the level of habitual intelligence (*al-‘aql bi’l-malakah*). As the intelligible becomes fully actualized in the mind, man reaches the level of the actual intellect (*al-‘aql bi’l-fi’l*) and finally as this process is completed, the acquired intelligence (*al-‘aql mustafād*). Finally above these stages and states stands the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa’‘āl*) which...illuminates the mind through the act of knowledge” (Nasr, 1979:69; See also Fakhry, 1983:141-142 for an elucidation of the epistemology of Ibn Sīnā; See Fakhry, 1983:85-88 on the epistemology of Al-Kindī; and see Netton, 1992:31-54 and Fakhry, 1983:120-124 for a summary of the epistemology of Al-Fārābī). Nasr adds: “It is not accidental that the followers of St. Augustine were to rally around the teachings of Ibn Sīnā once his works were translated into Latin and that a school was developed which owed its origin to both St. Augustine and Ibn Sīnā” (1979:70). Concerning the Active Intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa’‘āl*) and its relation to the individuality, Titus Burckhardt says: “the goal of wisdom (*hikmah*), to which the philosopher (*hakīm*) aspired, was union with the ‘active Intellect’ (*al-‘aql al-fa’‘āl*) [called thus, he says, “because the intellect consists...of the pure act of knowing, and never itself becomes the passive object of perception” [Burckhardt, 1999:130]; it was called in Latin: *intellectus agens*; and in Hebrew: *ha-sekhelel hapo’eil*], which exceeds transitory [i.e. corporeal and subtle] existence.” (1999:134; See also Burckhardt, 1999:129-136 for a summary of Islamic Neo-Platonic philosophy as pertaining to the ‘*aql*’). In other words, the philosopher (*hakīm*) can attain to the level of the supra-formal and universal Active Intellect – but only insofar as the individuality *per se* is surpassed (See Netton, 1992:46-51; and 53 [diagram] for a lucid definition of the hierarchical degrees of the intellect [*al-‘aql*] in the Neo-Platonic philosophy of the Al-Fārābī – upon whom, in large measure, Ibn Sīnā bases his epistemology). It is important to note that the Arabic word *al-‘aql*, like the Latin *intellectus*,

1969:144-158; and Burckhardt, 1999:129-137). In Hinduism, the correspondent terms are *kārana-sharīra/Buddhi* (Spirit-Intellect); *sukshma-sharīra/manas-prāna/jīvātman* (mind and feeling; soul); and *sthūla-sharīra/rūpa* (body)<sup>109</sup> (Stoddart, 1993:37-40; See also, Guénon, 1999a:57-61; 68-70).<sup>110</sup>

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refers to Intelligence at both its Universal (*'aql-i kullī*) and individual (*'aql-i juz ī*) degrees, respectively (Nasr, 1979:65; and Burckhardt, 1995a:94-95; See Schuon, 1987:141; 1990a:65-66; 1993a:55-57; 1994b:178; and H. Smith, 1993:6 on the 'omnipresence' of the Intelligence (or Intellect) – in the mineral, vegetable, animal, human, angelic, and Divine 'kingdoms', respectively). The present thesis has deemed it necessary to accentuate the Universal (and not the individual) dimension of the *'aql-intellectus* to counteract the pervasive modern scientific limitation of the Intelligence to the individual (or 'this-worldly' rational) order alone: "It is reason (*'aql-i juz ī*) which [by its limited individual nature] has destroyed the reputation of the [supra-individual] Intellect [*'aql-i kullī*]", says Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (Cited in Nasr, 1991c:55).

<sup>108</sup> In Islam, the four 'degrees' of the soul (*an-nafs*) are (in descending order): "*an-nafs al-mutma'innah*: 'the soul at peace', the soul reintegrated in the Spirit and at rest in certainty (See *Qur'ān*, XXXIX, 29); *an-nafs al-lawwāmah*: [the] 'soul which blames', the soul aware of its own imperfections; *an-nafs al-ammārārah*: 'the soul which commands' [to evil], the passionate, egoistic soul; *an-nafs al-haywāniyah*: the animal soul, the soul as passively obedient to natural impulsions" (Burckhardt, 1995:122; See also Bakhtiar, 1976:20-21). In terms of the tripartite "spiritual anthropology" above, the first 'degree' corresponds to the Spirit; the second 'degree' to the 'higher' soul; and the third and last 'degrees' respectively, to the 'lower' soul. According to another complementary schema, the levels of the soul are: the 'vegetative' soul (*an-nafs al-nabāṭiyyah*); the 'animal' soul (*an-nafs al-haywāniyah*); the 'rational' soul (*an-nafs al-nāṭiqah*); and the primordial perfection of the original nature of the soul (*al-fitrāh*) (Bakhtiar, 1976:18-19). As for the Spirit (*ar-Rūh*), it too comprises four 'degrees' (listed again in descending order): "The Divine, and therefore uncreated Spirit (*ar-Rūh al-ilāhī*) also called *ar-Rūh al-Qudūs*, the Holy Spirit; the Universal, created, Spirit (*ar-Rūh al-kullī*); the individual Spirit, or rather the Spirit polarized in relation to an individual; [and] the vital spirit, intermediate between soul and body" (Burckhardt, 1995:124). The tripartite "spiritual anthropology" referred to above concerns the third (or penultimate) level of (the "individual" or human) Spirit alone. It will be recalled that the "Spirit polarized in relation to [the] individual" is *not itself* individual, but supra-individual or Universal; whilst the lowest 'degree' of the 'spirit' would appear to correspond to the 'vegetative' soul (See Burckhardt, 1995a:97).

<sup>109</sup> The Hindu doctrine of the 'envelopment' (*kosha*) of the Supreme Spirit (*Ātmā*) by the different levels of manifestation (the word *maya* signifying "made of") provides yet another correspondence: *vijñāna-maya-kosha* (Spirit/Intellect); *mano-maya-kosha* (mind); *prāṇa-maya-kosha* (vital breath); and *anna-maya-kosha*

Now, it is precisely the presence of both the soul and the Spirit-Intellect 'within' the human being that allows of a comprehension of sundry texts expressing the medieval maxim: *duo sunt in homine* ("there are two [realities] in the human being")<sup>111</sup>. A citation of texts from the 'Egyptian', Greek, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist traditions respectively, will again present evidence for the well-nigh universal provenance of this doctrine:<sup>112</sup>

"Man has two souls." – Hermes

"God compacted (man) of...two substances, the one divine, the other mortal." – Hermes

"Corporeal nature is your wife, O Soul, and intellect (*Nous*) is your father; and a blow given by your father's hand is better than a kiss given by your wife." – Hermes

"It is not possible, my son, to attach yourself both to things mortal and to things divine." – Hermes

"When a man is drawn in two opposite directions, to and from the same object, this as

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(body). It is to be understood that *mano-maya-kosha* and *prānā-maya-kosha* together constitute the 'intermediate' degree of the 'soul' (or *sukshma-sharīra*) (See *Taittiriya Upanishad*, II, 2-5; See also Guénon, 1999a:57-61; and Stoddart, 1993:39).

<sup>110</sup> See Huxley (1946:23) for a brief exposition of the Maori and Native American Indian view of the integral human being. The Buddhist 'correspondence' will be dealt with in due course.

<sup>111</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas: "*Dicendum quod in homine duo sunt: scilicet natura spiritualis et natura corporalis*" [There are two (realities) in the human being: the spiritual nature and the corporeal nature] (*Summa Theologiae*, II, ii, 26, 4; Latin text cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1988:151; English translation based on the Blackfriars translation, 1966:129).

<sup>112</sup> In the majority of texts that follow, reference to the "two in the human being" indicates, respectively, the Spirit-Intellect and the soul. Occasionally, however, the reference can be to the 'higher' and 'lower' souls respectively. Whatever the case, it must be recalled that the 'higher' soul is – according to the testimony of myriad sacred texts – in close conjunction, and even coterminous with, the Spirit-Intellect (See the present section dealing with the Heart, which approximates to the 'higher' soul).

we affirm, necessarily implies two distinct principles in him.” – Plato (*Republic*, X, 604b)

“There are two natures, one self-existent, and the other ever in want.” – Plato (*Philebus*, 53d)

“May the outward and inward man be at one.” – Plato (*Phaedrus*, 279c)

“When I was about to cross the stream, the *daimonian*<sup>113</sup> sign that usually comes to me was given – it always holds me back from what I want to do – and I thought I heard a voice from it which forbade...” – Plato (*Phaedrus*, 242b; Cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1989:35)

“There is a something in the soul that bids men drink and a something that forbids, something other than that which bids.” – Plato (*Republic*, 439b; Cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1989:35-36)

“Now I say that Mind (*animus*) and Soul (*anima*) are held in union one with the other, and form of themselves a single nature, but that the head, as it were, and Lord in the whole body is the counsel (*consilium*) that we call Mind (*animus*) or Understanding (*mens*)... The rest of the Soul (*anima*), spread abroad throughout the body, obeys and is moved at the will and inclination of the Understanding (*mens*).” – Epicurus ([341-271 B.C.E.]; Cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1988:147)

“This world is God’s house, wherein a gallant sumptuous feast is prepared, and all men are his guests: and... there are two waiters at the table which fill out the wine to them that call for it; the one a man, the other a woman; the one called *Nous*, or [supra-rational] mind, from whose hand all wise men drink, the other Intemperance, who fills the cups of the lovers of this world.” – Dion Chrysostom (c. 40-115 C.E.)

“I am black but beautiful”<sup>114</sup> – *Song of Songs*, I, 5

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<sup>113</sup> The *daimonian* (the “divine sign”; See Plato’s *Apology*, 31d; and *Republic*, 496c) of Socrates is equitable with the *pneuma* (Spirit, or Intellect) (See Schuon, 1981b:31n; and A.K. Coomaraswamy, 1988:152).

"There are two minds, that of all beings<sup>115</sup>, and the individual mind: he that flees from his own mind flees for refuge to the mind of all in common." – Philo

"That which dies is not the ruling part of us, but the subject laity, and for so long as the latter will not repent and acknowledge its perversion, so long will it be held by death." – Philo

"It is always right that the superior should rule, and the inferior be ruled; and Mind is superior to sensibility." – Philo

"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself [*denegat semetipsum*], and take up his cross, and follow me.<sup>116</sup> For whosoever will save his life [*psyche*] shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life [*psyche*] for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."<sup>117</sup> – *St. Mark*, VIII, 34-35

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life [*psyche*] shall lose it; and he that hateth his life [*psyche*] in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." – *St. John*, XII, 24-25

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life [*psyche*] also, he cannot be my disciple."<sup>118</sup> – *St. Luke*, XIV, 26

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<sup>114</sup> At the literal level of the text these are the words of the Bride to the Daughters of Jerusalem.

<sup>115</sup> That is, the universal Mind (or Spirit); not the so-called "collective unconscious" of Jungian doctrine.

<sup>116</sup> See also *St. Matthew*, X, 38 and *St. Luke*, XIV, 27.

<sup>117</sup> See also *St. Matthew*, X, 39 and *St. Luke*, XVII, 33.

<sup>118</sup> See also *St. Matthew*, X, 37. It is quite obvious that Christ intends that a person "hate" father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters "and his own soul [*psyche*] also", *only* if they are an obstacle to the spiritual life; for otherwise it would be an injunction to senseless hatred (a veritable misanthropy!), and the saying of Christ that "thou shalt love thy neighbour [including family] as thyself" (*St. Matthew*, XXII, 39; See also *St. Luke*, X, 25-28) would have no meaning whatever; and neither would the following saying of Christ: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour [*Leviticus*, XIX, 18], and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,



"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." – *St. Matthew*, XII, 25

"He must increase, but I must decrease." – *St. John*, III, 29

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." – *Galatians*, II, 20

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul (*psyche*) and spirit (*pneuma*)." – *Hebrews*, IV, 12

"To make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" – *Ephesians*, II, 15

"[B]ut though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."<sup>119</sup> – *II Corinthians*, IV, 16

"I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." – *Ephesians*, III, 14-16

"Bow thy head, proud Sicamber, burn what thou hast worshipped and worship what thou hast burnt." – St. Remy<sup>120</sup> ([c. 437-533 C.E.]; Cited in Schuon, 1997:157n).

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and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (*St. Matthew*, V, 43-45). This last clause furnishes the very *raison d'être* of Christ's injunctions pertaining to the 'hatred' of family and the 'love' of enemy (See Schuon, 1987:65).

<sup>119</sup> The "outer man" and the "inner man" of St. Paul refer to the soul (*Septuagint: psyche; Vulgate: anima*) and the Spirit (*Septuagint: pneuma; Vulgate: spiritus*), respectively (See also *I Corinthians*, II, 14-15; and XV:45-46 for an analogous Pauline distinction between the 'natural man' [*psychikos anthropos*] and the 'spiritual man' [*pneumatikos anthropos*]).

<sup>120</sup> St. Remy here addresses Clovis (466-511 C.E.) – 'pagan' king of the Franks. In his *The History of the Franks*, II, 27-43, Gregory of Tours relates that the influential monarch heeded the admonishment of St. Remy, following his wife Clotilde into the Christian religion in 498 C. E. His remarkable influence led to

“For while it [the self] is yet *anima*, it lightly becometh effeminate, even to being fleshly, but *animus vel spiritus* hath no thoughts of anything save the manly and the spiritual.”<sup>121</sup> – William of St. Thierry ([c. 1085-1148 C.E.]; Cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1988:137)

“There is a spirit in the soul, untouched by time and flesh, flowing from the Spirit, remaining in the Spirit, itself wholly spiritual.” – Meister Eckhart (Cited in Huxley, 1946:22)

“The Scriptures say of human beings that there is an outward man and along with him an inner man. To the outward man belong those things that depend on the soul, but are connected with the flesh and blended with it, and the co-operative functions of the several members, such as the eye, the ear, the tongue, the hand and so on. The Scripture speaks of all this as the old man, the earthly man, the outward person, the enemy, the servant. Within us all is the other person, the inner man, whom the Scripture calls the new man, the heavenly man, the young person, the friend, the aristocrat.” – Meister Eckhart (Cited in Huxley, 1946:49)

“When thou art rid of self, then art thou self-controlled, and self-controlled art self-possessed, and self-possessed, possessed of God.” – Meister Eckhart (Cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1989:34)

“All scripture cries aloud for freedom from self.” – Meister Eckhart (Cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1989:91)

“Man has two spirits, a divine and an animal spirit. The former is from the breath (Spirit) of God; the latter from the elements of the air and the fire. He ought to live according to the life of the divine spirit and not according to that of the animal.” – Paracelsus

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his being called the “new Constantine of the West” and “founder of medieval France” (Cited in Ferguson [Ed.], 1990:219).

<sup>121</sup> It will be recalled that *anima* refers to the ‘soul’, whilst *animus* refers to the ‘Spirit’ or *imago Dei* (image of God). This – the traditional interpretation – bears no resemblance to the modern Jungian construal of these terms (See A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1988:137-164 for a review of the traditional acceptance of *anima* and *animus*, and a critique of the Jungian position).

“Every man carrieth a beast in the body which doth plague, molest, and burden the poor captive soul...[which] must be transmuted again into an angel’s form.” – Jacob Boehme (Cited in R. Coomaraswamy, 1999:46)

“The being of man consists of two beings, the natural and the supernatural.” – Boehme

“A watchful observer of his own heart and life shall often hear the voice of wisdom and the voice of folly speaking to him: he that hath his eyes opened, may see both the visions of God falling upon him, and discern the false and foolish fires of Satan that would draw away his mind from God.” – John Smith the Platonist

“Two men are in me: one wants what God wants;  
The other, what the world wants, the devil, and death.” – Angelus Silesius

“What could begin to deny self<sup>122</sup>, if there were not something in man different from self.” – William Law

“You are under the power of no other enemy, are held in no other captivity and want no other deliverance but from the power of your earthly self.” – William Law (Cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1988:156)

“That light of the heart or attraction to God...has the same contrariety to all the vices of the heart that light has to darkness, and must either suppress or be suppressed by them.”  
– William Law

“He it is Who created you, but one of you is a disbeliever and one of you is a believer, and *Allāh* is Seer of what ye do.” – *Qur’ān*, LXIV, 2

“*Allāh* coineth a similitude: A man in relation to whom are several part-owners, quarreling, and a man belonging wholly to one man. Are the two equal in similitude? Praise be to *Allāh*! But most of them know not.” – *Qur’ān*, XXXIX, 29

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<sup>122</sup> See the related passages in: *St. Mark*, VIII, 34-35; *St. Matthew*, X, 38; and *St. Luke*, XIV, 27.

“Die before ye die.”<sup>123</sup> – Muhammad ([570-632 C.E.]; Cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1988:155)

“O Rābi’a<sup>124</sup>, thou hast a desire and I [God] have a desire. I and thy desire cannot dwell together in a single heart.” – ‘Attār (c. 1120-1220 C.E.)

“Although your intellect is flying upward, the bird of your conventional notions is feeding below.” – Rūmī

“Man, in regard to his corporeal nature, stands at the lowest point of degradation; nevertheless, in regard to his spiritual nature, he is at the summit of nobility. He takes the impress of everything to which he directs his attention, and assumes the colour of everything to which he approaches.” – Jāmī

“The mind is said to be twofold:

The pure and also the impure;

Impure – by connection with desire;

Pure – by separation from desire.” – *Maitri Upanishad*, VI, 34

“Two birds, fast bound companions,

Clasp close the self-same tree.

Of these two, the one eats sweet fruit;

The other looks on without eating.

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<sup>123</sup> This saying of the Prophet of Islam may be interpreted in the light of another of his utterances (on returning from battle): “We have returned from the lesser holy war to [fight] the greater holy war” (*rajanā min al-jihādil-asghar ilā al-jihādil-akbar*). When asked by his companions what could be greater than fighting the Holy War, he replied: “The fight against the [‘lower’] soul” (*jihādil-nafs*). (Cited in Guénon, 1996b:41-42; See also Perry, 1991:391-412 for a list of quotations relating to the ‘greater holy war’). This recalls the mystical German proverb: “He who dies before he dies, does not die when he dies” (Cited in Schuon, 1995b: 88). Quite evidently, these sayings allow of but little comprehension without an understanding of the *duo sunt in homine* thesis.

<sup>124</sup> Rābi’a al-‘Adawiyya (c. 717-801 C. E.), an early female Sufi saint of Islam.

“On the self-same tree a person, sunken,  
Grieves for his impotence, deluded;  
When he sees the other, the Lord (*Īshvara*), contented,  
And His greatness, he becomes freed from sorrow.

“When a seer sees the brilliant  
Maker, Lord, Person, the Brahma-source,  
Then, being a knower, shaking off good and evil,  
Stainless, he attains supreme identity (*sāmya*) (with Him).”<sup>125</sup> – *Mundaka Upanishad*, III,  
I, I

“The better ( *reyas*) is one thing, and the pleasanter (*preyas*) quite another  
Both these, of different aim, bind a person.  
Of these two, well is it for him who takes the better;  
He fails of his aim who chooses the pleasanter.” – *Katha Upanishad*, II, 1

“*Samsāra* is just one’s own thought;  
With effort he should cleanse it, then.  
What is one’s thought, that he becomes;  
This is the eternal mystery.” – *Maitri Upanishad*, VI, 34

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it  
is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows  
him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it  
is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness  
follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.” – *Dhammapada*, I, 1-2

“*Om Mani Padme Hum!*”<sup>126</sup> – Tibetan Buddhist prayer

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<sup>125</sup> The “two birds” of this text refer to: (i) the Sun-bird (the Spirit-Intellect) who “looks on without eating [i.e. without partaking or becoming ‘entangled’ in the world]”; and (ii) the Soul-bird (the individual self) who “eats [the] ‘sweet’ fruit” of the world and becomes thereby ‘impotent’ and “deluded” (See Perry, 1995:96).

“Controlling his vacillating soul [*ying p'o*], (the Perfect Man) embraces the One in his arms and is never separated therefrom.”<sup>127</sup> – *Tao Te Ching*, X (Cited in Izutsu, 1983:444)<sup>128</sup>.

The identification of the Spirit with the Intellect, and the elucidation of the *duo sunt in homine* thesis above, allow of a further refinement and clarification of the tripartite

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<sup>126</sup> The words of the *mani-mantra* mean: “O Thou Jewel in the Lotus, hail!” The most apparent explanation of the two words ‘jewel’ and ‘lotus’ is the “equation of the *jewel* with [the] enlightenment mind (*bodhicitta*), which arises in the *lotus* of human consciousness” (Diener *et al*, 1991:163; italics added; See also Stoddart, 1998:75-77; Rawson, 1991:16; and Pallis, 1991:121-122 for a fuller elucidation of the ‘*Om Mani Padme hum!*’ *mantra*).

<sup>127</sup> Izutsu comments on this passage (chapter X) from the *Tao Te Ching* as follows: “In ancient China, what corresponds to the English ‘soul’ (Greek *psyche*) was held to consist of two separate substances, one of them being *hun*, and the other *p'o*. Or...[it] could...[be said] that man was believed to possess two souls. The former was the superior or spiritual soul, the principle of mental and spiritual functions. The latter was the inferior or physical (or animal) soul, charged with bodily and material functions. When a man died, the *hun* was believed to ascend to Heaven, while the *p'o* was to go down into Earth. As for the phrase *ying p'o*, here translated as ‘the vacillating (physical) soul’, it is significant that exactly the same combination is found in the famous [ancient] shamanic poem ‘Travelling Afar’ (*Yüan Yu*) of the *Elegies of Ch'u*: ‘Controlling my vacillating soul [*ying p'o*], I ascend to a misty height, / And riding on the floating clouds, I go up and ever higher’ ” (1983:444-445). The French Sinologist Léon Wieger speaks of the ancient Chinese view of the soul as follows: “Man has two souls. From conception to birth, one inferior soul only, *p'o*, which is the issue of the paternal sperm. It directs the development of the body... After birth, a second soul, the ethereal soul, *hun*, is gradually formed... This ethereal soul is the principle of the intelligence and of personal survival, while the functions of the spermatoc soul are purely vegetative” (1988:57; D. Bryce, trans.). In his explanation of the meaning of *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Richard Wilhelm observes the ancient Chinese belief that at death the lower *p'o* soul “sinks to the earth [whilst]... the higher [*hun*] soul” rises to the “ethereal space [i.e. *T'ien*, Heaven]” (1962:14; See also, A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1988:147).

<sup>128</sup> The above quotations are from Perry (1991:480-484); A. K. Coomaraswamy (1988:137; 147; 155; 156; 1989:34-36; 91); and Izutsu (1983:444), not including the sundry listing of Gospel texts. See A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1977b:88-106; 1988:137-164; 1989:33-41; 90-93 for a detailed elucidation of the universal provenance of the *duo sunt in homine* thesis).

“spiritual anthropology” of the Traditionalist school; for between the supra-formal Spirit-Intellect and the formal soul lies an entity traditionally called the Heart. To be sure, this is not the bodily heart; nor is it the seat of the emotions. The nature of this ‘Heart’ is explained by Titus Burckhardt through an interpretation (*tafsīr*) of the *Qur’ānic* verse (*āyat*): “He created the two seas that meet together, between them an isthmus they do not overpass” (XXV, 53) by the Muslim Sufi Muhammad at-Tādilī:

He [*Sīdī*<sup>129</sup> Muhammad]...interpreted the verse as an image of the relationship between two degrees of reality: of one of the two seas, the Koran says that it is sweet and pleasant to taste, and the other, that it is salty and bitter (See, XXV, 53)<sup>130</sup>. The purity and sweetness indicate a higher level of reality, while the bitterness indicates a relatively lower level, one more strongly mixed with ‘nothingness’. The isthmus (*barzakh*) between the two seas or degrees of reality separates them, but at the same time unites them, like the narrow neck of an hourglass...Whenever two domains of reality meet there is an isthmus of this kind. Applied to man, the sweet sea means the pure Intellect or Spirit (*ar-Rūh*), which in itself is undivided and capable of direct knowledge; while the bitter sea is the *psyche* (*an-nafs*)<sup>131</sup>, which is troubled and dissipated by passions. The isthmus is the Heart (*Qalb*). The *psyche* cannot ‘overpass’ the threshold of the Heart. Bound as it is to imaginings and tendencies, the *psyche* cannot lay hold on the Spirit that transcends all forms, and in this sense the isthmus divides the two seas. But the Spirit or Intellect is able, not to remove the isthmus, but, through the Heart, to act upon the *psyche*. It confers light on the *psyche*, just as the physical heart confers life on the body<sup>132</sup> (Burckhardt, 1992:146).

<sup>129</sup> The term “*Sīdī*” is the Moroccan form (dialect) of the (classical) Arabic “*Sayyidnā*”, which means: “my Lord” – a respectful form of address common in traditional Morocco, particularly in Sufi circles.

<sup>130</sup> See also the *Qur’ānic* verse wherein the prophet Moses says: “I will not cease until I reach the meeting-place of the two seas” (XLI, 53) – in other words, the isthmus whereat the beginning of the ‘next world’ commences.

<sup>131</sup> Here is the theory of *duo sunt in homine* in an Islamic form.

<sup>132</sup> The legitimacy of this spiritual (i.e. *anagogical* or *tropological*) interpretation is contained in these words of the *Qur’ān*: “We [God] will show them Our signs [*āyat*] on the horizons and in themselves”, which establishes the precedent for the correspondence between ‘macrocosmic’ phenomena (e.g. sun, moon

This last sentence explains why the isthmus (*barzakh*) between the Spirit-Intellect and the soul is designated as the Heart<sup>133</sup> (*al-Qalb*); for this name is suggested by an application of the principle of traditional symbolism, defined by the famous Muslim Sufi and theologian al-Ghazālī as: “the science of the relationship between different levels of reality” (Cited in H. Smith, 1976:86n): whilst the bodily heart is the *center* of the physical organism by virtue of its core function of blood circulation, there is – at the subtle (or psychic) level of reality ‘above’ it – a faculty at the *center* of the soul,<sup>134</sup> which by analogical transposition may *also* be called the Heart (Lings, 1981:48; See also Guénon, 1999:23-24). Martin Lings draws out the nature of the Heart further:

In the macrocosm, the Garden of Eden is both center and summit (note: as such it is often represented as being on top of a mountain)<sup>135</sup> of the earthly state. Analogously the Heart, which in the microcosm corresponds to the Garden, is both center and summit of the human individuality. More precisely, the Heart corresponds to the center of the Garden, the point where grows the Tree of Life and where flows the Fountain of Life (1981:50; See also Lings, 1991:2-3).

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stars, and in this instance, the sea) and ‘microcosmic’ faculties (e.g. Spirit-Intellect, Heart, soul etc.) (Lings, 1981:51).

<sup>133</sup> The upper case here signifies that it is not to the bodily heart that reference is made.

<sup>134</sup> The fundamental (but *not* central) faculties of the soul are: reason, intuition, memory, imagination, will, and sentiment (Schuon, 1975:159-160; 1995b:57-58). According to another schema of the primary faculties of the soul – which is yet more succinct – it may be said that: “[T]he Intellect, which is the ‘eye of the heart’ or the organ of direct [supra-formal] knowledge, is projected into the individual soul by limiting and polarizing itself; it is then manifested under a triple aspect...namely intelligence [which includes reason, intuition, memory, and imagination], will and sentiment” (Schuon, 1981b:68-69).

<sup>135</sup> Martin Lings refers, no doubt, to the *Purgatoria* of Dante: at the summit of the Mount of Purgatory is the Garden of Eden (See Dante Alighieri, 1955; especially:8; 62; 202-203 [illustrations]; 289-340 [i.e. Canto XXVIII-Canto XXXIII], D. Sayers, trans.); and perhaps to the Tibetan Buddhist *Shambhala*, which is “an earthly point of contact with [Heaven]...in a remote and mountainous north” (Ashe, 1992:58).



Now, just as the center and summit of the ‘macrocosmic’ world (the Garden of Eden) has withdrawn from general view since the Fall, so also has the center and summit of the ‘microcosmic’ world (the Heart); for the human being has lost access to the primordial perfection of the Heart since the advent of the Fall. And this provides the key to the comprehension of the Heart: it is none other than the primordial perfection of ancient humanity – the soul created in the “image of God” (See *Genesis*, I, 26-27), to use a Western monotheistic expression<sup>136</sup> (See Abū Bakr Sirāj ad-Dīn, 1992:23-34).

If Adam and Eve had direct access to Heaven (they who walked with God in the “cool of the day” [*Genesis*, III, 8]) whilst resident in the Garden of Eden, it was by their access to the ‘axial’ Tree and Fountain of Life (Lings, 1991:15). Analogously, the Heart of primordial humanity also had immediate access – by virtue of its centrality – to the world of the Spirit-Intellect ‘above’; indeed, it received the light of the Spirit directly. Adopting the terminology of the ‘anagogical’ hermeneutic of the 14<sup>th</sup> century Sufi commentary on the *Qur’ān* by ‘Abd ar-Razzāq al Kāshānī (d. 1329 C.E.), Martin Lings elucidates the relationship of the Heart and the Spirit as follows:

[T]he sun is interpreted as signifying the Spirit; light is gnosis; day is the Beyond, the transcendent world of direct spiritual perception; and night is this world, the world of ignorance or, at its best, the world of indirect reflected knowledge symbolized by moonlight. The moon transmits indirectly the light of the sun to the darkness of the night; and analogously the Heart transmits the light of the Spirit to the darkness of the soul. But it is the moonlight that is indirect; the moon itself, when it shines in the night sky, is looking directly at the sun and is itself not in night but in daylight. This symbolism reveals the transcendence of the Heart and explains what is meant when it is said that the Heart is the faculty of direct spiritual (or intellectual) vision (1981:51; See

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<sup>136</sup> The primordial perfection of ancient humanity will be covered in some detail presently.

also Abū Bakr Sirāj ad-Dīn, 1992:17-19; 23-27; 52-58).

To recapitulate, the 'Heart-moon' directly apprehends the 'light-knowledge' (*gnōsis*) of the 'Spirit-sun' and transmits this 'moonlight' (reflected knowledge) to the 'darkness' (ignorance) of the 'soul-night'. According to this formulation – that of the strict metaphysical demarcation of the existent ontological levels - the Heart is *not* the supra-individual Spirit-Intellect *per se*, but the isthmus that is directly 'in touch' with it (See Lings, 1981:45-62). Notwithstanding the above formulation, however, the Heart is most typically considered as coterminous with the Spirit-Intellect by virtue of their 'conjunction' of 'essence'<sup>137</sup> (Lings, 1981:51); for the Heart is 'connected' to the Spirit-Intellect by the light of gnosis which it directly apprehends,<sup>138</sup> and which it thereafter transmits to the nescient soul.

This conflation of the Heart and the Spirit-Intellect should alert the vigilant reader to a possible confusion caused by the polyvalent nature of the 'heart'; for it may refer not only to the physical and psychic 'centers' of the being, but also to the supra-individual 'center' called the Spirit-Intellect (or "Eye of the Heart"). For example, in the above

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<sup>137</sup> In the sacred scriptures and in the writings of the saints and sages of very diverse religious traditions the 'conflation' of the Spirit and the Heart is frequently made, such that it is not immediately intelligible to which ontological level – the 'individual' Heart or the 'universal' Spirit – is being referred (See Perry, 1991:819-828).

<sup>138</sup> It is in this sense that Frithjof Schuon speaks of the Heart-Intellect, which is a "universal [epistemic] faculty which has the human heart [symbol of the center of the individuality] as its...seat [or vehicle]" (1990a:80). The distinction between the two senses of the Heart – individual and supra-individual – is clarified by Schuon in the following statement: "The 'heart' means the [supra-individual Spirit-] intellect and, by extension, [also] the individual essence [of the soul]...In both senses it is the *center* of the human being" (1987:80; See also Schuon, 1982b:80-82; italics added).

quoted saying of the Sufi al-Hallāj: “I saw my Lord with the Eye of the Heart. I said: ‘Who art thou?’ He answered: ‘Thou’ ” (Cited in Lings, 1981:49), it is the supra-individual Spirit-Intellect (the “Eye of the Heart”) that directly apprehends the Divinity, and not the (individual) Heart as psychically conceived. Similarly, the *hadīth qudsī* (an extra-*Qur’ānic* Divine saying): “My earth hath not room for Me, neither hath My Heaven, but the Heart of My believing slave hath room for Me”, refers to the supra-individual Spirit and not to the individual Heart (Lings, 1981:49). This specific terminological usage – of the ‘Heart’ to designate the Spirit-Intellect – is moreover fully justified (from the esotericist point of view) in that the true ‘heart’ of the human being is, indeed, beyond the individuality (i.e. the body and the soul) as such.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>139</sup> In a purely esotericist tradition such as *Advaita Vedānta* the identification of the Self (*Ātmān*) – or ‘center’ of the being – with the body or the soul is ‘false attribution’ (or ‘superimposition’; Sanskrit: *adhyāsa*). In his *Viveka-Chudamani* (The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom), Śhrī Shankarāchārya expresses this view as follows: “It is ignorance that causes [humanity]...to identify...with the body, the ego, the senses, or anything that is not the *Ātmān*” (Cited in Huxley, 1946:13). Similarly, in his *Ātmā-Bodha*, Śhrī Shankarāchārya says: “I am other than the body...I am other than emotion...[etc.]” (1994:113; C. Johnston, trans.) (See also Guénon, 1999a:147n; and Izutsu, 1994:73-74; It will be recalled that within Hinduism the heterodox [*nāstika*] materialist [*Cārvāka*] philosophy of Brihaspati [c.7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.] affirms the reality of the corporeal world [of the body] alone [Raju, 1992:86-93]; and that “the *Vedānta* expressly mentions the conviction, ‘I am the body’, as being the doctrine of the demons” [Schuon, 1995a:81n]). Buddhism represents the ‘personality’ as being composed of ‘five aggregates’ (*skandha*; literally, “heap”): (i) form or corporeality (*rūpa*); (ii) sensation (*vedanā*); (iii) perception (*saṃjñā*); (iv) mental formations (*samskāra*); and (v) consciousness (*viññāna*) – all of which are: (i) without abiding essence (*anātman*); (ii) impermanent (*anitya*); and (iii) comprised of suffering (*dukkha*); which is to say that the psychophysical being – because impermanent and ‘empty’ (*shūnya*) of essence (*anitya*) – is without ‘self’ (*anātman*) (Diener *et al.*, 1991:8; 206-207; The Sanskrit term *ātman* – a reflexive pronoun [except in the nominative, or subject case] meaning “itself” – refers *not* to the soul (alone), but to the ‘self’ – *at whichever level the being is identified*, i.e. as (i) the Supreme Self [*Paramātmā*]; (ii) the Divine Personality [*Ishvara*]; (iii) the universal Spirit [*Purusha*]; (iv) the soul [*jīvātman*]; (v) the ego [*ahankāra*]; and (vi) the body [*rūpa*] [Guénon, 1999a:17; A.K. Coomaraswamy, 1977b:93n; Werner, 1994:37]). It is important to note that Buddhism does not deny the *existence* of the individuality, or the body-soul aggregate; it simply claims that

A further confusion may arise through the relatively modern association of the heart with the sentiment and emotion. This difficulty may be resolved by recourse to the following remark of Titus Burckhardt: "The fact that people of today localize feeling and

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it is impermanent (*anitya*) and therefore without an abiding 'self' (*anātman*). The question as to whether Buddhism posits an abiding reality superior to the impermanent individuality – which is typically conceived as nothing more than a mortal 'heap of aggregates' (*skandhas*) – is answered by the Buddha himself: "There is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unconditioned. If that Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unconditioned were not, there could be no escape from this that is born, originated, created, conditioned. But because there is That which is Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unconditioned, an escape from this that is born, originated, created, conditioned can be proclaimed" (*Khuddaka-Nikāya Udāna*, 80f; Cited in Stoddart, 1998:3). Now "that which is Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unconditioned" is the Supreme State referred to as *Nirvāna* – variously described in sundry Buddhist texts (collated here by Edward Conze) as: "[P]ermanent, stable, imperishable, immovable, ageless, deathless, unborn, and unbecome...power, bliss and happiness, the secure refuge, the shelter...the place of unassailable safety...the real Truth...the supreme Reality...the Good, the supreme goal...the one and only consummation of...life, the eternal, hidden and incomprehensible Peace" (Conze, 1997:40). This is evidence enough that Buddhism does not deny the Supreme Self (*Ātman*, or *Paramātmā*) that eternally abides beyond the level of the mutable body (*rūpa*) and soul (*jīvātman*); it simply denies the permanence of the psychophysical individuality, or empirical personality (*nāmarūpa*). Witness these sayings of the Buddha himself: "What think ye? Were it not better that ye sought the Self?" [*attānam gaveseyyātha*] (*Vinaya Pitaka*, I, 23); "Make the Self your refuge" (*Samyutta Nikāya*, iii, 143); "Be such as have the Self as your refuge" (*Dīgha Nikāya*, ii, 101); "I have made the Self my refuge" (*Dīgha Nikāya*, ii, 120; Above cited in Stoddart, 1998:33; See Pallis, 1980:129-143; and Stoddart, 1998:33-34 for a Traditionalist account of the Buddhist doctrine of *anattā* [Sanskrit: *anātman*]; See A.K. Coomaraswamy, 1977b:88-106 for an enumeration of sundry traditional texts [Buddhist and otherwise] elucidating the idea that the human individuality [*nāmarūpa*] is devoid of 'self' [Buddhism: *anātman*; Sufism: *fanā* ('extinction')]; See Schuon, 1993b: 88-89; Burckhardt, 1995a:15; Lings, 1981:25; 87-88; and Stoddart, 1998:33-34 for an elucidation of the correspondence between the Buddhist and Sufi terms], or – what comes to the same thing – not the true supra-individual Self [Hinduism: *Ātmā*]; See also Diener *et al*, 1991:153 for an account of *nāmarūpa*). It will thus be seen that an inward 'reconciliation' of the Hindu *Advaita Vedāntist* and Buddhist views – as to their "spiritual anthropology" – is facilitated by a comprehension of the *duo sunt in homine* thesis elucidated above.

not intellectual intuition [*noēsis*] in the heart<sup>140</sup> proves that for them it is feeling that occupies the center of the individuality”<sup>141</sup> (1995:123). Herein is the resolution to the polyvalent ‘enigma’ of the heart (physical, psychic, spiritual, and divine<sup>142</sup>): it refers – and this is crucially important – to that which is at the *center*<sup>143</sup> of the different degrees of reality; as such it is none other than the central axis that transpierces the innumerable grades of reality (corporeal, psychic, spiritual, and Divine).

Lest the doctrine of the Heart – intermediate between the Spirit and the soul – appear to be a restricted phenomenon, a wide-ranging list of quotations from the Hindu, Buddhist,

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<sup>140</sup> Titus Burckhardt here identifies the heart with the supra-individual intelligence (*Nous-Intellectus*).

<sup>141</sup> Frithjof Schuon, however, allows of a legitimate association of the heart and sentiment (which in no wise contradicts what Titus Burckhardt has said above): “In [the]...heart, the elements knowledge, love and power – or intelligence, sentiment and will – are combined as so many dimensions of one and the same deiform [i.e. made in the image of God] subjectivity...[such that] a sentiment [can be said to] come from the heart to the extent that it is *profound* [i.e. spiritual and not sentimentalist], exactly as is the case with knowledge” (1982b:79-80; italics added). According to this understanding, the Heart may be said to consist of truth (intelligence), goodness (will), and beauty or love (sentiment); and the display of a profound sentiment, far from being subjective and sentimentalist, is truly objective because in *adaequatio* with the designated object. Thus, for example, to exhibit emotion at the sight of a beautiful sunset is an expression of objectivity, and not a sentimentalist subjectivism – for the sunset is truly (i.e. objectively) beautiful.

<sup>142</sup> The Divine ‘Heart’ is the Essence of God, variously named ‘*Ayin Sof*’ (Judaism); *al-Dhāt* (Islam); *Nirguna Brahman* (Hinduism); *Shūnyatā* (Buddhism); *Wu* (Philosophical Taoism); and Beyond-Being (St. Dionysius the Areopagite) or *Gottheit* (Meister Eckhart) in Christianity (See Appendix 1).

<sup>143</sup> According to René Guénon (summarized here by S.H. Nasr): “The word *heart*, *hrdaya* in Sanskrit, *Herz* in German, *kardia* in Greek, and *cor/cordis* in Latin, have the root *hrd* or *krd* which, like the Egyptian *Horus*, imply the center of the world or a world” (Nasr, 1989:150; See also Guénon, 1995a:45-85; 145-148; and 283-312 on the ‘center’ and the ‘heart’).

Christian, Islamic, and Native American Indian traditions, respectively, is here provided to establish its presence within diverse religions throughout the world.<sup>144</sup>

“This *Ātmā*, which dwells in the heart, is smaller than a grain of rice, smaller than a grain of barley, smaller than a grain of mustard, smaller than a grain of millet, smaller than the germ which is in the grain of millet; this *Ātmā*, which dwells in the heart, is also greater than the earth [corporeal manifestation], greater than the atmosphere [subtle manifestation], greater than the sky [supra-formal ‘spiritual’ manifestation], greater than all the worlds together [manifestation *per se*]...this *Ātmā* within the heart, this is *Brahma*.”<sup>145</sup> – *Chāndogya Upanishad*, III, xiv, 3-4

“In this abode of *Brahma* (*Brahma-pura*) there is a small lotus, a place in which is a small cavity (*dahara*) [i.e. the heart] occupied by Ether (*Akāsha*); we must seek That which is in this place, and we shall know It.”<sup>146</sup> – *Chāndogya Upanishad*, VIII, i, 1

“The heart is the same as *Prajāpati* (Lord of Creation). It is *Brahma*. It is all.” – *Bṛihad-Āraṇyaka Upanishad*, V, 3

“He who knows That, set in the secret place (of the heart) –  
He here on earth, my friend, rends asunder the knot of ignorance.” – *Mundaka*

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<sup>144</sup> It should be recalled that the heart is frequently used as a synonym for the Spirit-Intellect, in which case the said quotation confirms the tripartite “spiritual anthropology” (body, soul, Spirit-Intellect) of the Traditionalist school. When, however, the heart is used to refer to that faculty which is the center and summit of the soul, the tripartite division should then be ‘modified’ to include the said intermediate entity. In reality, a given text can refer to both ontological levels (the supra-formal Spirit, and the formal Heart) at once, according to the well-known formula from the *Emerald Tablet* of Hermes Trismegistus: “That which is below is like that which is above, and that which is above is like that which is below” (1997:7; P. Smith, trans.); or, more succinctly: ‘as above, so below’. Thus applied, the former interpretation refers to the dwelling (or ‘union’) of the Divine Spirit within the ‘human’ Spirit-Intellect; whilst the latter interpretation refers to the dwelling (or ‘union’) of the ‘human’ (but supra-individual) Spirit-Intellect within the Heart.

<sup>145</sup> See René Guénon (1999a:23-29) for an elucidatory exegesis of this Upanishadic text

<sup>146</sup> “Ether” (*Akāsha*) is the principle and quintessence (*quinta essentia*: literally – “fifth essence”) of the four corporeal elements fire, air, water, and earth; which by symbolic transposition refers to the Universal Spirit (*Ātmā*) – principle and quintessence of subtle manifestation – which dwells in the psychic heart (Guénon, 1999a:24-27).

*Upanishad*, II, i, 10

“That God, the All-Worker, the Great Self (*mahātman*),  
Ever seated in the heart of creatures,  
Is framed by the heart.” – *Śetāsvatara Upanishad*, IV, 17

“Thus it has been said: That Golden Person<sup>147</sup> who is within the Supernal Sun, and who from his golden station looks down upon this earth, is even He who dwells consuming food in the Lotus of the Heart.” – *Maitri Upanishad*, VI, 1 (Cited in Eaton, 1995:58)

“This verily, is the person (*purusha*) dwelling in all cities (*puri aya*) [i.e. hearts].” – *Brihad-Āranyaka Upanishad*, II, v, 18

“He truly, indeed, is the Self (*Ātmā*) within the heart, very subtile.” – *Maitri Upanishad*, VII, 7

“Who is the bird of golden hue,  
Who dwells in both the heart and sun,  
Swan, diver-bird, surpassing bright –  
Him let us worship in this fire!” – *Maitri Upanishad*, VI, 34

“I [God] am seated in the hearts of all.” – *Bhagavad-Gītā*, XV, 15

“O Arjuna, the Lord dwells in the heart of all beings.” – *Bhagavad-Gītā*, XVIII, 61

“This earth is the largest thing we see around us. But larger than the earth is the ocean, and larger than the ocean is the sky. But *Vishnu*...has covered earth, sky, and the nether world with one of His feet. And that foot of *Vishnu* is enshrined in the *sādhū*'s [pilgrim or hermit] heart. Therefore the heart of the holy man is the greatest of all.”<sup>148</sup> – *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*

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<sup>147</sup> The Golden Person is the Spirit (*Ātmā*) – conceived at either the Divine or Universal ontological degree respectively (Eaton, 1995:58-78).

<sup>148</sup> “Spoken by Ishan [sic], a devotee, in reply to a question put by Shri Ramakrishna” (Perry, 1991:822n).

“ ‘Heart’ is merely another name for the Supreme Spirit, because He is in all hearts.” –  
Shrī Rāmāna Mahārshi

“ ‘O Arjuna, I am in the expanse of the Heart,’ says Shrī *Krishna*. ‘He who is in the Sun,  
is also in this man,’ says a *mantra* in the Upanishads. ‘The Kingdom of God is within,’  
says the Bible. All are thus agreed that God is within.” – Shrī Rāmāna Mahārshi

“In truth, we seek for God outside of ourselves, until we make the great Discovery –  
which is that our heart is the sanctuary where the Lord of the universe, *Vishvanāth*,  
dwells in all His glory.” – Swami Ramdas

“A fund of omniscience exists eternally in our heart.” – *Tipitaka*

“The Dwelling of the *Tathāgata* [the Buddha] is the great compassionate heart within  
all living beings.”<sup>149</sup> – *Saddharmapundarīka*

“In virtue of his miraculous power, transcending human [rational] intelligence,  
Residing in the center of the smallest atom [i.e. in all created beings],  
The *Tathāgata* [the Buddha] preaches the doctrine of perfect serenity.” – *Avatamsaka  
Sūtra*

“The Dharma-body [*Dharmakāya*] (the Absolute) of all the Buddhas enters into my own being.  
And my own being is found in union with theirs.” – Yung-chia Ta-shih

“The Buddhas in the numberless Buddhist kingdoms  
Are nothing other than the one Buddha in the center of our soul.” – Kōbō Daishi (774-  
835 C.E.)

“Find Buddha in your own heart, whose essential nature is the Buddha himself.” – Eisai  
(1141-1215 C.E.)

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<sup>149</sup> In *Mahāyāna* Buddhism the indwelling of the *Tathāgata* (via his *Dharmakāya* form of Absolute or Ultimate Reality) in the “great compassionate heart” is called *Tathāgata-garbha* (literally: “germ of the *Tathāgata*”), which means approximately: “[the heart] containing the [Absolute] Buddha within itself” (Diener *et al.*, 1991:220).



“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (*St. Matthew*, V, 8)

“His throne is in heaven who teaches from within the heart.” – St. Augustine

“I found Thee not, O Lord, without, because I erred in seeking Thee without that wert within.” – St. Augustine

“Soul [in her highest aspect – as Heart-Intellect] and Godhead are one: there the soul finds that she is the kingdom of God.” – Meister Eckhart

“The Most High is absolutely without measure, as we know,  
And yet a human heart can enclose Him entirely!” – Angelus Silesius

“My earth and My heaven contain Me not, but the heart of My faithful servant containeth Me.” – Muhammad<sup>150</sup>

“I thought that I had arrived at the very Throne of God and I said to it: ‘O Throne, they tell us that God rests upon thee.’ ‘O Bāyazīd,’ replied the Throne, ‘we are told that He dwells in a humble heart.’” – Bāyazīd al-Bistāmī (d. 875 C.E.)

“He whose heart rejoices in the knowledge that he is really one with God loses his own individuality and becomes free. Be eternally satisfied with thy Beloved, and so shall thou dwell in Him as the rose within the calyx.” – ‘Attār

“The core in the center of the heart is small,  
Yet the Lord of both worlds will enter there.” – Shabistārī

“Man’s heart is the central point  
And heaven the circumference.” – Shabistārī

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<sup>150</sup> This is a well-known *hadīth qudsī* (quoted above): i.e. an extra-*Qur’ānic* saying of the Divinity placed on the tongue of the Prophet of Islam.

“What a wonderful lotus it is that blossoms at the heart of the wheel; who are its comprehensors? There in the midst thunders the self-supported lion-throne, there the Great Person shines resplendent.” – Kabir (1450-1518 C.E.)

“O *Wakan-Tanka* [Great Spirit], behold the [sacred tobacco] pipe!... You have taught us that the round bowl of the pipe is the very center of the universe and the heart of man!” – Black Elk

“The heart is a sanctuary at the Center of which there is a little space, wherein the Great Spirit (*Wakan-Tanka*) dwells.” – Black Elk<sup>151</sup>

The “spiritual anthropology” of the Traditionalist school may thus be represented – after a schema of Frithjof Schuon – as follows: the microcosm is constituted of the “body” and the “soul”; within the latter, there is the mortal “sensorial soul” (the ‘animal’ and ‘vegetable’ soul), and the “immortal soul”; and within the latter, there is the “individual soul” (the Heart), and the “Spirit-Intellect” (1997:149).

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<sup>151</sup> The foregoing quotations are from Perry (1991:819-828) unless otherwise indicated.

Chapter 4: 'Quelle Dégringolade.'<sup>152</sup>

"We have come to the place where I have told thee  
Thou shalt behold the miserable people,  
Those who have foregone the good of intellect."

[*Noi siam venuti al loco ov'i' t'ho detto  
che tu vedrai le genti dolorose  
c'hanno perduto il ben de l'intelletto.*]

(Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, III, 16-18; author's translation).

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<sup>152</sup> "From the Stone Age until now, *quelle dégringolade!*" (Lodge, cited in Eaton, 1995:183); i.e. "what a rapid deterioration, or fall!"

Following the *in extenso* listing of texts pertaining to (i) the *Nous-Intellectus*; (ii) the direct and unitive nature of its supra-formal knowledge; (iii) the *duo sunt in homine* thesis – including the concomitant claim to a tripartite “spiritual anthropology”; and (iv) the doctrine of the Heart, the question must now be asked: what is the evidence (rational and/or empirical) for the so-called supra-individual and Universal epistemic faculty called the *Nous-Intellectus*, as well as of its subsidiary vehicle or support, called the Heart? And further, what evidence (rational and/or empirical) is there that it allegedly apprehends its ‘object’ directly and without intermediary?

Immediately it must be acknowledged that there is a problem – as Hugh of St. Victor explains:

[B]ut, after the shades of *sin* had entered upon it, the *eye of contemplation* indeed was extinguished [at the Fall] so that it saw nothing<sup>153</sup>, but the *eye of reason* was made bleared so that it saw doubtfully. That eye alone which was not extinguished [the “eye of the flesh”] remained in its clarity (1951:167; italics added).

Hugh of St. Victor here mentions the well-nigh general extinction of the “eye of contemplation” as consequent upon the Biblical Fall of Adam and Eve. It is to be recalled that it was the Fall that led to the banishment of the primordial couple from the paradise

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<sup>153</sup> According to the Church Father St. Augustine: “The Intellect...has been weakened and obscured by deep-seated vices” (*De Civitate Dei* [The City of God]:XI, 2; Cited in Burckhardt, 1995b:14); which view is corroborated by the ‘eagle of Florence’: “passion fetters the Intellect [*L'affetto l'intelletto lega*]” (Dante, *Paradiso*, XIII, 20); and by the *Bhāgavad Gītā* (II, 66): “There is no [access to the] Intellect (*Buddhi*) for the uncontrolled (or undisciplined, *ayuktasya*) [person]” (Based on the translations of A. Besant, 1998:42; S. Radhakrishnan, 1995:127; and V. Nabar and S. Tumkur, 1997:14). Frithjof Schuon expresses the same truth thus: “[O]bstacles to the shining forth of the Intellect and to the vision of the ‘Eye of the Heart’...[include] psychic ‘hardenings’, ‘dissipations’...or ‘heavinesses’ ” (1994a:3); in other words, every infirmity of soul.

of the Garden of Eden – there where once they had had access to the Tree of Life and where, indeed, they had walked with God in “the cool of the day” (See, *Genesis*, II, 4 - III, 24). Now, Hugh of St. Victor clearly implies that the loss of Paradise and the loss of the “eye of contemplation” at the Fall are but one and the same thing<sup>154</sup>; the former represented in a macrocosmic and the latter in a microcosmic form, respectively (See Lings, 1991:15 for the association of the Tree and the Fountain of Life with the spiritual heart, or *Nous*). And so, it is the loss of the “eye of contemplation” by the vast majority of humanity (according to Hugh of St. Victor) that makes the verification of its existence most difficult; for the said majority to whom the proof is to be given, are precisely those

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<sup>154</sup>Traditionalist Marco Pallis summarizes the contemplative, *gnōsis*-based interpretation of the Biblical Fall as follows: “[T]he ‘terrestrial paradise’ or Garden of Eden was described in *Genesis* as disposed around a central tree, known as the Tree of Life. Now this tree is simply an alternative symbol of the Axis; among similar examples...mention [should be made of] the Sacred Oak of the Druids, the World Ash-tree of the Scandinavians and the Lime-tree of the ancient Germans. Adam and Eve, or in other words humanity in its truly normal state, dwell in the garden near the Tree, that is to say they lead a life in which the Contemplative Intelligence [*Nous*] is always directed towards the one essential Truth...while the various faculties of indirect knowledge and action [reason, intuition, memory, imagination, sentiment, and will] are grouped around it in their proper order, each occupying the place that belongs to it in virtue both of its possibilities and limitations. Such a condition of inward harmony is automatically reflected in the outward peace symbolized by the garden in which all kinds of creatures, including Man himself, dwell together in friendship. The Fall, when it occurs, is ascribed to the tasting of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil; that is to say, the formerly single eye [*Nous*] begins to see double, and unity gives place to dualism, or polarization into contraries. From that moment harmony is destroyed and now Man, at war with himself, finds himself likewise vowed to conflict with everything else around him, while peace lingers on only as a more or less blurred memory in the back of his consciousness, causing him to feel perpetually discontented with the present state and thus inspiring him to seek the path of return to the lost paradise” (1991:28-29).

who have lost access to the requisite knowledge of the “eye of contemplation” by the Fall<sup>155</sup>.

It may, however, be argued that the contention of Hugh of St. Victor is *particular* to the Judeo-Christian tradition alone, and that it is not applicable to religious traditions lacking such a doctrine of the Fall. Now, according to the Traditionalist school, the doctrine of the ‘fall’ is to be found in all religious traditions without exception,<sup>156</sup> albeit, the formulation and ‘perspective’ may differ considerably from tradition to tradition:

[Philosophical] Taoism regards the actual dichotomy between man and his primordial nature in terms of a *disequilibrium*. Vedanta starts from the perspective of *illusion*, while Buddhism speaks of the same thing in terms of *ignorance*. Judeo-Christianity teaches that man is in a state of *fall*, whereas Islam describes it from the viewpoint of *rebellion* (Perry, 1991:53).

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<sup>155</sup> This recalls the saying of the Taoist sage Chuang tzu: “The blind cannot enjoy the sight of beautiful colours and patterns. The deaf cannot enjoy the sound of bells and drums. But do you think that blindness and deafness are confined to the bodily organs? No, they are found also in the domain of cognition [rational and spiritual]” (Cited in Izutsu, 1991:49); and these words of St. Paul: “But the natural man [*Vulgate: psychikos anthropos*] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are *spiritually discerned* [by the *Nous*]. But he that is spiritual...hath known the mind of the Lord” – (*I Corinthians*, II, 14-15; italics added; See also *I Corinthians*, XV:45-46); as also the above quoted saying of Shrī Shankarāchārya: “The eye of Knowledge contemplates *Brahman* as It is in Itself, abounding in Bliss...*but the eye of ignorance discovers It not, discerns It not, even as a blind man perceives not the sensible light*” (*Ātmā-Bodha*, cited in Guénon, 1999:151; italics added). Frithjof Schuon expresses the problem in a contemporary idiom: “To ask for the proof of intellection [*noēsis*, i.e. the *Intellectus in actus*] – hence of a direct, adequate and infallible knowledge of the supernatural – is to prove that one does not have access to it, and, analogically speaking, it is like asking for the proof of the adequacy of our elementary sensations – which no one doubts” (1990c:62; See also Schuon, 1975:31-32).

<sup>156</sup> It is, indeed, the ‘fall’ that is the *raison d’être* of all religion (Latin *religare*: “to bind” [the human to the Divine]). Were there no ‘fall’, there would be no need for religion (or the return to Divinity).

In other words, the ‘fall’ in each of the major religious traditions mentioned above has resulted in either disequilibrium, illusion, ignorance, sin, and rebellion. And it is precisely the task of religion to reverse this ‘fall’ and effect the path back towards equilibrium, reality, truth, righteousness, and obedience<sup>157</sup>. Further, from the standpoint of the ‘way of knowledge’ (*gnōsis*) adopted by the Traditionalist school (and Hugh of St. Victor), it is (by turns) disequilibrium, illusion, ignorance, sin, and rebellion that have caused the occlusion of the “eye of contemplation”; for without it, the human being is, precisely, in a state of disequilibrium, illusion, ignorance, sin, and rebellion.

Acceptance of the thesis of a generalized ‘fall’ within all of the religious traditions of the world (expressed, it is understood, in widely divergent formulations) is clearly premised on the (‘non-scientific’) belief in a state of primordial perfection to which an ancient humanity had direct access. Following is a list of quotations from the ‘Egyptian’, Greek, Latin, Hindu, Buddhist, Chinese, Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions respectively, such as bear witness to this ancient state of primordial perfection and the concomitant thesis of the cosmic – and thereby human – ‘devolution’:

“The (cosmic) forces do not work upward from below, but downward from above.”<sup>158</sup> –

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<sup>157</sup> See Perry (1991:53-134) for a comprehensive listing of traditional sources from diverse religious traditions related to the doctrine of the ‘fall’.

<sup>158</sup> This is a most succinct metaphysical ‘critique’ of the modern scientific hypothesis of ‘transformist’ evolution. For a Traditionalist critique of the ‘transformist’ hypothesis – necessarily beyond the scope of the present thesis – see Schuon (1975:12-13; 68-69; 93-94; 1982b:5-6; 17; 88; 98; 1985:68-69; 1990c:50-51; 1991a:5; 17-20; 1993b:27; 1995a:89); Perry (1995); Burckhardt (1987:30-45); Lings (1987:18-42; 1992:1-6); W. Smith (1984:66-91; 1988:1-26; 133-151; 1997:119-127); Nasr (1993:149-158); R. Coomaraswamy (1994:91-116; 1997:45-74); Cutsinger (1998:96-101); and Monastra (1997:57-99). See also Perry (1991:23-50), Schuon (1982b:10-12; 1984a:45-47; 58-71; 1986:47-59; 1992:37-42; 1997:27-29); Burckhardt (1987:13-45); Cutsinger (1998:91-114); and W. Smith (1984:43-65; 87-91;) for an

Hermes

"Intellect (*Nous*) the Father of all, He who is Life and Light, gave birth to Man, a being like to Himself. And He took delight in Man, as being His own offspring... With good reason then did God take delight in Man; for it was God's own form that God took delight in." – Hermes

"If you possess true knowledge (gnosis), O Soul, you will understand that you are akin to your Creator." – Hermes

"That which has a precedency is more honourable than that which is consequent in time." – Pythagoras (fl. c. 530 B.C.E.)

"The world is the fairest of creations." – Plato (*Timaeus*, 29a)

"The reason why the life of [primordial] man was, as tradition says, spontaneous, is as

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explication, in metaphysical and cosmological perspective, of the traditionally conceived process of creation or manifestation summarized by Frithjof Schuon in the following words: "[T]he origin of a creature is not a material substance, it is a perfect and non-material archetype: perfect and consequently without any need of a transforming evolution; non-material and consequently having its origin in the Spirit, and not in matter" (1982b:16). For the scientific critique of 'transformist' evolution, see for example, Dewar (1995); Denton (1986); Johnson (1993); and Behe (1996). Sheldon Isenberg and Gene Thursby (1984-1986:177-226) have drawn a distinction between "devolutionary" and "evolutionary" orientations amongst followers of the *philosophia perennis*. Evidently, the Traditionalist school adheres to a 'devolutionary' interpretation of the *philosophia perennis*. The 'evolutionary' – and, *a fortiori* anti-traditional – recension of the *philosophia perennis* is propounded most notably by: Anthroposophy, Bahai, Aurobindo Ghose, G.I. Guerdjieff, Aldous Huxley, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Rajneesh, Subud, the Theosophical Society, Vivekananda, Alan Watts, Ken Wilber and Mahesh Yogi. The Traditionalist school have critiqued these "very inadequate...[and] even completely false" (Schaya, 1980:167) representatives of the *philosophia perennis* in numerous articles; See especially the critiques of Whitall Perry on Guerdjieff (1974:211-239; 1975a:20-35; 1975b:97-126); Huxley (1996:7-16); Krishnamurti and Watts (1996:65-79); Rama Coomaraswamy on Aurobindo Ghose, Rajneesh and Mahesh Yogi (1998:194-219); Gai Eaton (1995:166-182) and Peter Moore (1972:61-64) on Huxley; René Guénon (1921) on the Theosophical Society; and Kenneth Oldmeadow (2000:142-163) on the "counterfeit spirituality" of Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda, Aldous Huxley and others.



follows: In those days God himself was their shepherd, and ruled over them, just as man, who is by comparison a divine being, still rules over the animals. Under him there were no forms of government or separate possession of women and children; for all men rose again from the earth, having no memory of the past. And although they had nothing of this sort, the earth gave them fruits in abundance, which grew on trees and shrubs unbidden, and were not planted by the hand of man. And they dwelt naked, and mostly in the open air, for the temperature of their seasons was mild; and they had no beds, but lay on soft couches of grass, which grew plentifully out of the earth. Such was the life of man in the days of [the Golden Age of the God] *Cronos*.”<sup>159</sup> – Plato (*Statesman*,

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<sup>159</sup> During the Golden Age of *Kronos* (Roman: *Saturn*) “mortal people lived as if they were gods...[and] no miserable old age came their way” (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 5, 108-202; Cited in Evola, 1995:185). According to Hesiod, the appearance of death only appeared within the conditions of existence at the time of the Bronze Age of the Greek cosmological cycle (See Evola, 1995:184-187 for similar claims in other religious traditions). “In Hinduism and Buddhism – as also in Greek, Roman, Judaic, Christian, Hermetic, and Islamic traditions – one finds reference to the ‘four ages’, sometimes identified with the metals gold, silver, bronze, and iron and sometimes with the four legs of the sacred cow or with the Pythagorean *tertraktys* (note: The Sacred Cow is said to live in the Golden Age on four legs, in the Silver on three, in the Bronze on two, and in the Final Age on one leg. The symbolism – 4, 3, 2, 1 – corresponds to the Pythagorean symbol of the *tetraktys*). These four ages begin with a paradisaal Golden Age and end with the conclusion of the Iron Age, which is full of strife, suffering, and destruction. Currently, [humanity]...live[s] in the Iron Age, known in Hindu tradition as the Kali Yuga” (Versluis, 1992:24; 146). Mention of the Sacred Cow by Arthur Versluis, recalls these words of Frithjof Schuon: “The sacred animal of the Plains Indians, the buffalo, symbolizes the Mahāyuga [Hindu: four ages], each of its legs representing a yuga. At the beginning of this Mahāyuga a buffalo was placed by the Great Spirit at the West in order to hold back the waters which menace the earth; every year this bison loses a hair, and in every yuga it loses a foot. When it will have lost all its hair and its feet, the waters will overwhelm the earth and the mahāyuga will be finished” (Schuon, 1990b:113-114; See also Schuon, 1969:117n; and J.E. Brown, 1989:9). Another explicit formulation of the doctrine of the four ages is to be found amongst the Hopi Indians of North America: “According to the Hopi, there are four worlds [each corresponding to an age], the first of which was Tokpela, or ‘infinite space’. Its colour was yellow; its metal was gold; and its inhabitants were happy together for a long time, until some finally became destructive, and the Creator decided to save some of the people and destroy the rest. Those He saved went on to populate the second world, Tokpa, whose mineral was silver. In this world, too, people became greedy and destructive, ignored the Divine, and...once again a few religious people went into the ‘womb of the earth’, in an ant kiva, while the second world was destroyed by ice. The people then emerged into the third world, Kukurza, where the mineral was copper, and were for a time happy. Once again...at the end of the cycle, people grew acquisitive and irreligious,

"You are a principal work, a fragment of God Himself, you have in yourself a part of Him. Why then are you ignorant of your high birth?... You bear God about with you, poor wretch, and know it not." – Epictetus (c. 50-120 C.E.)

"Golden was that first age, which, with no one to compel, without a law, of its own will, kept faith and did the right." – Ovid (43 B.C.E -17 C.E.)

"In the beginning, before there was any division of subject and object, there was one

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using magical power in very destructive ways – and so there came a purifying flood. To survive this flood, the religious people floated in hollow reeds above the waters and came to rest upon the highest mountain. Finally, they were led by Spider Woman to the current fourth world, Tuwagachi, the metal for which is 'mixed' " (Versluis, 1992:24-25). Commenting on this Hopi 'myth of emergence', Arthur Versluis insists that it is "not a hidden reference to evolutionism; humankind is not 'evolving' toward a common 'New Age'; the symbolism involved is not a progressive ascent from an inferior to a superior state; rather, humans are born into a primordial 'golden' or paradisaal world; humankind slowly becomes decadent; the decadent ones are destroyed; and a new world appears, at its inception more perfect than the last at its decadence but not as perfect as the first age" (1992:25). Considering the doctrine of the 'four ages' in relation to the Judeo-Christian 'myth' of Genesis, Martin Lings says: "The ancient and world-wide tradition of the four ages does not contradict the Book of Genesis, but...it does suggest an allegorical rather than a literal interpretation...for example...certain [Biblical] names indicate not single individuals but whole eras of pre-history...[T]he name Adam in particular may be taken as denoting not only the first man but also the whole of primordial humanity, spanning a period of many thousands of years...[T]he Old Testament [the Hebrew *Torah*] is a story of a downward trend, as for example between the Fall and the Flood, and then between the Flood and the Tower of Babel" (1992:3; 16). According to René Guénon (1983:45n), the Tower of Babel and the 'confusion of tongues' in the Biblical narrative represent the onset of the *Kali Yuga* (See, *Genesis*, XI, 1-9). For further details of the doctrine of the four ages in particular and cosmic 'devolution' in general, see Lings (1992:1-25); Perry (1995); and Evola (1995:175-369). It is to be noted that the Traditionalist school cite the work of Julius Evola with some reservation. Frithjof Schuon, for example, has drawn attention to Evola's heterodox placement of the *kshatriya* (royal, warrior caste) over and above the *brahmin* (sacerdotal caste) in his analysis of traditional societies (1998:11); See also, Burckhardt (1987:68-74) for a Traditionalist critique of Evola; and Schuon (1982a:7-36) for a Traditionalist representation of the caste system.

<sup>160</sup> See also Plato's *Phaedo*, 110b-111c for another description of the primordial perfection of the Golden Age.

existence, *Brahman* alone, One without a second. That time is called the *Krita yuga*, or the golden age, when people skilled in knowledge and discrimination realized that one existence...Men had but one caste, known as *Hamsa*<sup>161</sup>. All were equally endowed with knowledge, all were born knowers of Truth; and since this was so the age was called *Krita*, which is to say, 'Attained.' ”<sup>162</sup> – *Srimad Bhagavatam*, XI. XVII & XI

<sup>161</sup> This is the single 'caste' of primordial humanity before the later breakdown into several caste groups (See Stoddart, 1993:43-48; See also the revelatory account of the *Rig-Veda*, X, 90 on the derivation of the four castes from *Purusha* – the 'Universal Man')

<sup>162</sup> The doctrine of the 'fall' is present within the Hindu tradition in its elaborate theory of cosmological cycles. According to its chronology, the present humanity has entered upon the last phase of the *Kali Yuga* (the "Dark Age" or "Age of Strife") where access to the spiritual 'vision' of the *Buddhi* is extraordinarily rare. The *Mānava-Dharma-Shāstra* outlines the theory of cosmological cycles in its most representative form as follows (cited in Stoddart, 1993:73-74):

4 Yugas = 1 Mahāyuga		
71 Mahāyugas = 1 Manvantara		
14 Manvantaras = 1 Kalpa ("Day of Brahmā")		
360 (x2) Kalpas = 1 Para ("Year of Brahmā")		
994 ("1000") Mahāyugas = 1 Kalpa		
- Each Mahāyuga ("eon") is made up of four Yugas ("ages"), which are as follows:		- Relative duration in the following proportion:
1. <i>Krita-Yugā (Satya-Yuga)</i>	Golden Age	4
2. <i>Treta-Yuga</i>	Silver Age	3
3. <i>Dvapara-Yuga</i>	Bronze Age	2
4. <i>Kali-Yuga</i> ("Dark Age")	Iron Age	1

It will be noted that the Hindu theory of cosmological cycles is ineluctably 'devolutionary' in import: a gradual degradation is witnessed from the 'impeccable' *Krita Yuga*, down through the *Treta* and *Dvapara Yugas*, and devolving upon the 'disgraced' *Kali Yuga*. A citation from the *Vishnu Purāna* (codified in approximately the 3<sup>rd</sup> century C. E.) contains a most noteworthy description of the deleterious conditions characterizing the latter part of this the Dark Age [*Kali Yuga*]: "Riches and piety will diminish daily, until

“In those days...all times were pleasant...People had no need of sacraments for the purification of their bodies, and their youth was permanent.” – *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, XLIX

“Human birth...reflects My image.” – *Srīmad Bhagavatam*, XI, XIX

“Mind is consciousness which has put on limitations. You are originally unlimited and perfect. Later you take on limitations and become the mind.” – Śrī Rāmāṇa Maharshi

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the world will be completely corrupted. In those days it will be wealth that confers distinction, passion will be the sole reason for union between the sexes, lies will be the only method for success in business, and women will be the objects merely of sensual gratification. The earth will be valued only for its mineral treasures, dishonesty will be the universal means of subsistence...The observance of castes, laws, and institutions will no longer be in force in the Dark Age [*Kali Yuga*], and the ceremonies prescribed by the *Vedas* will be neglected. Women will obey only their whims and will be infatuated with pleasure...Men of all kinds will presumptuously regard themselves as the equals of *brahmins* [the sacerdotal caste]...The *vaishyas* will abandon agriculture and commerce and will earn their living by servitude or by the exercise of mechanical professions...The path of the *Vedas* having been abandoned, and man having been led astray from orthodoxy, iniquity will prevail and the length of human life will diminish in consequence...Then men will cease worshipping *Vishnu*, the Lord of sacrifice, Creator and Lord of all things, and they will say: ‘Of what authority are the *Vedas*? Who are the Gods and the *Brahmins*? What is the use of purification with water?’...The dominant caste will be that of the *shūdras* [the labouring caste]...Men, deprived of reason and subject to every infirmity of body and mind, will daily commit sins: everything which is impure, vicious, and calculated to afflict the human race will make its appearance in the Dark Age” (Cited in Stoddart, 1993:74-76; See also, Evola, 1995:367-369 for a description of the ‘end times’ from the *Vishnu Purāṇa*, 4.24; 6.1, H. Wilson, trans.). This account may be compared with the following pronouncement from the *Saddharmapundarīka* (“The Lotus of the Good Law Sutra”): “At the horrible time of the end, men will be malevolent, false, evil and obtuse and they will imagine that they have reached perfection when it will be nothing of the sort” (Cited in Paraskevopoulos, 1999:129; The Lotus Sutra was put to writing in c. 200 C.E., but *Mahāyāna* Buddhist tradition attributes it to the later sermons of the historical Buddha Siddhartha Gautama [563-483 B.C.E.]; See Diener *et al.*, 1991:129-130). The above quoted (Hindu) evocation of the rule of the *shūdra* recalls a corresponding account – by the Traditionalist Titus Burckhardt – of the gradual decline of the medieval and ‘Renaissance’ West by a perspicacious analysis (based on the political philosophy of Plato) of the fortunes of Siena – ‘City of the Virgin’. The account details the gradual decline of the city from the initial sacerdotal rule of the Church, through the aristocratic, mercantile, and finally, serf rule of *Il Monte del Popolo* – The People’s Party (See Burckhardt, 1960; especially:30-33; 91-93).

“The search ‘Who am I?...ends in the annihilation of the illusory ‘I’ and the Self [*Ātmā*] which remains over will be as clear as a gooseberry in the palm of one’s hand... You are sure to realize the Self [*Ātmā*] for it is your natural state.” – Shri Ramana Maharshi

“For in the past, we were made of mind, we fed on rapture, self-luminous, we traversed the air in abiding loveliness; long long the period we so remained.” – *Aggana Suttanta*

“During the first five hundred-year period after the Buddha’s *parinirvāna* [death], my disciples will be resolute in acquiring wisdom. During the second five hundred-year period, they will be resolute in cultivating meditation. During the third five hundred-year period, they will be resolute in listening to the teaching and sutra-recitation. During the fourth five hundred-year period, they will be resolute in constructing towers and temples, practicing meritorious conduct and performing penance. During the fifth five hundred-year period, they will be resolute in conflict and strife, which will become widespread with the good *dharma* being diminished... This is now the last *dharma*-age; it is the evil world of the five defilements”<sup>163</sup> – *The Great Collection Sutra* (Cited in Paraskevopoulos, 1999:129).

“The mind from the beginning is of a pure nature, but since there is the finite aspect of it which is sullied by finite views, there is the sullied aspect of it. Although there is this

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<sup>163</sup> According to the “Pure Land” Buddhist (Japanese: *Jōdo*; Chinese: *Ching-t’u*) practitioner John Paraskevopoulos, the ‘five defilements’ “constitute the distinguishing characteristics of the age in which [humanity] currently live[s]. They are [i] the impure or turbid age in which calamities occur incessantly; [ii] impurity of the view that ignores the principle of cause and effect; [iii] the impurity and defiling nature of evil passions; [iv] the degeneration of the minds and bodies of sentient beings; and [v] the shortening of the span of life of sentient beings as the result of prevailing evil passions and wrong views” (1999:129). The *Jōdo* bonze Kanei Okamoto has given expression to a more simplified version of the ‘devolutionary’ cycle of existence thus: “According to the Buddhists there are three periods during which...[the] capacity for understanding Buddhism grows less and less. These are counted from the death of [Gautama the] Buddha [d.483 B.C.E.]: the first, which lasts for a thousand years, is called ‘the period of true Buddhism’; the second, also a thousand years, is called ‘the period of imitation Buddhism’; the third, in which [present humanity has been for approximately the last 500 years]...is the ‘period of degeneration’ ” (Cited in Lings, 1992:19).

defilement, yet the original pure nature is eternally unchanged. This mystery the Enlightened One alone understands.” – Asvaghosha (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E.)

“Just as crystal, which is clear, becomes coloured from the colour of another object, so likewise the jewel of the mind becomes coloured with the colour of mental conceits. Like a jewel the mind is naturally free from the colour of these mental conceits; it is pure from the beginning, unproduced, immaculate and without any [limitative] self-nature.” – *Cittavisuddhiprakarana*

“Realize thy Simple Self [*su*],  
Embrace thy Original Nature [*p’u*].”<sup>164</sup> – *Tao Te Ching*, XIX

“The trees of the New Mountain were once beautiful. Being situated, however, in the borders of a large state, they were hewn down with axes and bills; – and could they retain their beauty?...And so also of what properly belongs to man – shall it be said that the mind of any man was without benevolence and righteousness? The way in which a man loses his proper goodness of mind is like the way in which the trees are denuded by axes and bills. Hewn down day after day, can it – the mind – retain its beauty?” – Mencius (372-289 B.C.E.)

“The knowledge of the ancients was perfect. How perfect? At first they did not yet know that there were things (apart from Tao, which signifies the Eternal and Infinite). This is the most perfect knowledge, nothing can be added. Next, they knew that there were things [‘apart’ from Tao], but did not make [an absolute] distinction between them [and Tao]. Next they made [an absolute] distinction between them but they did not [yet] pass [‘artificial’ moral] judgements upon them. When [these] judgements were passed (the [unitive] knowledge of) Tao was destroyed.”<sup>165</sup> – Chuang-tzu [369-286 B.C.E.]

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<sup>164</sup> In the translation of Red Pine (Bill Porter) these lines are rendered (very literally) as: “Wear the undyed [*su*] and hold the uncarved [*p’u*].” Thereafter, he lists the traditional commentaries of, amongst others, Liu Ching (fl. 1074 C.E.): “*Undyed* [*su*] means unmixed with anything [i.e. pure, simple, unified] else and thus free of [worldly] wisdom and reason. *Uncarved* [*p’u*] means complete [i.e. perfect] in itself.” Even more succinctly, Chiao Hung (1541-1620 C.E.) says: “The *undyed* [*su*] and the *uncarved* [*p’u*] refer to our original nature” (1996:38-39; italics added). These lines of chapter XIX of the *Tao Te Ching* can thus be glossed as: ‘Embrace the purity and simplicity (*su*) of thy primordially perfect original nature (*p’u*).’

Cited in Lings, 1965:19)

"And so in the days when natural instincts prevailed<sup>166</sup>, men moved quietly and gazed steadily. At that time there were no roads over mountains, nor boats, nor bridges over water. All things were produced, each for its own proper sphere. Birds and beasts multiplied; trees and shrubs grew up. The former might be led by the hand; you could climb up and peep into the raven's nest. For then man dwelt with birds and beasts, and all creation was one. There were no distinctions of good and bad men. Being all equally without [worldly] knowledge, their virtue could not go astray. Being all equally without evil desires they were in a state of natural integrity, the perfection of human existence."<sup>167</sup> – Chuang tzu, ch. IX)

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<sup>165</sup> The point at which the unitive knowledge of Tao was destroyed may be compared to the Judeo-Christian Biblical Fall.

<sup>166</sup> "In the days when natural instincts prevailed" has been translated more felicitously as: "in the age of perfect virtue" (J. Legge, in Chuang Tzu, 1962:277-278); "a time of Perfect Virtue" (B. Watson in Chuang Tzu, 1968:105); "those times of perfect naturalism" (D. Bryce in Chuang Tzu, 1994:52); and "this [ancient] time of perfect Virtue" (M. Palmer in Chuang Tzu, 1996:73).

<sup>167</sup> The proverbial Taoist 'naturalism' is to be understood in the light of the central idea of *wu-wei* (literally: "non-action"), which refers to a perfect simplicity (*su*: literally: "undyed [cloth]") and spontaneity (*tzu-jan*) of action, accomplished without interference or effort, by the primordially perfect 'original nature' (*p'u*: literally, "uncarved block" [of wood]) of an ancient humanity fully in accord with the *Tao* and untainted by the (relatively) artificial and imposing 'rules and regulations' (*li*) of "the [Confucian] 'sage', huffing and puffing after 'benevolence' [*jên*], reaching on tiptoe for 'righteousness' [*yi*]... mooning and mouthing over his music, [and] snipping and stitching away at his rites." According to the Taoist, it is precisely in this manner that "the plain unwrought substance [the 'uncarved block']... [is] blighted" (Chuang Tzu, 1968:105; B. Watson, trans.; See chapters 15, 19, 21, 28, 32, and 57 of the *Tao Te Ching* [A. Waley trans.], for a description of the *p'u* ['uncarved block'] nature of the *Tao* and of primordial humanity; See chapters 7, 10, 17, 20, 30, 31, 37, 46, 48, 49, 56, 59, 60, 61, 75 in the *Tao Te Ching* [A. Waley, trans.], for a description of the *wu-wei* ['non-action'] of the *Tao* and the primordial sage [*sheng-jen*]. See Izutsu, 1983:418-456; and 1991:39-54 for a Traditionalist account of "The Perfect [and therefore Ancient] Man [*chen-jen*] in Taoism"; See also Wilkinson, in Lao Tzu, 1997:ix-xiv; Fischer-Schreiber, 1996:126-127; 210-211, and Watts, 1975:74-98 for an elucidation of the central Taoist ideas of *wu-wei* and *p'u*). The traditional Taoist critique of Confucianism is not to be compared to the modern 'iconoclastic' critique of religious tradition; for the modern cult of 'instinctivism', it must be said, fails to discriminate between the perfect and innocent 'original nature' (*p'u*) of primordial humanity, and the imperfect and experienced 'fallen nature' of modern humanity. It is a confusion between the spontaneity (*tzu-jan*) of the 'original nature' and the impetuosity of

“For the sake of those among people of the future who will appreciate, I am writing this – knowing that all those of later times will be of inferior calibre.” – Ko Hung (284-364 C.E.)

“When the Ten Thousand things [i.e. the manifested world] are viewed in their oneness, we return to the Origin [*Tao*] and remain where we have always been.” – Sen T’sen

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden [the terrestrial Paradise]; and there he put the man whom he had formed.” – *Genesis*, II, 8

“Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee”<sup>168</sup> – *Song of Songs*, IV, 7

“Before he ate of the tree of knowledge, Adam was all spirit and wore angelic clothing like Enoch and Elias [or Elijah]. This is why he was worthy to eat the fruits of paradise,

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the ‘fallen nature’; or again, between the ‘higher’ soul (Chinese: *hun*) and the ‘lower’ soul (Chinese: *p’o*); and this is the very definition of the “pre-trans fallacy” – i.e. the false identification of the sub-rational ‘instinct’ with the supra-rational and illuminated (*ming*) ‘original nature’. Whereas the esoteric tradition of Philosophical Taoism (*Tao-Chia*) – which speaks from the point of view of ‘primordial perfection’ – criticizes the exoteric tradition of Confucian ‘formalism’ from ‘above’, modern iconoclastic libertinism criticizes religious tradition – illegitimately – from ‘below’ (See Izutsu, 1983:444-446; Wieger, 1988:57; Wilhelm, 1962:14-15; and Fischer-Schreiber, 1996:66-67; 126; 195-196 on the Taoist terms *tzu-jan*, *p’o*, and *hun*; See Guénon, 1995c:283-290 on the modern confusion of the spiritual and the psychic).

<sup>168</sup> These are the words of the Bridegroom to the Bride in the *Song of Solomon*. The Bride has been variously interpreted as: the Queen of Sheba; the Children of Israel; the Virgin Mary; the Church; and (in its most universal sense) the primordial and perfect soul; in relation to which the Bridegroom is respectively: King Solomon; *YHWH* (the *Shem ha-Meforash*, or sacrosanct Name of the God of Israel; See Schaya, 1971:8n; 145-165); the Holy Ghost (Spirit); Christ as the Mystical Body of the Church (See, for example, *I Corinthians*, VI, 15; XII, 27; and especially *Colossians*, I, 18); and, finally, Christ as Bridegroom (See, for example, *St. Matthew*, IX, 15; *St. Luke*, V, 34; *St. Mark*, II, 19). For an appreciation of the traditional interpretation of scripture at its literal, moral, allegorical, and anagogical levels, respectively (“[T]he ignorant...extol [only] the letter of the scriptures, saying: ‘There is nothing deeper than this’ ” [*Bhagavad Gītā*, II, 42; Shri Purohit Swami, trans., 1994:19]), see Schuon (1974:354-358; 1993a:30n); Guénon (1996:1-2); Lings (1996:14-15); Perry (1996:82-87); and Critchlow (1995:7-8); See also Burckhardt (1995b:13-35) for an expression of the traditional hermeneutical method as applied to the Gothic and Romanesque architecture of medieval Christianity.



which are the fruits of the [primordial and pure] soul.”<sup>169</sup> – Ezra (5<sup>th</sup> century C.E)

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<sup>169</sup>This saying alludes to the gradual ‘materialization’ of “Adam” in the Garden of Eden; from being pure Spirit (as Ezra says above), he gradually assumed a subtle soul (See *Genesis*, II, 7: “And the Lord God formed man...and man became a living soul.”) and corporeal body (See *Genesis*, III, 21: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skin, and clothed them.” This would appear to correspond to the Hindu doctrine of the *koshas* [“sheaths”, or “envelopes”], whereby the Supreme Spirit [*Ātmā*] ‘clothes’ itself with [the five] ‘descending’ levels of manifestation; more particularly it refers to “Adam” as Spirit becoming, respectively: *mano-maya-kosha* [mind]; *prānā-maya-kosha* [vital breath]; and *anna-maya-kosha* [physical body, cf. “coats of skin”]. See also Guénon, 1999:57-61; and Stoddart, 1993:39-40). This idea of the gradual and multiple ‘fall’ of “Adam” is affirmed by certain interpretations within the esotericist traditions of Judaism and Islam, respectively. In Jewish *Qabbalistic* exegesis a distinction is drawn between the ‘Adam’ of chapter I, verse 27 of the *Genesis* narrative (“So God created man”, *Vayivra Elohim et ha Adam*), and the ‘Adam’ of chapter II, verse 7 of the same text (“And the Lord God formed man”, *YHVH Elohim vayitzer et ha Adam*). According to this interpretation, the first ‘Adam’ was ‘created’ (*vayivra*) purely spiritual in the supra-formal and ‘angelic’ world of *Beriah* (*olam haberiyah*, the spiritual ‘world of creation’); whilst the second ‘Adam’ was ‘formed’ as a “living soul” (*Genesis*, II, 7) in the subtle and individualized realm of *Yezirah* (*olam ha’yetsirah*, the subtle ‘world of formation’). Now, it is precisely in this latter ‘world’ that the Garden of Eden resides; and it is also in this realm that the ‘androgynous’ ‘Adam’ of *Beriah* became “male and female” (See *Genesis*, II, 21-24). According to the same *Qabbalistic* exegesis, the principle and origin of both the ‘Adam’ of *Beriah* and the ‘Adam’ of *Yezirah*, respectively, is the *Adam Kadmon* (“Transcendent Man”) of the Divine realm of *Azilot* (*olam ha’atsiluth*, the ‘world of [the] emanation’ of the *Sefiroth*) (Halevi, 1979:10-15; and Schaya, 1971:26; 153; See also Guénon, 1996b:19n; 1999:39; Scholem, 1991:229-230, 308n; 1995:272-273; 1996:72-73 for an exposition of the ontological grades of reality [‘worlds’] according to Jewish *Qabbalism*). In Islamic Sufism: “the creation of Adam and his adoration by the Angels [referring to a passage from the *Qur’ān*: ‘And when We (God) said unto the angels: “Make prostration before Adam”, they prostrated themselves all save *Iblis* [the Devil]...And We said: “O Adam, dwell thou and thy wife in the Paradise...”’ – II, 34-35] is taken to refer to [the most ancient] period when man was born with [direct] consciousness of the [Divine] Self [known in Sufism as the supreme ‘station’ (Arabic: *maqam*) of the Truth of Certainty (Arabic: *Haqq al-Yaqīn*)]...The [subsequent] creation of Eve...augurs a later period when man...[was] born in possession of the Eye of Certainty [‘*Ayn al-Yaqīn*, the non-supreme ‘station’ of the “Eye of the Heart” (Arabic: ‘*ayn al-qalb*’)] only, that is, in the state of merely human perfection [*al-fitrāh*]...Finally the loss of this perfection corresponds to the loss of the Garden of Eden, which marks the end of the Primordial Age. This interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve makes it relevant to quote a saying attributed by some to the Prophet: ‘Before the Adam known to us God created a hundred thousand Adams’. Between the first Adam, to whom the Angels prostrated themselves and the ‘Adam known to us’, that is, the Adam who fell, lay the

“Ye are inferior in stature in comparison with your predecessors; and so, also, (will be) your posterity than yourselves: even as creation is already grown old, and is already past the strength of youth.” – *IV Ezra*, V, 55

“When we remain as we have been created, we are in a state of virtue.” – *Philokalia*

“When God created the soul he fell back upon himself and made her after his own likeness.”<sup>170</sup> – Meister Eckhart

“God created the soul according to his own most perfect nature.” – Meister Eckhart

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whole Edenic period” (Abū Bakr Sirāj ad-Dīn, 1992:17-18; See also Schuon, 1981b:79-89 for an esoteric discussion of the Fall).

<sup>170</sup> “[T]he efforts of certain contemporary apologists to reconcile their evolutionist hypotheses with the doctrine of the Fall, by equating man’s first state with the imagined existential and sub-rational spontaneity of a happy animal not yet arrived at the complexities of reason, has no basis whatsoever save in their own fancies. [The state of original humanity, created in] ‘the image of God’ is not that of a happy animal. The confusion here is between the instinct and the intellect, a distinction clearly set forth by Hermes, for example, where he says: ‘In the irrational animals, there is instinct in place of [the supra-rational, *not* sub-rational or instinctual] intellect (*Nous*)’ [*Hermetica*, I, 225]” (Perry, 1991:561). ‘In the image of God’ (cited by Perry above) refers to the following Biblical passage: ‘And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them’ (*Genesis*, I, 26-27); See also, *I Corinthians*, XI, 7; *St Matthew*, XIX, 4; and *St Mark*, X, 6. In addition, it may be mentioned that in the *Qur’ān* God says: “I breathed into him [Adam] of my Spirit” (XV, 29). It is precisely this “Spirit” (the *Nous*, or Intellect of Hermes) that distinguishes humanity from the animals. It will be noted that the sacred scriptures may be ‘inaccurate’ on peripheral scientific theses which (by their nature) have little bearing on the soteriological and eschatological destiny of humanity (e.g. in presupposing a geocentric rather than a heliocentric view of the universe); but they could not be mistaken on matters of “spiritual anthropology” without losing their very *raison d’être*. Were they to present an inaccurate portrait of the human ‘state’ they would by that very fact abrogate all of their saving efficacy. Ironically, it is precisely this standpoint that the scientific atheists adopt; they who maintain that the human being is – contrary to the revealed scriptures – nothing more than a concatenation of sub-atomic particles! (See, for example W. Smith, 1984 – a noted physicist, mathematician, and Traditionalist – for a detailed critique of the scientific mentality; See also H. Smith, 1976:1-18; 96-117; 1989:78-113;143-160; and E. F. Schumacher, 1995).

"When God made man the innermost heart of the Godhead was put into man." –

Meister Eckhart

"Those men of yore who sang the golden time and all its happy state...they on Parnassus [celestial mountain of the Greek Muses] dreamed of this fair clime."<sup>171</sup> – Dante (*Purgatoria*, XXVIII, 139-141)

"The highest Good, who himself alone doth please, made man good and for goodness, and gave this place [the terrestrial Paradise] to him as an earnest of eternal peace." – Dante (*Purgatoria*, XXVIII, 91)

"We have come to the place [i.e. Hell] where I have told thee  
Thou shalt behold the miserable people,  
Those who have foregone the good of intellect."<sup>172</sup> – Dante (*Inferno*, III, 16-18)

"The being of man...is the noblest being of all made things." – *The Epistle of Privy Counsel*, III

"This image made to the image of God in the first shaping was wonderly fair and bright, full of burning love and ghostly light." – Walter Hilton

"Goodness needeth not to enter into the soul, for it is there already, only it is unperceived." – *Theologia Germanica* (Cited in Huxley, 1946:21)

"Adam was both man and woman and yet neither one nor the other but a virgin, full of chastity and modesty and purity, such was the image of God."<sup>173</sup> – Jacob Boehme

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<sup>171</sup> It will be recalled that in the traditional view the poets received their words by inspiration from the celestial Muses (See D. Sayers, in Dante Alighieri, 1955:296-297; 375). Dante here affirms the veracity of the celestially informed idea of the Golden Age.

<sup>172</sup> Well might these words of the 'eagle of Florence' be cited to inveigh against the 'living Hell' of a modern humanity determined to subsist on the "bread" of the reason and senses "alone" (See *Deuteronomy*, VIII, 3; *St. Matthew*, IV, 4: "Man cannot live by bread alone").

<sup>173</sup> Jacob Boehme, no doubt, refers to the following passage from scripture: "Male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called *their* name Adam, in the day when they were created" (*Genesis*, V, 1-2;

“Men would have gone naked upon the earth, for the Celestial interpenetrated the Exterior and was its garment; and he (Adam) moved in great beauty, joy and pleasure, with a childlike heart. He would have drunken and eaten magically, not in the body as now...He had no sleep in him, night was to him as the day: for he saw with glorious eyes by means of his own light; the interior man, interior eye, saw across the exterior; just as in the next world we shall have no need of the sun, for we shall see with divine vision, by the light of our own nature.” – Jacob Boehme

“God...so copied forth himself into the whole life and energy of man’s soul, as that the lovely characters [qualities] of Divinity may be most easily seen and read of all men within themselves...The *impresse* of souls is...nothing but God himself.” – John Smith the Platonist

“As sure as man is called to this unity, purity, and perfection of love, so sure is it that it was at first his natural heavenly state and still has its seed or remains within him.” – William Law

“He [God] created the heavens and the earth with truth, and He shaped you and made good your shapes.” – *Qur’ān*, LXIV, 3

“Surely We [God] created man of the best stature  
Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low.” – *Qur’ān*, XCV, 4-5

“So set thy course for religion as a man by nature upright – the nature of *Allāh*, in which He hath created man.” – *Qur’ān*, XXX, 30

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italics added). “Adam”, in this interpretation, was created “male *and* female” – i.e., “Adam” was ‘androgynous’; and it was only at a later period that Eve (woman) was formed from ‘him’ (See *Genesis*, II, 20-24). Plato, in his *Symposium*, 189e contends that the “original nature” of primordial humanity “was by no means the same as it is now...for ‘man-woman’ was then a unity in form no less than [in] name” (trans. A. K. Coomaraswamy; Cited in Perry, 1995:27; See also Guénon, 1996b:12n; 29n). In *The Gospel according to Thomas* (c. 140 C.E), Christ says (in Logion 22): “When you make the two one...and when you make the male and the female into a single one...then shall you enter (the Kingdom of Heaven)” (Cited in Perry, 1995:100).

"Have they not traveled in the land and seen the nature of the consequences for those who were before them? They were stronger than these [presently] in power." – *Qur'ān*, XXX, 9

"God created Adam in His own form."<sup>174</sup> – Muhammad

"No time cometh upon you but is followed by a worse" – Muhammad (Cited in Stoddart, 1985:50)

"The best of my people are my generation; then they that come immediately after them, then they that come immediately after those"<sup>175</sup> – Muhammad (Cited in Lings, 1992:19)<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup>In Islam, the Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh* (*al-Asmā' al-Husnā*) are the very 'form' of God. They are traditionally divided into the *Asmā' al-Dhātīyah* (the Names of the Divine Essence) and the *Asmā' al-Sifātīyah* (the Names of the Divine Qualities): the former include such 'impersonal' (or supra-personal) names as *al-Haqq* (the True, or the Real) and *al-Quddūs* (the All-Holy), whilst the latter include such 'personal' names as *al-Basīr* (the All-Seeing), *as-Samī* (the All-Hearing), *al-'Alīm* (the All-Knowing), *al-'Adl* (the All-Just), *al-Ghafūr* (the All-Forgiving), *al-Karīm* (the All-Generous) etc. (See Schuon, 1969:104n; Burckhardt, 1987:200-209). These Divine Names were directly reflected in the perfected nature (*al-fitrah*) of primordial humanity through the presence of the spiritual virtues. Thus, for example, the Divine Name *al-Karīm* (the All-Generous) was reflected in ancient humanity by the spiritual virtue of generosity (*karam*) (See Schuon, 1987:178-223; 1995a:147-157 for a delineation of the primary spiritual virtues).

<sup>175</sup> Martin Lings represents the 'devolutionary' Christian point of view in the following passage: "Some [progressivist and evolutionist Christians]...prefer to believe that it was human progress which eventually earned the first coming of Christ, and that still further progress will finally make the world fit for his second coming. But such ideas are altogether alien to medieval and ancient concepts. Far from holding that mankind had earned the Redemption, our ancestors believed that it was a pure Grace; and as to Christ's second coming, they believed that the signs of its imminence would be, not the virtues of an almost perfect world waiting for a final perfecting touch, but 'wars', 'rumours of wars', 'earthquakes', 'famines', and civil discords with 'brother against brother', 'father against father', 'children against parents' and finally 'the abomination of desolation' [See *St. Matthew*, XXIV, 1-28; *St. Mark*, XIII, 1-23; and *St. Luke*, XXI, 5-38; as also *The Revelation* of St. John the Divine for the foundation of Christian eschatological doctrine]. According to the sayings of Christ and the Prophets...the Millennium was not something which would be led up to, but something which would be led down to...It was believed that a gradual decline...would lead

As the above texts bear ample witness, ancient humanity was possessed of a remarkable degree of primordial perfection;<sup>177</sup> but, through an inexorable process of cosmic ‘devolution’ – or what the Traditionalist René Guénon has termed “the qualitative determinations of time” (1995c:50-57) – humanity has fallen away from its primordial norm. “It will doubtless be asked,” says Guénon:

why development must proceed ... in a downward direction, from higher to lower, a

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to ‘great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world’ [*St. Matthew*, XXIV, 21]...The lowest ebb of humanity was marked by the reign of the Antichrist. Then the true Christ would appear...” (1992:24-25; See also Lings [1987] for a Traditionalist account of eschatological doctrine – drawing on a wide spectrum of Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and Native American Indian sources).

<sup>176</sup> The above quotations are from Perry (1991:38-49), unless otherwise stated.

<sup>177</sup> In Islam the station of human perfection in ancient humanity (*al-insān al-qadīm*) is called *al-fitrāh* – the primordial norm, and in Sufism ‘*ayn al-yaqīn*’ – the “eye of certainty” (See, for example, Schuon, 1994a:209-234; 1994b:95-102; 108-114; 122-125; and Abū Bakr Sirāj ad-Dīn, 1992:1; 17-19; 52-58); in Philosophical Taoism (*Tao Chia*) the perfected adept is called *chen-jen*, or “true man” (See Guénon, 1991:124-128; See also Fischer-Schreiber, 1996:12-13 for an authoritative definition of *chen-jen*); and in Christianity, the writings of the early Church Fathers – St. Dionysius the Areopagite in particular – refer to this degree of primordial perfection as the second of the three spiritual ‘degrees’ of (i) purification (*katharsis*), (ii) illumination (*photismos*), and (iii) union (*henosis*) with God (Louth, 1981:163; the intermediate degree of the Church Fathers refers to the perfection of the soul, and its subsequent illumination by the *Nous-Intellectus*). It may be added that the three degrees of spiritual advancement are represented in Jewish esoteric exegesis (which, according to Origen [185-254 C.E.], derives from the venerable person of King Solomon himself [1957:40-46; R.P. Lawson, trans.]), through the books of *Proverbs* [*ethike*, i.e. ethics or morality – ‘purification’], *Ecclesiastes* [*physike*, i.e. the ‘natural contemplation’ of the transience of the world – ‘illumination’], and the *Song of Songs* [*enoptike*, i.e. metaphysics: “to go beyond things seen and contemplate somewhat of things divine and heavenly” (Origen, cited in Louth, 1981:58) – ‘union’], respectively (Louth, 1981:57-61; See Origen’s *Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs* (1957:39-46; R.P. Lawson, trans.; See also Schuon, 1987:96). According to yet another Christian exegesis, the three degrees refer to Baptism (purification), Confirmation (illumination), and the Eucharist (union), respectively (Burckhardt, 1995b:13; See Schuon, 1997:167-168 on the “three great degrees...of every spiritual path”).

course which will at once be perceived to be a complete negation of the idea of progress as the moderns understand it. The reason is that the development of any manifestation [or creation] necessarily implies a gradually increasing movement away from the [Divine] principle from which it proceeds; starting from the highest point, it tends necessarily downwards...[a] fall [which] could be described as a progressive materialization (1996a:11).

Now, it is precisely this process of “progressive materialisation” that explains the gradual loss of the presence of the Spirit-Intellect ‘within’ in the soul of ‘fallen’ humanity; and too, the contemporary need – given this loss – for a so-called ‘proof’ of the Spirit-Intellect.

The traditional response to this imperious need for proof, however, is to assert that the three epistemological faculties of the human being viz.: (i) the ‘eye of the flesh’ (the empirical senses); (ii) the ‘eye of the reason’ (the rational sense); and (iii) the ‘eye of contemplation’ (the Spirit-Intellect) each pertain to a different ontological order.<sup>178</sup> Thus, whilst the empirical senses alone register *sensibilia*; and the rational sense alone registers *rationabilia*<sup>179</sup>; it is the Spirit-Intellect (*Nous-Intellectus*) that alone registers

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<sup>178</sup> *Adequatio rei et intellectus* says the medieval Latin maxim, which may be translated as: “the understanding [of the knower] must be adequate to the thing [known]” (Schumacher, 1995:49; See also 1995:49-71 for an elucidation of this most crucial epistemological idea). That is, an epistemic faculty can only be adequate to the thing known, if it belongs to the same ontological order. This same idea is encapsulated in the above quoted saying of Plotinus (see chapter 1): “Knowing demands the organ fitted to the object.”

<sup>179</sup> Strictly speaking, it is not the reason alone, but all the faculties of the soul – the reason, intuition, memory, imagination, and sentiment – that register the *rationabilia* of the psychic realm.

*Intelligibilia*<sup>180</sup> (or *Transcendelia*).<sup>181</sup> In the terminology of the Traditionalist school (See Guénon, 1999:18-20): (i) the empirical senses alone register the facts of the “gross” (“corporeal” or material) world; (ii) the rational sense alone registers the truths of the “subtle” (“psychic” or “animic”) world; and (iii) the Spirit-Intellect alone registers the Universals of the “supra-formal” (celestial or Angelic) and Divine worlds, respectively (See Appendix 1)<sup>182</sup>. Now, none of these epistemic faculties is able to pass beyond the ontological ‘degree’ to which – by its nature – it is bound: the empirical senses cannot

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<sup>180</sup> “The Intellect does not have as its immediate object the empirical existence of things but their [supra-formal and] permanent essences which are relatively ‘non-existing’ since on the sensory plane they are not manifested” (Burckhardt, 1995a:94).

<sup>181</sup> Hugh of St. Victor: “Therefore, man since he has the *eye of the flesh* can see the world and those things which are in the world. Likewise, since he has the *eye of reason* in part, he similarly sees the soul in part and those things which are in the soul. Since indeed he has not the *eye of contemplation*, he is not able to see God and the things that are in God” (1951:167; italics added). Or as Ken Wilber has said: “[T]he moons of Jupiter can be disclosed by the eye of flesh [i.e. the empirical senses]...and the Pythagorean [mathematical] theorem can be disclosed by the eye of the mind [i.e. the reason]...[but] the nature of the Absolute can only be disclosed by the eye of contemplation [i.e. the Spirit-Intellect]” (1996:xiv; See also: 1-37; 60-62; The words of Ken Wilber – and the following applies to other evolutionary exponents of the *philosophia perennis* quoted in the present thesis such as A. Huxley, S. Radhakrishnan, and A. Besant – are typically quoted with some caution by the Traditionalist school; but in this instance the quotation is deemed justified, for the ideas are fully conformable with their representative theses).

<sup>182</sup> The question may be put: if the human Intellect is of the ontological degree of supra-formal manifestation, how is it able to apprehend the Divinity, which is situated at the superior ontological degrees of ‘Being’ and ‘Beyond Being’ respectively (See Appendix 1)? The answer must be that the human Intellect is a “ray [that]...‘emanates’ from God” (Schuon, 1984a:93), and which therefore connects – or rather prolongs – the “principial realities” (Schuon, 1981b:17) of the Divine order. In this sense, what *appears* to be the human Intellect perceiving the Divine order, is in fact the Divine Intellect knowing Itself from a viewpoint (i.e. the human Intellect) illusorily ‘other’ than Itself; and this is what is meant by the non-dualistic view of the unity, or oneness, of knowledge: “*Brahman* [alone] knows *Brahman*” (*Yoga Vasistha*); but “He [*Brahman*] is your Self [*Ātmā*]” (*Bṛihad Āraṇyaka Upanishad*, III, vii, 23). Less rigorously put, the human Intellect (a “ray [that]...‘emanates’ from God”) participates – by an infusion or illumination – in the insights of the Divine Intellect (See chapter 2 on the unity, or non-duality of higher knowledge).



‘see’ the truth of a mathematical equation, for this pertains to the subtle realm of the mind alone. More importantly, the empirical and rational senses cannot ‘see’ the Celestial Intelligences (the Angels)<sup>183</sup> or the Divinity<sup>184</sup>, for these pertain to the supra-formal realm of the Spirit-Intellect alone. And this exposes the pretensions of the rationalist<sup>185</sup> and

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<sup>183</sup> It may be argued that the Celestial Intelligences – the Angels – may very well be seen by the empirical senses; a fact that is moreover ‘proved’ by the unanimous witness of the prophets, saints, and sages through the ages. To which the answer must be: the Angels may assume a physical body in order to make themselves known to human beings; howbeit in their ‘essence’ they ‘remain’ beyond the corporeal and subtle degrees of reality, respectively (Moore Jr., 1991:236). It would appear that an analogous argument can be made for subtle beings of the psychic realm (e.g. ghosts, demons, genies, fairies, gnomes, sylphs, undines, banshees, leprechauns, salamanders, sprites, nature spirits, elves etc.; See Schuon, 1990c:112n) who may assume a visible form and thereby make themselves known to human beings. These subtle beings, however, should in no wise be confused with the angelic beings of the spiritual realm, which are of a supra-formal and purely blissful substance – made of truth, goodness, and beauty. The subtle beings, however, are of a formal and ‘mixed’ nature, i.e. composed of a combination of truth and error, good and evil, beauty and ugliness; evidence of which is provided by (i) the relatively positive nature of fairies, elves, and gnomes; (ii) the negative nature of demons, banshees, and ghosts; and (iii) the ambivalent nature of genies, sprites, and nature spirits, respectively (See René Guénon, 1995c:283-290 on the crucial distinction – so often overlooked in contemporary New-Age religions – between the spiritual and the psychic realms; See Alvin Moore Jr., 1991:237-238 on the difference between the supra-formal and the formal realms; and Moore Jr., 1991:232-255 for the traditional view of Angels; as also Schuon, 1993a:6n; 1994b:186n).

<sup>184</sup> “Thou canst not see My face [i.e. with the physical eye]: for there shall no man see Me, and live” (*Exodus*, XXXIII, 20). It may however be argued that the patriarch Jacob did indeed see God (“I [Jacob] have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” [*Genesis*, XXXII, 30]); but here it is not God in Himself that the patriarch has seen, but God insofar as He has taken a form (in this case of “a man”; See *Genesis*, XXXII, 24) susceptible of empirical sight (See Schuon, 1981a:35n, “To say that the [physical] eye has seen God is to say that God [has] made Himself [into a] form”). The idea of the ‘incarnation’ (Hindu: *avatāra*, literally “descent” [of the Divine to the human]) – present, for instance, in Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism – provides yet another example of the supra-formal Divinity assuming a formal mode of existence, and thereby becoming visible to the physical eye.

<sup>185</sup> “Autonomous rationalism [posing as pure ‘objectivity’] endeavors on principle to start from zero, that is, to think without any initial ‘dogma’. Such an attitude is...illusory...since rationalism itself starts...with a dogma, namely its gratuitous axiom that nothing exists save what is supplied to us by the reason in its

empiricist<sup>186</sup> epistemologies<sup>187</sup> so pervasive in the contemporary world; for according to the aforementioned Latin medieval maxim (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*) the empirical and rational senses have no authority whatever – given the limited domain of their competence<sup>188</sup> – to deny the existence of, by turns, (i) the Spirit-Intellect, and (ii) the celestial and Divine degrees of reality.

What, then, of the rational and empirical proof for the existence of the *Nous-Intellectus*; as also of its direct apprehension of transcendent Reality?<sup>189</sup> This, it must be said, is not

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capacity as handmaid of the sensible perceptions” (Schuon, 1975:41). This initial “dogma” of the rationalist – let it be said – is “gratuitous” because *a priori* incapable of proof.

<sup>186</sup> “The empiricist error consists not in the belief that experiment has a certain utility [within its own field, but in]...denying the possibility of a knowledge [whether rational or supra-rational] other than the experimental and sensory” (Schuon, 1995a:29).

<sup>187</sup> “The position of [rationalist] science is exactly like that of a man who, by hypothesis, could grasp only two dimensions of space and who denied the third because he was incapable of imagining it; now what one spatial dimension is to another, so is the psychical to the corporeal, the spiritual to the animic, and the Divine to the humanly spiritual” (Schuon, 1975:41). If the rationalist is “two-dimensional” in outlook, the empiricist is “one-dimensional” – in the denial of both the psychic and spiritual orders of reality (See Schuon, 1975:33-55; 1995a:25-30; 1997:68-69; and Guénon, 1995c:110-117; 1995b:48-81 on the Traditionalist critique of rationalism and empiricism).

<sup>188</sup> Meister Eckhart points out this limitation of the empirical senses (in a rather humorous manner!) in the following passage: “Some people want to see God with their eyes [even] as they see a cow” (Cited in Huxley, 1946:99); but they think not rightly, he adds. The *Kena Upanishad* (I, 3) likewise asserts the limitation of the empirical and the rational senses thus: “There [in the world of *Ātmā*, the Spirit] the eye goes not...nor [the] mind” (1965:51, J. Mascaro, trans.).

<sup>189</sup> “Is it possible to go beyond nature [i.e. the corporeal and subtle realms of this world]?” asks René Guénon; to which he gives the following reply: “We do not hesitate to answer plainly: not only is it possible, but it is a fact. Again it might be said, is this not merely an assertion; what proofs thereof can be adduced? [Now] it is truly strange that proof is demanded concerning the possibility of a kind of knowledge [i.e. from the Intellect] instead of searching for it and verifying it [‘existentially’] for one’s self by undertaking the [intellectual and spiritual] work for its acquisition...Substituting a ‘theory of knowledge’ for [the direct] knowledge [of the Intellect]...is perhaps the greatest admission of impotence in modern

possible insofar as legitimate 'proof' is artificially restricted to the rational and the empirical senses, respectively.<sup>190</sup> But that such proof is not forthcoming is no reason to doubt the existence of the *Nous-Intellectus* – *quod absit*! It merely 'proves' the poverty of the prevailing epistemology, which is unable to pass beyond the altogether limited domain of the general order; and which parochially restricts so-called legitimate 'proof', as well as 'objectivity', 'knowledge', 'truth', and 'reality' to the rational (subtle) and empirical (corporeal) domains alone. Frithjof Schuon summarizes:

[Rationalists and empiricists] will ask us to prove the existence of this way of knowing [i.e. metaphysical intellection, or *noēsis*]; and herein is the first error, namely that only what can be proved *de facto* is knowledge; the second error...is that a reality that one cannot prove – that is to say which one cannot make accessible to some artificial and ignorant mental demand – by

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philosophy" (1964:8); "Nothing is more foolish", says Frithjof Schuon, "than the question as to whether the suprasensory can be proved: for, on the one hand, one can prove everything to the one who is spiritually gifted, and, on the other, the one who is not so gifted is blind to the best of proofs" (1979:136).

<sup>190</sup> In the Traditionalist view – where a less parochial definition of 'proof' is accepted – it is indeed possible to prove the existence of the *Nous-Intellectus*, as also its direct apprehension of transcendent Reality. However, this contention must needs be qualified with the crucial proviso of Frithjof Schuon: "certain conditions must have been realized [inwardly, or spiritually] to be able to perceive that [the supra-formal reality called the *Nous-Intellectus*] which is to be proven" (1995b:63); which verification, it is to be understood, is *ab intra* (from within) and of a "quasi-existential" nature (Schuon, 1995b:63), and not *ab extra* and of a ratiocinative nature. In other words, the proof of the *Nous-Intellectus* is the very fact of its direct and existential presence within the human being; which indisputable datum is thereby "capable of conferring [a] direct and plenary certitude [i.e. a veritable proof *ab intra*]" (Schuon, 1994a:15). It is in this sense that "knowledge is a function of being" (Huxley, 1946:1); but it is not to be expected that in this, the 'disgraced' time of the *Kali-Yuga*, the intellectual and moral preparation for this direct and existential form of proof would have been realized. As for the proof concerning the ability of the *Nous-Intellectus* to apprehend transcendent Reality directly, it is also to be had *ab intra* and in a "quasi-existential manner" (Schuon, 1995b:63); for the said transcendent Reality is "present in the very substance of the [supra-rational] intelligence [i.e. 'within' the Intellect]" (Schuon, 1995b:63); and again: "[The] transpersonal Intellect...is the vehicle of the immanent Presence of the Absolute Real" (Schuon, 1995b:64); by which fact it directly and existentially knows that same transcendent Reality ("we know it [the Absolute Real] because we are it [in the transpersonal Intellect, and not in the unregenerate soul!]", Schuon, 1995b:64).

reason of this apparent lack of proof, does not and cannot exist (1981b:17).

That is, this lack of rational and empirical 'proof' does not mean that (i) the *Nous-Intellectus* cannot be known; or that (ii) it does not exist. It simply means that it cannot be proven by a certain restrictive epistemological methodology called rationalistic materialism – an epistemology forcefully represented by Steven Katz in the mystical experience debate. According to this influential academic commentator – but contrary to the witness of countless mystical and metaphysical practitioners through the ages (See Rothberg 1990: 171-172; 180-181) –:

...no veridical propositions can be generated on the basis of the mystical experience. As a consequence it appears certain that mystical experience is not and logically cannot be the grounds for *any* final assertions about the nature or truth of any religious or philosophical position nor, more particularly, for any specific dogmatic or theological belief. Whatever validity mystical experience has, it does *not* translate itself into 'reasons' which can be taken as evidence for a given religious proposition (Katz, 1978b:22).

The reason for this position, he avers, is that:

*There are NO pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences.* Neither mystical experience nor more ordinary forms of experience give any indication, or any grounds for believing, that they are unmediated. That is to say, *all* experience is processed through, organized by, and makes itself available to us in extremely complex epistemological ways. The notion of unmediated experience seems, if not self-contradictory, at best empty<sup>191</sup> (1978b:26).

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<sup>191</sup> Although Katz speaks only of the mystical experience in his article – he makes no reference to metaphysical intellections – it is assumed that he would claim they too are mediated and impure in nature, for in his view *all* experience – including metaphysical intellection – is mediated (See H. Smith, 1987:555; "It seems safe to assume...that...his [Katz's] 'principle of no unmediated experience'...cover[s] metaphysical discernments [i.e. 'intellections'] as fully as it does mystical states"). If, according to Katz, the mystical experience cannot furnish the grounds "for *any* final assertions about the nature or truth of any religious or philosophical position" (1978b:22), because *all* experience is mediated, then this must also

This statement of “agnosticism”<sup>192</sup> (Rothberg, 1990:169) – let it be said – is a classical expression of a relativistic argument, which “sets out to reduce every element of absoluteness to a relativity”<sup>193</sup>, while making a quite illogical exception in favour of this

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apply to metaphysical intellection. And thus, according to Katz – but contrary to the claims of the Traditionalist school – the Intellect *cannot* directly apprehend transcendent Reality, for its experience of that reality is both mediated and impure. In other words, Katz effectively denies the spiritual epistemology of the Traditionalist school.

<sup>192</sup> Katz’s position – let it be said – represents a neo-Kantian denial of any possibility of supra-rational knowledge of the Divinity. What is an infirmity with him becomes generalized for all humanity; which introduces the link between the limited epistemological viewpoint of exotericism and the concurrent denial of the Intellect. Frithjof Schuon explains: “The exoteric denial of the presence, whether virtual or actualized, of the...Intellect in the created being, finds its most usual expression in the erroneous affirmation that no supernatural knowledge is possible apart from Revelation. But it is quite arbitrary to maintain that on this earth we have no immediate knowledge of God, and in fact that it is impossible for us to have such knowledge...[for] to maintain that the supernatural Knowledge of God, that is to say, the beatific vision in the next world, is an unobscured knowledge of the Divine Essence that is enjoyed by the individual soul, amounts to saying that absolute Knowledge can be achieved by a relative being as such” (1993a:57-58). Now, whilst in exotericism access to the ‘beatific vision’ is reserved for the blessed in Paradise, it is the aim of plenary esotericism – says Frithjof Schuon – to “render...[it] possible [contra Katz] in this very life” (Schuon, 1994a:15).

<sup>193</sup> The quality of objectivity (“absoluteness”) is reduced to subjectivity (“relativity”) in the following statement from Katz: the mystic, “as for all of us, only knows things as they ‘appear’ to him” (1978b:64). “For Katz, the real exists, but neither a mystic nor anybody else can ever come to know it. Since knowing is understood to be a matter of my interpretation of my experience, it follows that I can never transcend my own interpretations to know the real in itself” (Price III, 1985:92); “Katz makes a clear and forceful case that mystical experience is culturally mediated and argues in consequence that mystical truth claims have no objective status” (Price III, 1985:82); “Katz denies the possibility of objective mystical knowing and hence the objectivity of any mystical truth claim” (Price III, 1985:84). In other words, it is impossible – according to the Katzean neo-Kantian epistemology (Katz, 1988:757; “The roots of my [Katz’s] thinking on the nature and conditions of experience are Kantian”; Evans, 1988:53-60; Forgie, 1985:205-218; Janz, 1995:77-94; Rothberg, 1990:180; Perovich Jr., 1985:76-78, 1990:237-253) – to penetrate the subjective ‘appearance’ in order to obtain to the objective ‘reality’; the mystic (and the metaphysician) is inextricably caught up within ‘phenomena’ and can never attain to the ‘noumena’.

reduction itself" (Schuon, 1975:7). For if Katz is right – i.e. if there *are* in fact no unmediated experiences – then in order to apprehend this so-called fact he must either himself have had an unmediated experience in order to proclaim this so-called objective truth (in which case the content of his statement is contradicted); or he must have had a mediated experience, in which case his proclamation is at best relative, at worst subjective (See Price III, 1985:82; 91). To recapitulate, either Katz's statement is based on (i) an unmediated experience, and then it contradicts and nullifies itself; or it is based on (ii) a mediated experience, in which case it has no objective value and can safely be ignored. This contradiction is brought out all the more clearly, if Katz's last quoted line is rendered as follows: "The notion of unmediated experience seems [to Katz's experience], if not self-contradictory, at best empty" (1978b:26). Now if anything is "self-contradictory" and "empty" it is Katz's claim – based presumably on an unmediated experience? – that there are no unmediated experiences!<sup>194</sup> (See Schuon, 1975:7-18<sup>195</sup> for a thoroughgoing critique of relativism *per se*; See also H. Smith, 1987:559-560 for a utilization of this traditional Aristotelian argument to criticize Katz).

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<sup>194</sup> Aristotle – whose argument is here summarized by Titus Burckhardt – has countered Katz's relativist claim in advance: "Whoever asserts that everything is in a stream can never prove this assertion, for the simple reason that it can rest on nothing that is not itself in the stream; it is thus self-contradictory" (1987:99). Needless to say, the Traditionalist school believe that it is "abundantly evident that man can perfectly well escape from subjectivity...the proof of this lies in the fact that we are able to conceive both of the subjective as such and of passing beyond it. For a man who was totally enclosed in his own subjectivity, that subjectivity would not even be conceivable [to him]" (Schuon, 1975:7). This view is confirmed by Titus Burckhardt: "The human spirit does, in fact, have the faculty of placing itself outside...contingency, of viewing things objectively and essentially, and of making judgements" (1987:98); and this "faculty" of objectivity, he says, is "the *Nous* (= Intellect = Spirit)" (1987:98).

<sup>195</sup> "All force of reasoning must be enlisted", says Plato, "to oppose anyone who tries to maintain an assertion [such as that 'there are no pure experiences'] and at the same time destroys [objective] knowledge, understanding and intelligence" (*Sophist*, 249; Cited in Schuon, 1986:119)

Evidence for the relativist claim that “there are no pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences” (1978b:26) is provided by Katz from the case of the French Impressionist Claude Monet<sup>196</sup>: the story is related that he painted the Romanesque style arches of the Notre Dame cathedral as if they were Gothic in style, because – as Katz says – he “‘knew’ Notre Dame [as]...a Gothic cathedral, and so ‘saw’ [and painted] it as a Gothic cathedral” (Katz, 1978b:30). In other words, what Katz wants to say is that Monet’s belief – that Notre Dame is a Gothic cathedral, and must therefore have Gothic arches – has actively shaped, mediated and (at least partly) constructed his experience of the cathedral. From this alleged fact of ‘ordinary’ experience, Katz then extrapolates to argue that the mystical experience (and, no doubt, metaphysical intellection) is *also* shaped, mediated and (at least partly) constructed by the belief system of the mystic<sup>197</sup>: the Hindu mystic (for example) must needs have a different mystical experience to the Christian mystic; for each mystical experience is determined (through the aforesaid mediation and construction) by the particular belief system out of which they have their origin<sup>198</sup> (Katz, 1978b:26-27; Rothberg, 1990:166-169; Forman, 1990a:9-13; Price III, 1985:83-84; King, 1988:262-263).

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<sup>196</sup> The Impressionist artist who painted the Romanesque arches of Notre Dame cathedral as if they were Gothic in style, was Claude Monet, and not – as Katz claims – Edouard Manet (1978b:30; See Forman, 1990a:11).

<sup>197</sup> Robert Forman’s article, entitled “Mystical Knowledge: Knowledge by Identity” (1993:705-738), is a critique of the position – expounded here by Katz – that is wont to apply a ‘constructivist’ epistemological model of ‘ordinary’ experience, to the mystical experience of the type called the “pure consciousness event” (Forman, 1993:708).

<sup>198</sup> “The [mystical] experience itself as well as the form in which it is reported is shaped by concepts which the mystic brings to, and which shape, his experience” (Katz, 1978b:26).

Katz's "non-controversial example" (Katz, 1978b:30) concerning Monet's apprehension of the Romanesque arches of Notre Dame cathedral, is rather misleading; for the question must be asked whether there is any justification in extrapolating from a particular case of misperception, to a general model for *all* perception? Now, whilst there is no doubt that the mind *can* play a partial role in shaping, mediating, and constructing certain experiences – by its imposition of interpretative data upon the senses –, this determinative influence could not be of a total nature; as is proven by the fact that an independent and objective faculty of judgement – the 'higher' reason and, ultimately, the Intellect – is capable, precisely, of registering the aforesaid influence. Thus, in the case of Monet, it is precisely this faculty of judgement<sup>199</sup> that allows of the view that the Impressionist painter had indeed misperceived the arches of Notre Dame cathedral. But this view – of Monet's misperception of the cathedral arches – presupposes (though Katz seems altogether unaware of it) a criterion of objectivity (i.e. of a pure, unmediated experience), on pain of being reduced to a subjectivist supposition of merely relative import (Price III, 1985:91)<sup>200</sup>. And this leads back to the age-old argument of Aristotle: Katz argues – on the basis of an unmediated experience – that there are no unmediated

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<sup>199</sup> The neo-Thomist theologian James Robertson Price III refers to this faculty of judgement in his article entitled "The Objectivity of Mystical Truth Claims" (1985:81-98), wherein he argues for the incomplete nature of Katz's epistemology. Although he does not explicitly refer to the Intellect (Latin: *Intellectus*), it is quite evident that his faculty of "judgment" (1985:88-91) – by its capacity for objectivity and impartial assessment – is to be identified with the supra-individual Intellect (See Burckhardt, 1987:98).

<sup>200</sup> "Katz's entire essay is the record of a cognitional performance attempting to supply good [i.e. objective] reasons and sufficient evidence for why others should judge...that his [relativist] interpretation of mystical experience and mystical knowing is the correct one. Here [ironically] there is no relativism, no pluralism. Instead there is a strong claim for objectivity" (Price III, 1985:91). Katz attempts to make the objective claim that there is no possibility of objectivity!



experiences: not for Monet, not for the mystics, not for anyone, except – of course – for Katz himself! If, however, Katz is willing to admit that he too is subject to the infirmity of mediated and constructed experiences – that he too “only knows things as they ‘appear’ to him” (Katz, 1978b:64), then there is no especial reason for taking his views on the mystical experience debate seriously; for they are merely the relative and contingent expostulations of a particular academic commentator, who has not the ability (and why then is he an academic?) to penetrate beyond the ‘appearances’ to Reality itself. In other words, his views have no objective import and cannot therefore furnish any definitive pronouncements on the mystical experience debate.

A significant consequence of Katz’s “constructivist” epistemology (Forman, 1990a: 9-19; Rothberg, 1990:164-183) is that for instance – as mentioned above – the Buddhist mystic has a different mystical experience to the Christian mystic; and this because each shapes, mediates, and constructs their particular experience according to the system of beliefs prevalent within their cultural and religious milieu (Katz, 1978b:26-27). “The forms of consciousness which the mystic brings to [the mystical] experience”, says Katz:

[S]et structured and limiting parameters on what the experience will be... Thus, for example, the nature of the Christian mystic’s pre-mystical consciousness informs the mystical consciousness such that he experiences the mystic reality in terms of Jesus, the Trinity, or a personal God, etc., rather than in terms of the non-personal, non-everything... Buddhist doctrine of *nirvāṇa* (1978b:26-27).

Now, the Traditionalist readily concurs (H. Smith, 1987:555) with the view that both the mystical experience and metaphysical intellection will take place within the cultural and linguistic boundaries of the religious form to which the mystical practitioner belongs (e.g.

the Christian will experience Christ, the Trinity, or the personal God, and not *Brahman*, in the mystical experience); and this view is moreover confirmed in diverse traditional texts, such as the following well-known *hadīth qudsī* in Islam: “I [God] am as My servant thinks I am”<sup>201</sup> (*Hadīth* 15; Ibrahim *et al.*, 1979:78); as well as from this passage of the *Bhagavad Gītā*: “Howsoever men...worship Me, so do I welcome them”<sup>202</sup> (IV, 11; Shri Purohit Swami, trans. [1994:39]); without forgetting the key Buddhist notion of *upāya* – the spiritual stratagems (‘skillful means’) used by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to “liberate beings from their suffering-ridden state” (Diener *et al.*, 1991:239). In other words, the transcendent Divinity – in its infinite Mercy – ‘adapts’ itself to the limitative and form-bound mentality of humanity, by assuming the sort of form that would be most dispositive of the latter’s salvation (i.e. for the Christian: Christ, the Holy Spirit, God the Father etc., and not *Brahman*); which view is in sharp contradistinction to the “phenomenological” (H. Smith, 1987:555) and anthropocentric approach of Katz, wherein the “limiting parameters” (1978b:26) of human perception appear – by ‘intentional’ consciousness (Katz, 1978b:63; Price III, 1985:83) – to ‘construct’ and even ‘determine’ the nature of the mystical experience of the Divinity: “[The] images, beliefs, symbols, and rituals [of the mystic] define, *in advance*”, says Katz, “what the [mystical] experience [is that] *he wants to have*, and which he then does have” (1978b:33); and, says Katz (in humanistic vein), “there is obviously a self-fulfilling prophetic aspect to this” (1978b:59).

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<sup>201</sup> An alternative translation renders the *hadīth qudsī*: “I [God] am as My servant expects Me to be” (Ibrahim *et al.*, 1979:78n).

<sup>202</sup> Alternative translations include: “In whatever way men worship Me, accordingly I requite them” (1997:21; Nabar *et al.*, trans.); and: “I favour them according to the manner in which they approach Me” (1994:19; W.J. Johnson, trans.).

If it is true that, as the Baghdad Sufi Junayd (d. 910 C.E.) has said: “Water takes on the colour of its container”<sup>203</sup> (Cited in Schuon, 1994a:52), which is to say that the Divinity (“water”) must needs take on a ‘form’ (“colour”) consonant with the recipient human being (the “container”), this should not give rise to the false impression – *à la* Katz – that in the mystical experience and in metaphysical intellection the Divinity is somehow shaped, mediated and constructed by the ‘determinative’ human being. In reality, it is the Divinity who – in the beginning – shaped and constructed (i.e. created) the limitative faculties of the human being; by which fact it is the Divinity that is the true and active ‘determiner’. In this way, the above symbolism may be reversed: the Divinity is the “container”, whilst humanity is the “coloured water” contained within It. Whence the Traditionalist view whereby the supra-personal Divinity – beyond all ‘form’ – actively ‘determines’ Itself so as thereby to assume a form concordant with the beliefs and understanding of a passive and recipient humanity; which latter, nevertheless, directly register – without any mediation or construction – the said Divinity in the mystical experience or in metaphysical intellection (Schuon, 1990a:25-29).

The mystical or metaphysical apprehension is, therefore, ‘objective’ (or direct and immediate) in that it registers the Divinity as It ‘is’; whilst, however, not necessarily being ‘absolute’, in that it may apprehend not the ‘pure’ Absolute Itself – ‘Beyond Being’

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<sup>203</sup> Whilst this pronouncement evidently has many interpretations and applications, it is interesting to note what Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn al- ‘Arabī says of it: “If he [the follower of a particular religion] understood the saying of Junayd [quoted above]...he would not interfere with the beliefs of others, but would perceive God in every form and in every belief” (Cited in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1979:66).

– but the Absolute as it is ‘determined’ and ‘conditioned’ (i.e. ‘Being’) in the direction of the world and humanity (See Schuon, 1994a:109 on the ‘absoluteness’ of knowledge; See also Appendix 1). To use now the symbolic example of the rainbow, the uncoloured light will represent the ontological degree of ‘Beyond Being’ and its epistemological concomitant of supreme knowledge; whilst the coloured light (red, green, blue etc.) will represent the ‘conditioned’ degree of ‘Being’ and its epistemological concomitant of objective, but non-supreme knowledge; objective: for the coloured light is apprehended as it ‘is’ (i.e. as red, green, blue etc.; and not as it is mediated or constructed *à la* Katz); non-supreme: for the coloured light is a determination and, hence, a delimitation of the uncoloured light and cannot therefore be ‘purely’ absolute in nature. But in both instances (i.e. of supreme and non-supreme knowledge) it may be said – in conformity with the thesis of the oneness (or non-duality) of Knowledge – that it is ultimately the Divinity who knows Itself from a perspective illusorily other than Itself (“The division into knower, knowing, [and] known, exists not in the higher Self [*Ātmā*]” – Shrī Shankarāchārya). Or, from a point of view more accessible to the individual (i.e. rational) intelligence, it is the Divinity who directly illuminates the knower in the act of higher spiritual knowledge; and this is at the antipodes from the constructivist thesis of Katz.

### Part III: The Traditionalist Esoteric Ecumenicism:

#### Chapter 5: The Transcendent Unity of Religions.

“I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Magian [Zoroastrian], nor Muslim. I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the land [corporeal existence] nor of the sea [psychic existence]...I have put duality away, I have seen that the two worlds [Heaven and earth] are one; One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call. *He is the First, He is the Last, He is the Outward, He is the Inward* [*Qur’ān*, LVII, 3]...”

(Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīz*, XXXI; R. A. Nicholson translation).

According to an unsubstantiated opinion of Steven Katz (1978b:23), Frithjof Schuon<sup>204</sup> – and *a fortiori* the Traditionalist school – allegedly make the claim that “all mystical experiences are [one and] the same”; and this – Katz seems to reason – is the basis for their adherence to the well-known thesis of the “transcendent unity of religions” (Schuon, 1993a). But contrary to this Katzean asseveration, neither Frithjof Schuon nor the Traditionalist school make any such assertion (of the unity of the mystical experience) in their writings, which indeed focus *not* on ‘subjective’ mystical experiences (H. Smith, 1987:554-555)<sup>205</sup>, but rather, on their ‘objective’ complement: that is, the doctrinal explications garnered from “the [sundry] revealed Scriptures as well as [from] the [expositional] writings of the great spiritual masters” (Schuon, 1995a:i; Stoddart, 1991:89-90); which formulations – in conjunction with the supra-individual “intellect [that] deciphers...and ‘recollects’ [Platonic: *anamnesis*] their content” (Schuon,

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<sup>204</sup> Katz renders the name of the foremost Traditionalist expositor of the *philosophia perennis* as “Fritjof Schuon” (1978b:67), in addition to inadvertently changing the title of his most widely known work from *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* to *The Transcendental Unity of Religions* (1978b:67). Furthermore, he explicitly associates the work of Aldous Huxley with that of Frithjof Schuon (1978b:23-24; 67) – no doubt, because both explicitly profess belief in a *philosophia perennis* – without in the least taking the trouble to distinguish the innumerable differences between the two (See Appendix 2 for a brief exposition of the distinction between the work of Aldous Huxley on the one hand, and that of Frithjof Schuon and the Traditionalist school on the other hand); and this in an article that he openly acknowledges is a “plea for the recognition of differences” (1978b:25).

<sup>205</sup> “Nowhere in the thirty-odd books of Frithjof Schuon...do we find him undertaking a phenomenology of mystical states along the lines of Zaehner, Stace, and James. That he shuns this approach...shows that the perennial philosophy he argues for does not turn on assessments of mystical phenomena at all...[P]ure intellection, which must be distinguished from rational argumentation – *ratio* is not *intellectus* – ha[s] nothing to do with mystical rapture or access to states of ‘pure consciousness’. The legitimacy of a metaphysical truth, evident to the intellect, does not depend on *samādhi* or gifts of ‘infused grace’ [i.e. mystical experience]” (H. Smith, 1987:554). This is the whole difference – crucial in the present thesis – between metaphysical intellection and mystical experience.

1994b:57) – provide the basis for the thesis of a transcendent unity of religions<sup>206</sup>. In other words, the Traditionalist school base themselves upon the twin foundation of Revelation and metaphysical intellection – and *not* upon the mystical experience – in order to discern the truth of the supra-formal and ‘essential’ identity of the intrinsically orthodox religions of the world.

In this regard, the following words from the *Dīwān* of the renowned Sufi Mansūr al-Hallāj may be recalled:

I have meditated on the various religions, forcing myself to understand them, and I have found that they arise from a unique Principle having numerous ramifications. So do not ask of a man that he should adopt this or that religion, for that would take him away from the fundamental Principle (Cited in Schuon, 1994b:173n).

It is to be noted that in this pronouncement, al-Hallāj makes no reference whatsoever to any form of mystical experience in order to authenticate his claim for a purported transcendent unity of religions. Rather, it is through meditational thought (*al-tafakkur*) and intellectual understanding – by both the Intellect (*Nous*) and the reason – that he has been able to penetrate the various religious ‘forms’; and this, in order to arrive at their common and transcendent ‘essence’, which is none other than the supra-personal Divinity, or ‘Beyond Being’ – the “unique” and “fundamental Principle”. Traditionalist William Stoddart summarizes this thesis of the transcendent unity of religions (al-Hallāj’s “unique Principle” and its “numerous ramifications”) as follows:

It has been said that ‘all paths lead to the same summit’. In this symbol, the variety of religions

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<sup>206</sup> See Cutsinger (1997:193-202); H. Smith (1993:ix-xxvii); and Oldmeadow (2000:68-83) for a succinct elucidation of the Traditionalist “transcendent unity of religions” thesis.

is represented by the multiplicity of starting-points around the circumferential base of the mountain. The radial, upward pathways are the mystical paths. The oneness of mysticism is a reality only at the single summit. The pathways are many, but their goal is one. As they approach this goal, the various pathways more and more resemble one another, but only at the Summit do they coincide. Until then, in spite of resemblance and analogies, they remain separate, and indeed each path is imbued with a distinctive perfume or colour – Islamic mysticism is clearly not Christian mysticism – but at the Summit these various colours are (still speaking symbolically) reintegrated into the un-coloured Light. Islamic mysticism and Christian mysticism are only one in God [conceived as the supra-personal and unconditioned Divinity, i.e. ‘Beyond Being’]. It is this point of ‘un-coloured Light’ [‘Beyond Being’], where the different religions come together, that renders possible the *philosophia perennis* or *religio perennis*. This is the supra-formal, divine truth which is the source of each religion; and which each religion incorporates. The heart of each exoterism is its corresponding esoterism, and the heart of each esoterism (or esoterism in the pure state<sup>207</sup>) is the *religio perennis*” (1991:90).

Frithjof Schuon amplifies this symbolical exposition of the relationship between the limited religious ‘form’ (“colour”, or exotericism and esotericism as “mystical path”) on the one hand; and the unlimited esotericist ‘essence’ (the “un-coloured Light”, or “esotericism in the pure state”) on the other hand, in the following remark:

[I]t is necessary to know that esoterism on the one hand prolongs exoterism – by harmoniously plumbing its depth – because the [individual] form expresses the [Universal] essence and because in this respect the two enjoy solidarity, while on the other hand esoterism opposes exoterism – by transcending it abruptly<sup>208</sup> – because the essence by virtue of its [universality

<sup>207</sup> “Esoterism in the pure state” (i.e. the *philosophia perennis*, or *religio perennis*) is to be distinguished from esoterism as a “mystical path” (Stoddart, 1979:216). “Esoterism in the pure state” may be likened to the center point of a circle; and esoterism as “mystical path” to the radii moving from the circumference (i.e. exoterism) towards that center (See Stoddart, 1985:20).

<sup>208</sup> “If thou wouldst reach the kernel [i.e. the esotericist ‘essence’]”, says Meister Eckhart, “thou must break the shell [i.e. the exotericist ‘form’]” (Cited in Stoddart, 1991:95). This shattering of forms, needless to say, must be from ‘above’ and not – as is too often the case with the New-Age religions – from ‘below’ (See Schuon, 1987:118; “Truth does not deny forms from the outside, but transcends them from within”; and Stoddart, 1991:95).



and] unlimitedness is of necessity not reducible to [individual] form, or in other words, because form, inasmuch as it constitutes a limit, is opposed to whatever is totality and liberty<sup>209</sup> (1981b:26; See also, 1991a:12).

Thus, to recapitulate: there is continuity between the exotericist 'form' and the esotericist 'essence' insofar as the former is a manifestation and expression of the latter. But there is also discontinuity and independence between the two insofar as the individual and limited exotericist 'form' cannot manifest and express *all* aspects of the Universal and unlimited esotericist 'essence'. And, says Frithjof Schuon: "no one is truly an esoterist unless he is conscious of both these relationships" (unpublished text)<sup>210</sup>.

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<sup>209</sup> In an unpublished text, Frithjof Schuon has said: "In a certain respect, the dogmatic and ritual symbols of the general [i.e. exotericist] religion support the doctrines and methods of esoterism, but in another respect, there is opposition between the form and the essence, hence between the exoteric formalism and the esoteric truth" (See also Laude, 1999:57-65 on the views of Frithjof Schuon concerning esotericism).

<sup>210</sup> In his doctoral thesis entitled *Frithjof Schuon and the Problematic of Mystical Experience*, Auwais Rafudeen argues – according to his so-called "straight line" hypothesis (1999:172) – that only the "congruent relationship between exoterism and esoterism" (1999:173) is to be acknowledged as legitimate: "esoterism", he avers, "cannot contradict exoterism" (1999:181). Furthermore, because esotericism has exotericism as its 'formal' basis, "exoteric [orthodoxy must needs] become the standard by which... the esoteric[ist]" is measured (Rafudeen, 1999:185). The Traditionalist response to this rather disappointing form of exotericist argumentation is that the integral esotericist position acknowledges *both* the congruency *and* the incongruency of esotericism vis-à-vis exotericism; and this because the individual and limited 'form' (viz. exotericism) *both* manifests *and* veils the Universal and unlimited 'essence' (viz. esotericism) (Schuon, 1981b:26; 1991a:12). Consequently, esotericism can – and even will of necessity – contradict exotericism within certain given conditions (See Schuon, 1993a:37-60 for several examples of this principle of incongruency). As for the contention that exotericist orthodoxy is to be the judge of esotericism, the Traditionalist riposte is that a fundamental distinction must be made between an "essential or intrinsic" (esotericist) orthodoxy on the one hand, and a "formal or extrinsic" (exotericist) orthodoxy on the other hand (Schuon, 1999:1) – the former pertaining to total or "universal truth", and the latter to "truth in some particular revealed form" (Schuon, 1999:1; See also 1994a:111). Now to say – as Rafudeen does – that an individual form of truth (viz. exotericist orthodoxy) is to be the judge of the total truth (viz.

This dual relationship between the exotericist ‘form’ and the esotericist ‘essence’ – the first continuous and dependent, the second discontinuous and independent – may be illustrated as follows (within the context of the Islamic tradition, where a strict demarcation between the two groupings is rigorously maintained): the Five Pillars (*arkān*) of Islamic Law (*sharī‘a*) are: (i) the testimony of faith (*shahāda*): ‘There is no god but God’ (*lā ilāha illā ‘Llāh*); (ii) prayer (*salāt*); (iii) fasting (*sawm*); (iv) almsgiving (*zakāt*); and (v) pilgrimage (*hajj*). Now, in accordance with the first relationship of continuity, esotericist Islam – Sufism – is able to utilize these exotericist ‘forms’ by virtue of the fact that they outwardly express the inner supra-formal ‘essence’ of Truth (*haqīqa*); the Sufi will then use the Five Pillars as the basis for the spiritual path (*tarīqa*), whilst differing from the exotericist Muslim in giving the ‘forms’ a breadth, depth, and height beyond the latter’s comprehension. Thus, for example, (i) the testimony of faith (*shahāda*) will be understood as an expression of the ‘oneness of Being’ (*wahdāt al-wujūd*): ‘There is no real but the Real (*al-Haqq*)’; (ii) prayer (*salāt*) will be the “submission of Manifestation to the Principle” (Schuon, 1981a:147); (iii) the fast (*sawm*) a detachment from the desires of the ego; (iv) almsgiving (*zakāt*) a detachment in relation to the world; and (v) the pilgrimage (*hajj*) a “return to the Center, to the Heart, to the Self” (Schuon, 1981a:147; See also 1981a:129-156 on the quintessential esotericism of Islam). In this way, esotericism appears as the ‘inner core’ of the exotericist religion.

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esotericist orthodoxy), is to say that the particular is to be the judge of the Universal, the lesser of the greater – and this is clearly an absurdity!

But there is *also* the relationship of discontinuity and independence: whilst, for example, traditional Islamic exotericism generally does not permit music and dance, for reasons pertaining to the moral and social equilibrium of the Muslim community (*al-umma*), Islamic esotericism – by contrast – ‘transgresses’ the exotericist Law (*sharī’a*) in its utilization of both music and dance during the spiritual gatherings (*majālis*) of its initiates (*fuqarā*). This discontinuity and independence (the ‘breaking of the shell’ of the exotericist Law) however, is justified in the esotericist view, for the intention behind the music and dance is the purely spiritual end of the ‘remembrance of God’ (*dhikr Allāh*)<sup>211</sup>; whereas with profane modern music and dance, the intention is no more than a worldly indulgence and gratification of the senses (See Lings, 1993:90-93). This is the whole difference between the esotericist transcendence of religious ‘forms’ from above, and the modernist denial of those same religious ‘forms’ from below (Schuon, 1987:118).

If the question were now asked: is it possible to pass beyond a particular colour (red, green, yellow etc.) to the un-coloured Light? That is, is it possible for the esotericist to pass beyond the bounds of a particular religious ‘form’ (the *religio formalis*) in order to attain to the unlimited esotericist ‘essence’ (the *religio perennis*), the Traditionalist “answer must be”, says William Stoddart:

[Y]es and no. Returning to [the]...symbolism of the uncoloured light which is refracted into many colours, one may say that he [the ‘liberated’ or ‘enlightened’ one “who has reached the end of the path” (1979:216)] has left ‘colour’ [i.e. the religious ‘form’] behind, but not light [i.e. the religious ‘essence’]. And yet, when one recalls that each colour is fully present in the

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<sup>211</sup> The Sufis often cite the following *Qur’ānic* verse as authority for their actions: “Verily the ritual prayer [*ṣalāt*] preserveth from iniquity and abomination; but the remembrance of God [*dhikr Allāh*] is greater” (XXIX, 45; M. Lings, trans.).

uncoloured light...one cannot truly say that he has left colour behind either. What he has done is to trace his own colour [i.e. his own religion] back to its essence or source, where although infinitely clarified, it is essentially and abundantly present. The uncoloured light, source of all the colours, has also been called the *philosophia perennis* or *religio perennis*. This is one with what was earlier called esoterism in the pure state (1979:216; See also Laude, 1999:59-62)<sup>212</sup>.

How, though, does the Traditionalist know that the possibility of passing beyond religious 'forms' *truly* exists? The infallible witness, says Frithjof Schuon, is the Intellect:

[T]o the question of whether or not the intellect can place itself above the religions considered as spiritual and historical phenomena [i.e. as religious 'forms'], or whether there exists outside the religions an objective point allowing of an escape from a particular religious subjectivity, the answer is: yes, certainly, since the intellect can define religion and ascertain its formal limits. But it is obvious that if by the term 'religion' is meant the inner [and esotericist] infinitude of Revelation [i.e. the *religio perennis*], then the intellect cannot go beyond it, or rather the question then no longer arises, for the intellect participates in this infinitude and is even identified with it (1994b:176).

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<sup>212</sup> In an unpublished text, Frithjof Schuon expresses the Traditionalist perspective – of both the continuity and discontinuity of esotericism vis-à-vis exotericism – thus: “The *religio perennis* [i.e. esotericism] has two origins: one intemporal, vertical and discontinuous [‘esoterism in the pure state’], and one horizontal and continuous [esoterism as ‘mystical path’]. The first is like rain that can descend from Heaven at any moment and anywhere; the second is like a stream that originates from a spring...Of the first...Christ said: ‘The Spirit bloweth where it listeth’ [St. John, III, 8]; the second has its starting point in a particular Founder of Religion. The first mode is totally independent of the second, whereas the second cannot be independent of the first. One may compare the first mode to mistletoe – celestial and sacred plant for the Celts – whose seed, falling from the sky, alights upon the trees”. In the following quotation, Frithjof Schuon mentions the (more controversial and therefore less acknowledged) aspect of discontinuity and independence alone (whilst nevertheless also implying the aspect of continuity): “The presence of an esoteric nucleus in a civilization that is specifically exoteric in character guarantees to it a normal development and a maximum of stability; this nucleus, however, is not in any sense a part, even an inner part, of the exoterism, but represents, on the contrary, a quasi-independent ‘dimension’ in relation to the latter” (Schuon, 1993a:9-10).

Thus, for the Traditionalist school, it is the Intellect and metaphysical intellection – the preserve it has been said, of the ‘way of knowledge’ – that allows of a non-dualistic *gnōsis* passing beyond all religious ‘form’<sup>213</sup> (i.e. exotericism, and esotericism as “mystical path”); for the “transpersonal” (Schuon, 1975:210) Intellect is able to discern that the personal Divinity (‘Being’) “creates religion[s] which [are]...necessarily particular and formalistic” (Schuon, 1994a:40<sup>214</sup>) in nature<sup>215</sup>, whilst the “the impersonal Divinity [‘Beyond Being’] does not create religions” (Schuon, 1994a:40; See also Schuon, 1993a:26), and is thus – by definition – beyond all religious ‘form’ whatsoever (See Appendix 1). Now it is precisely this ‘Beyond Being’ that is “esoterism in the pure state” (Stoddart, 1979:216), “the uncoloured light” (Stoddart, 1979:216), and the

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<sup>213</sup> Both the ‘way of works’ (*karma-mārga*) and the ‘way of love’ (*bhakti-mārga*) – based as they are on a dualistic servant-Lord (or lover-Beloved) relationship – do not allow of a destiny passing beyond the level of the personal Divinity (i.e. ‘Being’) (Schuon, 1995a:20-21; 1987:170-171; 1975:209-216; and Stoddart, 1979:222-223; 1991:91). Nor *a fortiori* do they allow of the possibility of passing beyond the religious ‘forms’ revealed by that personal Divinity. In the ‘way of knowledge’ (*jñāna-mārga*), however, “the pure Intellect withdraws from the ‘subject-object’ complementarism [of servant-Lord, lover-Beloved, ‘Being’-religious ‘form’] and resides in its own transpersonal being, which, never entering into this complementarism, is no other than the [non-dual] Self [i.e. ‘Beyond Being’]” (Schuon, 1975:210).

<sup>214</sup> “The Divinity manifests its Personal aspect through each particular Revelation”, says Frithjof Schuon (1993a:26).

<sup>215</sup> The fact that the pure Intellect is able to discern that the personal Divinity (‘Being’) is a ‘determination’ and ‘limitation’ of the supra-personal Divinity (‘Beyond Being’), shows that – in its ‘essence’ – it is “no other than the Self [‘Beyond Being’]” (Schuon, 1975:210; See also 1995a:12-15; Cutsinger, 1997:94). Nevertheless, the personal Divinity (the ‘Lord’) plays the *de facto* role of the Absolute for the human individual (the ‘servant’), who is not just the Spirit-Intellect but also a body and a soul; and who “can do nothing without His [i.e. the personal God’s] grace, despite the essentially ‘divine’ character of the Intellect” (Schuon, 1984a:67-68). It should be noted that the distinction between a supra-personal and a personal Divinity (common to all integral ‘ways of knowledge’) in no wise signifies that there are two Divinities, *quod absit*; but only that there are degrees within the Divine order, which remains ever ‘one’ (i.e. non-dual) (Cutsinger, 1997:37).

*philosophia perennis*, or *religio perennis*. It is that unique and central ‘point’ whereat all the religious ‘forms’ converge; and the only ‘point’ – strictly speaking (Stoddart, 1991:90; H. Smith, 1987:564) – whereat a transcendent unity of religions truly exists.

Now, it is this independence and discontinuity of esotericism (“in the pure state”) vis-à-vis the religious ‘forms’ (i.e. exotericism, and esotericism as “mystical path”)<sup>216</sup>, which Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī has so memorably expressed in his *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīz* (XXXI); and which is so controversial in the eyes of the exotericist (and indeed some of the esotericist) authorities:

What is to be done, O Muslims? for I do not recognize myself. I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Magian [Zoroastrian], nor Muslim. I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the land [corporeal existence] nor of the sea [psychic existence]...I have put duality away, I have seen that the two worlds [Heaven and earth] are one; One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call. *He is the First, He is the Last, He is the Outward, He is the Inward* [*Qur’ān*, LVII, 3]... (1994:125-127; 281; R. A. Nicholson, trans.).<sup>217</sup>

Witness also these words of St. John the Evangelist<sup>218</sup>, which express the independence and discontinuity of esotericism “in the pure state” (equated here with the Spirit) vis-à-vis the religious ‘forms’ (i.e. exotericism, and esotericism as “mystical path”):

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<sup>216</sup> “We know all too well”, says Frithjof Schuon, “...that this thesis [of ‘esoterism in the pure state’] is not acceptable on the level of the exoteric orthodoxies, but [it] is so on the level of universal [i.e. esoteric] orthodoxy” (1994b:36). For details of the Traditionalist view of “orthodoxy” – in its exoteric and esoteric modalities respectively – see Schuon (1984a:137-138; 1985:87; 1995a:1-42); Guénon (2000:189-194); Stoddart (1993:5-7); and Perry (1991:271-272; 275-301).

<sup>217</sup> It was this ability of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī to see the “transcendent unity of religions” (Schuon, 1993a) that allowed of his having a small group of Jewish and Christian disciples – in addition to his Muslim *fuqarā’* (Nasr, 1991c:149).

The wind blowest where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit [*Spiritus ubi vult spirat: et vocum eius audis, sed nescis unde veniat, aut veniat, aut quo vadat: sic est omnis, qui natus est ex spiritu*] (*St. John*, III, 8).

And finally, this saying from the *Tarjumān al-ashwāq* of Muhyi al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī – the great enunciator of Sufi *gnōsis* – where “the religion of Love” is none other than “esoterism in the pure state”:

My heart is open to every form: it is a pasture for gazelles, and a cloister for Christian monks, a temple for idols, the Kaaba of the pilgrim, the tables of the Torah, and the book of the Quran. I practice the religion of Love; in whatsoever direction His caravans advance, the religion of Love shall be my religion and my faith <sup>219</sup>(Cited in Schuon, 1994b:36). <sup>220</sup>

An especially forceful denial of this, the Traditionalist recension (of the ecumenical component) of the mystical experience debate, is presented by the ‘contextualist’ academic commentator Steven Katz (1978a:1-9; 1978b:22-74; 1983:3-60; 1988:751-757). Now it is the view of Katz that it is impossible for the mystic (or esotericist) to go beyond the particular religious ‘form’ to which they belong; and this according to his “single epistemological assumption” (Katz, 1978b:26) that “there are no pure (i.e.

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<sup>218</sup> St. John the Evangelist: author of the Fourth Gospel; the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (*St. John*, XIII, 23; XX, 2; XXI, 7; 20); and the representative of that Christian esotericism, which – Christ says – will “tarry till I come [again at the Second Coming]” (*St. John*, XXI, 22; See also XXI, 20-23; and Schuon, 1990a:107 for the association of St. John with esotericism).

<sup>219</sup> Schuon adds in a note that “the religion of Love” does not signify *mahabbah* (the ‘way of love’) in a psychological or methodological sense: “[The religion of] ‘Love’ is here opposed to ‘forms’ which are envisaged as ‘cold’ and as ‘dead’. Saint Paul also says that ‘the letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive’ [*II Corinthians*, III, 6]. ‘Spirit’ and ‘love’ are here synonymous” (1994b:37n).

<sup>220</sup> See also Perry (1991:790-803); and A. K. Coomaraswamy (1979:50-67) for a listing of sundry traditional metaphysical and esotericist texts expounding the thesis of the transcendent unity of religions, which is not ‘new’ with the Traditionalist school.

unmediated) experiences” (1978b:26). “The Hindu mystic”, he says, “...has a Hindu [mystical] experience...[T]he Christian mystic [has a]...Christian [mystical] experience...[T]he Hindu experience of Brahman and the Christian experience of God are not the same” (Katz, 1978b:26). Accordingly, each mystical experience remains forever bound to the religion of its origin, such that there can be no possibility of a so-called supra-religious “‘common core’ (*à la* Stace, for example) to all mystical experiences” (Katz, 1978a:4; See H. Smith, 1987:559-560). In short: “there is no *philosophia perennis*” (Katz, 1978b:24) because any experience of this purportedly independent reality (whether it be by the Intellect and metaphysical intellection, or by mystical experience) is – says Katz – shaped, mediated and constructed by (i) the subjective consciousness; and by (ii) the social and historical context of the mystic (or esotericist) (1978b:40)<sup>221</sup>. Consequently, the purported reality of the *philosophia perennis*, claims Katz, can never be known ‘as it is in itself’ (i.e. independent of the subjective consciousness, and the social and historical context of the mystic or esotericist), but only as it ‘appears to be’ (See Katz, 1978b:64)<sup>222</sup>. In short, if there is a *philosophia perennis*, humanity is incapable of knowing it objectively.

The question to be asked, then, is whether in fact the Intellect and metaphysical intellection are indeed susceptible – as Katz claims – to the influence of the so-called

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<sup>221</sup> As such, Katz denies any possibility of an esotericism (“in the pure state”) purportedly independent and discontinuous vis-à-vis exotericism. Evidently, he *does* allow of the possibility of an esotericism (“as mystical path”) dependent and continuous with exotericism.

<sup>222</sup> And thus, despite Traditionalist claims to the contrary, the Hindu *Nirguna Brahman*, the Buddhist *Shūnyatā*, the Philosophical Taoist *Wu*, the Judaic *Ayin Sof*, the Christian *hyparxis*, or *Gotttheit*, and the Islamic *al-Dhāt* are not – and indeed cannot be – the same (Katz, 1978a:4; 1978b:26; 46-65; Nasr, 1989:289).



principle of “no pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences” (1978b:26)<sup>223</sup>; i.e. whether the Intellect and metaphysical intellection are indeed shaped, mediated, and constructed by (i) the subjective consciousness; and by (ii) the social and historical context of the mystic (or esotericist)? The Traditionalist response is an emphatic: “no”; for the human Intellect pertains to the ontological degree of supra-formal manifestation, which altogether transcends (i) the ‘formal’ subjective consciousness; and (ii) the social and historical context of the mystic (or esotericist). Granted, the ontological degrees of supra-formal manifestation and of ‘Being’ are determinations – and hence delimitations – of ‘Beyond Being’ (the ‘pure’ Absolute); and so the knowledge of the human Intellect at these levels cannot be absolute, and thereby free and independent of all religious ‘form’ (See Schuon, 1994a:109-111); but this knowledge is nevertheless objective, for the human Intellect – argues the Traditionalist – directly apprehends (without mediation and/or construction *à la* Katz) the conditioned degrees of supra-formal manifestation and of ‘Being’ respectively. To recapitulate: metaphysical intellection is absolute only at the ontological degree of ‘Beyond Being’ (the ‘pure’ Absolute); but it is, nevertheless, objective at the ontological degrees of ‘Being’ and supra-formal manifestation respectively. Now, in the Traditionalist view, it is precisely this absolute and unconditioned knowledge of ‘Beyond Being’ as it is in Itself – by the Intellect in metaphysical intellection (See Perry, 1991:873-895; 994-1000) – that allows of the objective verification of the reality of the *philosophia perennis*, or the *religio perennis*; and hence of the thesis of the transcendent unity of religions.

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<sup>223</sup> A Traditionalist critique of the Katzean principle of “no pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences” (1978b:26) is contained in chapter 4 of the present thesis, and will not be recapitulated here.

Now whilst this latter contention is strictly based upon the direct spiritual knowledge conferred by the Intellect in metaphysical intellection, the Traditionalist school also accept – without, however, basing their thesis upon it – the possibility (See H. Smith, 1988:758-759) of a so-called “pure consciousness event” (Forman, 1990a:8), i.e. of a mystical experience of the pure and quality-less Absolute (in Traditionalist parlance, ‘Beyond Being’) wherein is no trace of any ‘form’ whatsoever (See Forman, 1990a). This type of mystical experience – let it be said – would appear to be a notable exception to the alleged Katzean principle of “no pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences” (1978b:26); for a peculiar feature of the “pure consciousness event” is that it is devoid of any ‘form’ or content whatsoever (Forman, 1990a:8; 38-40), and it is therefore not susceptible of any possible mediation and construction by (i) the subjective consciousness, or by (ii) the social and historical context, of the mystic (See Forman, 1990a:21-49; 1990b:98-120; 1993:705-738; Rothberg, 1990:163-210). That is, in the peculiar type of non-dualistic mystical experience called the “pure consciousness event” (See Forman, 1990a:30-43), the mystic has deliberately “forgotten” (Forman, 1990a:39) – or become detached from – all inward and outward forms (viz.: concepts, beliefs, images, ideas, categories, language, notions, emotions, desires etc.) whatsoever; such that there is nothing in the subjective consciousness of the mystical practitioner that can be shaped, mediated, or constructed *à la* Katz.<sup>224</sup> Here then is convincing evidence for a transcendent and supra-religious

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<sup>224</sup> See Forman (1990a) for a representative selection of articles delineating the ‘essentialist’ viewpoint in the mystical experience debate. This compendium details (i) the nature of the so-called “pure consciousness event” (as extant in the traditions of the Hindu *Sāṃkhya*; the Buddhist *Yogācāra*; the Christian Dominican friar Meister Eckhart; and the Jewish *Qabbalah*, respectively); and (ii) an extended philosophical and epistemological critique of the Neo-Kantian constructivist and ‘contextualist’ theses of Steven Katz and his followers.

common core 'essence' – in Traditionalist idiom: the *philosophia perennis*, the *religio perennis*, or "esoterism in the pure state" – discontinuous and independent of all the religious traditions; and none other than the supra-personal, or "impersonal Divinity ['Beyond Being', who] does not create [the various] religions" (Schuon, 1994a:40), but remains forever outside their limitative domain.

The above considerations, however, may give rise to the (misguided) impression that the Traditionalist school is (i) wholly opposed to the 'contextualist' position of Steven Katz; and (ii) entirely sympathetic with the 'essentialist' position of Robert Forman. Now, this is in no wise the case, for in accordance with an indication of Frithjof Schuon (from an unpublished text, cited above), the Traditionalist school is insistent upon *both* the relationship of (i) esotericist independence, *and* (ii) esotericist dependence, vis-à-vis exotericism. And insofar as Katz extols the indispensability of the religious 'form' as vehicle of the 'essence' (i.e. of the relationship of esotericist dependence upon exotericism), the Traditionalist school is fully supportive of him (Nasr, 1989:288-289); for it is insistent upon the necessity of an affiliation to one particular intrinsically orthodox religious tradition – founded upon a heavenly Revelation – as the indispensable condition and guarantor of a fully efficacious spiritual life (See Cutsinger, 1997:3-4; 194-199; and Nasr, 1989:65-92). But insofar as Katz denies the independent nature of esotericism ("in the pure state") and insists *solely* upon the relationship of esotericist dependence (as a "mystical path") upon exotericism, the Traditionalist school is opposed to him; for as Seyyed Hossein Nasr has said: "sacred [or religious] form is *not only* form

as particularity and limitation [as Katz would argue] but *also*...opens onto the Infinite and the formless [i.e. the supra-formal *philosophia perennis*]" (1989:289; italics added).

Thus, the Traditionalist school supports Katz in his endeavour to re-emphasize the necessity of the religious 'forms' as vehicles of an esotericist 'essence'. And this, contra (i) the efforts of the so-called "evolutionary" exponents of the *philosophia perennis* (See Isenberg and Thursby, 1984-6:177-226), who would readily dispose of the heretofore 'outmoded' and 'divisive' traditional 'forms' in favour of their pure 'essence' alone (See Schuon, 1975:224; 1981b:152; 1987:118); and (ii) the religious "syncretists" (See Guénon, 1996b:x-xi, Schuon, 1975:3; 1981b:188n; and Nasr, 1989:289), who would readily blur, mix, and distort the providential boundaries between the divinely ordained religious traditions of the world. But this particular merit of Katz notwithstanding, the Traditionalist school perceive in his objection to the abovementioned currents of (i) evolutionary universalism, and (ii) syncretism, a "pendular reaction to the...[opposite] extreme" (Nasr, 1989:289), viz. religion conceived as entirely 'form'-bound, and without any possibility of opening onto a common-core and independent transcendent 'essence' (i.e. the *philosophia perennis*).

It remains to be seen, though, why the Traditionalist school is so vehemently opposed to the abovementioned "evolutionary" and "syncretist" recensions of the *philosophia perennis*.<sup>225</sup> Exponents of the first group, say the Traditionalists, acknowledge *only* the

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<sup>225</sup> A representative – but not exhaustive – list of "evolutionary" and "syncretist" perennial philosophers would include the following: Anthroposophy, Bahai, Aurobindo Ghose, G.I. Guerdjieff, Aldous Huxley,

relationship of esotericist independence and discontinuity vis-à-vis exotericism; and this in accordance with the modernist views of progress and evolution which perceive modern humanity to have evolved beyond the restrictive limitations of the various religious ‘forms’ (Perry, 1996:76-77). Thus, for example, to follow the ‘world teacher’ Jiddu Krishnamurti means – for this very reason – not to belong “to any particular dogma, religion, church, and all that immature nonsense” (Cited in Perry, 1996:71)<sup>226</sup>. But, as Traditionalist Frithjof Schuon has said: “[Esotericist] truth does not deny forms from the outside, but transcends them from within” (1987:118); for the ‘form’ is *not only* a delimitation, but *also* a manifestation and an expression of the ‘essence’ (Schuon, 1981b:26); and thus, “what is mysterious in esoterism is its dimension of depth...but not its starting points, which coincide with the fundamental symbols [i.e. ‘forms’] of the religion” (Schuon, 1981b:152). In other words, the route to the ‘essence’ is through the ‘form’ (H. Smith, 1993:xxiv-xxv).<sup>227</sup>

“Syncretist” representatives of the *philosophia perennis*, on the other hand, readily ‘mix and match’ the desired elements (usually an esotericist ‘highest common factor’) of the religions, without any regard for the integral unity or “formal homogeneity” (Schuon, 1995a:1) of each separate religion. The result is all too often – witness the efforts of

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Jiddu Krishnamurti, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Rajneesh, Subud, the Theosophical Society, Vivekananda, Alan Watts, Ken Wilber and Mahesh Yogi.

<sup>226</sup> Krishnamurti appears oblivious of the fact that the very denial of all dogmas is itself a dogmatic statement.

<sup>227</sup> It may happen, though, that an esotericist will shatter a particular religious ‘form’ in order to attain to the ‘essence’ (“If thou wouldst reach the kernel”, says Meister Eckhart, “thou must break the shell” [Cited in Stoddart, 1991:95]); and the Sufi examples of music and dance have been mentioned as illustrative of this point. But in the Traditionalist view, a true esotericist will never shatter the religion *qua* ‘form’.

Aldous Huxley<sup>228</sup>, or of the Theosophical Society – an “eclecticism” of “incongruous elements” of no more than human origin (Guénon, 1996b:x); and this as opposed to the *upāya* (the “skillful means”) of Divine origin that specifically caters for the particular cultural and ethnic needs of a given human collectivity; and which “includes and guarantees incalculable values [e.g. the grace of the personal God] which man could not possibly draw out of himself [by, for example, developing a ‘new’ esotericist religion]” (Schuon, 1987:118)<sup>229</sup>. The “syncretist” proponents of the *philosophia perennis*, then, readily confuse the thesis of a supra-formal “transcendent unity of religions” with a formal ‘unity’ of religions – hence their syncretistic attempts to create a ‘new’ super-religion. Now, “syncretism”, says René Guénon:

consists in assembling from the outside a number of more or less incongruous elements which, when so regarded, can never be truly unified; in short, it is a kind of eclecticism, with all the fragmentariness and incoherence that this always implies. Syncretism, then, is something purely outward and superficial; the elements taken from every quarter and put together in this way can never amount to anything more than borrowings that are incapable of being effectively integrated....Synthesis, on the other hand, is carried out essentially from within...[that is] it properly consists in envisaging things in the unity of their principle, in seeing how they are derived from and dependent on that principle, and thus uniting them, or rather becoming aware of their real unity, by virtue of a wholly inward bond (1996b:x).

The mistake of the “syncretist” proponents of the *philosophia perennis* is thus – according to the viewpoint of the Traditionalist school – to try to make a ‘form’ of the supra-formal *philosophia perennis*, and to forget that if there is a unity of religions “it

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<sup>228</sup> See Appendix 2 for an example of Huxley’s “syncretist” version of the *philosophia perennis*.

<sup>229</sup> In *The Gospel According to Thomas* (Logion 40), Jesus says: “A vine has been planted without the Father and, as it is not established, it will be pulled up by its roots and be destroyed” (Guillaumont, 1998:25). In the Traditionalist view it is not for humanity to found a new more ‘inclusive’ religion; but rather, it is for humanity to base itself upon an already revealed Heaven-sent religion.

exists in God [i.e. the supra-personal 'Beyond Being'] alone" (Cutsinger, 1997:196). And again, "if the expression 'transcendent unity' is used", says Frithjof Schuon, "it means that the unity of the religious forms must be realized in a purely inward and spiritual way and without prejudice to any particular [religious] form" (1993a:xxxiv); and this, indeed, is what is meant by the Traditionalist "esoteric ecumenicism" (Schuon, 1985).

As for the 'essentialist' perspective of Robert Forman, the Traditionalist school – whilst basing itself upon the higher knowledge conferred by the Intellect in metaphysical intellection, and not on the so-called "pure consciousness event" – is in undoubted agreement that a common-core 'essence' exists, independent of each of the various religious 'forms'<sup>230</sup>; and that this – in Traditionalist terminology – is the *philosophia perennis*, the *religio perennis*, or "esoterism in the pure state" (Stoddart, 1979:216). But the Traditionalist school are nevertheless wary – and this is not a direct criticism of Forman *per se* – that the well-nigh exclusive preoccupation of the 'essentialist' position with mystical states (ostensibly) independent of all religious 'forms', can all too readily give unwitting credence to the modern iconoclastic disdain of the said religious 'forms' (Nasr, 1989:287-288; Cutsinger, 1997:196). In other words, modern humanity is all too eager to jettison (i) doctrine, (ii) method, (iii) virtue, and (iv) the traditional religious framework, in a hedonistic quest for altered states of consciousness; and the thesis of a transcendent and common-core 'essence' – based upon the mystical experience of the

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<sup>230</sup> The 'essentialist' view of Robert Forman was espoused earlier by – most notably – Walter Stace (1960) and Evelyn Underhill (1911), and represents a mitigated form of their argument; for it restricts the extent of the common core 'essence' – in the face of the influential Katzean critique – to the so-called "pure consciousness event" (Forman, 1990a:8) alone.

type called the “pure consciousness event” – can give rise to the narcissistic misperception that it is mystical states that alone count (See Schuon, 1995b:9).

In the Traditionalist view, however, it is (i) the orthodox intellectual doctrine; (ii) persevering mystical practice; (iii) moral virtue (i.e. essentially: humility, charity, and veracity); and (iv) the traditional religious framework, that are the indispensable bases for an approach to the Divinity (Cutsinger, 1997:7; 195-196). That is to say, it is Truth, Goodness, and Beauty – within the framework of a traditional Heaven-sent religion – that are the *alpha* and the *omega* of the spiritual life. Outside of these landmarks, the mystical experience is both a hindrance and a danger<sup>231</sup> (See Burckhardt, 1987:151-152). The Traditionalist school, then, would approve of an ‘essentialist’ position more cognizant of the important – indeed preponderant – role played by the religious ‘forms’ in the field of esotericism; and this as a necessary counterbalance to their preoccupation with the reality of an independent common-core ‘essence’ in the mystical experience of the type called the pure consciousness event. In this way, the Traditionalist school would advocate a more balanced exposition of *both* the dependence *and* independence of esotericism vis-à-vis exotericism.

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<sup>231</sup> In the exceptional case of what Frithjof Schuon terms an “accidental ecstasy” – where “someone entirely profane has a real ecstatic experience”, whose cause lies “far distant in the individual’s destiny, or in his *karma*” – the event “can only be a call to an authentic [i.e. a traditional and orthodox religious] way” and is not to be considered a “spiritual acquisition of a conscious and active character” (Schuon, 1981b:212).



### Conclusion:

The present thesis has discussed the approach of the Traditionalist school to the epistemological and ecumenical concerns of the mystical experience debate. Initially (in the introduction), attention was drawn to the fact of a regular misrepresentation of the Traditionalist perspective by certain authorities in the mystical experience debate. Typically, this involved either (i) a confusion of metaphysical intellection with the mystical experience; or (ii) a confusion of the supra-rational Intellect with the reason.

In order to rectify the aforesaid misrepresentations, the present thesis embarked upon a full and detailed exposition of the epistemology of the Traditionalist school. To begin with, the nature of the supra-individual intelligence called the Intellect was established, by distinguishing it from (i) the reason, (ii) Revelation, and (iii) inspiration (chapter 1). Then, metaphysical intellection of the Intellect was distinguished from the mystical experience. The former was seen to refer to a direct – and not mediated or constructed – spiritual knowledge of transcendent Reality, conferred by the supra-individual Intellect; whilst the latter was seen to refer to (i) phenomena of grace such as visions, auditions, raptures, ecstasy etc.; and to (ii) inward contemplative states such as *nirvikalpa samādhī*, *mushinjo*, *gezucket* etc. As such, metaphysical intellection was defined as a ‘vision’ of transcendent Reality by the supra-individual intelligence, viz. the Intellect; whilst the mystical experience was seen to refer to an ontological transmutation of the individual contemplative soul in the ‘mysteries of union’. Thus, metaphysical intellection was

referred to the pole: 'knowledge', whilst the mystical experience was referred to the pole: 'realization' (chapter 2).

Thereafter, the Traditionalist tripartite spiritual epistemology of (i) Intellect, (ii) reason, and (iii) the empirical senses, was directly related to the correspondent Traditionalist tripartite spiritual anthropology of (i) Spirit, (ii) soul, and (iii) body, respectively (chapter 3). With the elucidation of the Traditionalist epistemology thus completed (in chapters 1-3), the inherent difficulty in any attempted rational and/or empirical 'proof' of the Intellect was subsequently identified; and this, consequent upon (i) the devolutionary doctrine of the 'qualitative (or deteriorating) determinations of time', whereby a gradual occlusion of the Intellect was seen to have occurred through the imposition of a variously defined 'fall' (first part of chapter 4); and (ii) by an appeal to the authority of the medieval epistemological maxim *adaequatio rei et intellectus* ('the understanding [of the knower] must be *adequate* to the thing [known]'), whereby the reason and the empirical senses – restricted as they are to the subtle and corporeal degrees of Reality, respectively – were not deemed ontologically or epistemologically capable of ascertaining the existence (or not) of the supra-formal, and celestial, Spirit-Intellect (second part of chapter 4).

Next, a Traditionalist critique of the neo-Kantian rationalist/empiricist/constructivist academic commentator Steven Katz was presented, focusing on (i) the relativism inherent in the claim that there are 'no pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences'; and (ii) the fallacious extrapolation – in the manner of reasoning – from a particular case of misperception (i.e.

of Monet misperceiving the arches of Notre-Dame cathedral), to a generalized theory for *all* perception. Thereafter, the Traditionalist theory of the direct apprehension of transcendent Reality – by the Intellect in metaphysical intellection – was contrasted with the Katzean theory of the mystical experience as partly ‘constructed’ by (i) the subjective consciousness, and by (ii) the social and historical context of the mystic, or esotericist (last part of chapter 4).

Finally, the spiritual epistemology of the Traditionalist school was applied to the ecumenical concerns of the mystical experience debate. The Traditionalist esoteric ecumenicism – its theory of a transcendent unity of religions – was seen to include a two-fold definition of esotericism: firstly, an esotericism as mystical path, dependent and continuous vis-à-vis the exotericist religious ‘form’; and secondly, an esotericism in the pure state – i.e. the *philosophia perennis*, or *religio perennis* – independent and discontinuous vis-à-vis the exotericist religious ‘form’. Upon this basis, a Traditionalist critique of (i) the ‘contextualist’ position of Steven Katz, and (ii) the ‘essentialist’ position of Robert Forman was proffered, whereby the former was shown to reject the possibility of a trans-contextual esotericism in the pure state, and the latter to insufficiently acknowledge the reality of a contextual esotericism as mystical path.

The present thesis, then, has made the argument for the admissibility of both the spiritual epistemology, and the esoteric ecumenicism, of the Traditionalist school; which – despite not basing themselves in any way upon the mystical experience – provide a viable alternative to (i) the prevailing rationalist and empiricist neo-Kantian

epistemological perspectives within the mystical experience debate; and (ii) to the contending 'contextualist' and 'essentialist' approaches to the ecumenical concerns of the mystical experience debate.

## Appendix 1: The Grades of Reality.

The Traditionalist view of Reality is not restricted to the material order alone, as is the modern scientific viewpoint. Whilst the grades of Reality are, in fact, innumerable, the Traditionalist school have distinguished its five most important divisions (see R. Guénon, 1984:27-55; 1999:18-20; F. Schuon, 1969:142-144; 1975:109; 1976:202-204; 1985:30-31; 1993a:37-48; 1993b:83-87; 1994b:72-74; 1995a:12-15; S.H. Nasr, 1989:130-159; H. Smith, 1976:34-95; 1989:57-72; and E.F. Schumacher, 1995:25-48 for a Traditionalist elucidation of the major ontological degrees of Reality), which may be summarized briefly as follows:

1. Beyond Being
2. Being
3. Supra-Formal Manifestation
4. Subtle Manifestation
5. Gross Manifestation

### 1. Beyond Being:

The Absolute-Infinite-Perfection – beyond all determination, conditioning, or limitation whatever:

- Native American (Plains) Tradition: *Tunkashila* (*Wakan-Tanka* as Grandfather)
- Hinduism: *Brahman Nirguna* (*Brahman* without [limitative] qualities) of the *Advaita Vedānta*

- Buddhism: *Shūnyatā* (the Void), *Parinirvāna*, *Dharmakāya-Buddha* (the Universal Body of the Buddha), or *Ādi-Buddha* (Supreme Buddha) of the *Mahāyāna*
- Philosophical Taoism (*Tao Chia*): *the Tao that cannot be named*, *Wu* (Non-Being), or *hsüan chih yu hsüan* (the Mystery of Mysteries)
- Judaism: *Ayin* (No-Thing) or *Ayin Sof* (the Infinite) of the *Qabbalah*
- Christianity: Non-Being, or Beyond Being (St. Dionysius the Areopagite), *Gottheit*, or Godhead (Meister Eckhart), and *hyparxis* (Eastern Orthodox Church)
- Islam: *al-Dhāt* (the Divine Essence), *‘ālam al-Hāhūt*, or *al-ahadīyah* (Divine Oneness) of Sufism

## 2. Being:

The Absolute-Infinite-Perfection insofar as it determines, conditions, or limits itself – as the Personal God or the Uncreated Logos – in the direction of manifestation or creation:

- Native American (Plains) Tradition: *Ate* (*Wakan-Tanka* as Father)
- Hinduism: *Brahman Saguna* (*Brahman* with qualities), or *Īshvara* (the Personal God, or Lord)
- Buddhism: *Nirvāna*, and the *Dhyāni Buddhas* (the Meditation Buddhas [with qualities]) of the *Mahāyāna*
- Philosophical Taoism (*Tao Chia*): *the Tao that can be named*, *Yu* (Being), or *chung mia chih mēn* (the Gateway of Myriad Wonders)

- Judaism: the *Sefiroth* (the Divine Aspects or Numerations), or *olam ha-'Atsiluth* (the World of Emanation) of the *Qabbalah*
- Christianity: God the Father
- Islam: the *Sifāt* (Divine Qualities), *'ālam al-Lāhūt*, or *al-wāhidīyah* (Divine Unicity) of Sufism.

For an authoritative elucidation of the metaphysical *distinguo in divinis* between “Beyond-Being” and “Being” – including copious citations from the various sacred scriptures, as also the writings of the great saints, sages, and spiritual masters of the sundry intrinsically orthodox religious traditions designated below – see:

- Native American (Plains) Tradition: Schuon (1999:181); and J. E. Brown (1989:5n)
- Hinduism: Guénon (1999:11-12); Burckhardt (1995a:55); Stoddart (1993:15-17); Izutsu (1994:73-97); Perry (1991:975-986; 994-997); and Huxley (1946:29-33; 37-44)
- Buddhism: Schuon (1993b:83-87); Stoddart (1998:35-39); Izutsu (1994:73-97); Perry (1991:975-986; 994-997); and Huxley (1946:30; 41)
- Philosophical Taoism (*Tao Chia*): Izutsu (1983:375-417; 1994:73-97); Perry (1991:975-986; 994-997); and Huxley (1946:33)
- Judaism: Scholem (1995:10-14; 207-209); Schaya (1971:35-38); and Halevi (1979:5-6)
- Christianity: Schuon (1975:109; 1985:18-19); Burckhardt (1995a:56); Perry (1991:975-986; 994-997); and Huxley (1946:29-33; 37-44)
- Islam: Schuon (1969:142-144; 1993b:86; 1994b:72-74; 190); Burckhardt (1995a:53-57); Izutsu (1983:23-38; 152-158; 1994:73-97); and Perry (1991:975-986; 994-997)

### 3. Supra-Formal Manifestation:

Macrocosmically, the Celestial or Angelic (Hindu *dēva* and *apsāra*; Buddhist *bodhisattva* and *dākinī*; Islamic *mal'ak* and *houri*) realm (for the microcosmic correspondences within “supra-formal manifestation”, viz. the level of the Spirit-Intellect, see the chapter entitled “Duo Sunt in Homine”):

- Native American (Plains) Tradition: the Happy Hunting Grounds
- Hinduism: the *Brahmā-Loka*
- Buddhism: the Western Paradise or Pure Land (*Sukhāvatī*), and the *Sambhogakāya Buddha* (the Body of Felicity of the Buddha)
- Taoism: *T'ien* (Heaven), or the abode of the Chinese Immortals
- Judaism: *olam ha-Beriyah* (the World of [celestial] Creation)
- Christianity: Heaven
- Islam: Paradise (*Jannnah*), or *'ālam al-Jabarūt* (the Domain of Power)

### 4. Subtle Manifestation:

Macrocosmically, the psychic realm of ghosts, demons, genies, fairies, gnomes, sylphs, undines, banshees, leprechauns, salamanders, sprites, nature spirits, elves etc.; microcosmically, the soul.

### 5. Gross Manifestation:

Macrocosmically, the earthly or corporeal realm; microcosmically, the body.



It is important to note that the religious traditions are only united at the transcendent level of the 'unconditioned' supra-personal Divinity, i.e. at the degree of "Beyond Being" (Stoddart, 1991:90). The 'conditioned' personal Divinity (i.e. the degree of "Being") is already a determination of the supra-personal Divinity in the direction of manifestation, or creation (Schuon, 1995a:12-14); and may thus be considered as "the [confessional] Face that [the personal] God turns towards a particular religion...[and which] takes on diverse modes corresponding to so many religious, confessional or spiritual perspectives" (Schuon, 1986:91).

## Appendix 2: Aldous Huxley and the Traditionalist School.

The publication of Aldous Huxley's *The Perennial Philosophy* (1946) exposed many people to the universalist propositions of the *philosophia perennis* for the first time, in addition to stimulating widespread interest in the mystical and metaphysical doctrines of East and West alike. But according to the Traditionalist Marco Pallis, "[Notwithstanding] the wealth of splendid extracts from sacred literature...the book...is too eclectic and personal [in nature because the]...author's preferences, not to say prejudices, become the criteria of validity [in the selection of traditional texts]" (in Perry, 1991:8; See also Pallis, in A. K. Coomaraswamy, 1988:194-195). Concurring, the Traditionalist Gai Eaton notes the "labour of selection and rejection" that Huxley has undertaken:

[H]e approves of [the Sufi] Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī...but he cannot [accept]...the Moslem doctrine of the 'Jihad'<sup>232</sup>. He approves of [the *Advaita Vedānta* of] Shankara, but has no use for 'popular' [ritualistic] Hinduism<sup>233</sup> (1995: 182).

Now, it suffices to consult Traditionalist Whitall Perry's monumental anthology, *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*<sup>234</sup>, to be given the integral – and not merely partial –

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<sup>232</sup> "[W]ar is accompanied", says Huxley, "...by a widespread dissemination of anger and hatred, cruelty and fear...[I]s it possible", he asks, "...to sacramentalize actions whose psychological by-products are so completely God-eclipsing as are these passions?" (1946:312); and "The killing and torturing of individual 'thous' is a matter of cosmic significance...[E]very violence is...a sacrilegious rebellion against the divine order" (Huxley, 1946:222-223).

<sup>233</sup> "[F]or those... really concerned to achieve man's final end, *the fewer distracting [ritual] symbols the better*" (Huxley, 1946:303; italics added); and "[A]lmost all the Hebrew prophets were opposed to ritualism...[T]he Christ of the Gospels is...not a dispenser of sacraments or performer of rites; he speaks against vain repetitions...[F]or the Buddha...ritual was...[a] fetter holding back the soul from enlightenment" (Huxley, 1957:308-309).

traditional perspective on (i) holy war (“Jihad”); (ii) symbols (“the fewer distracting symbols the better”); and (iii) ritual (“ ‘popular’ [ritualistic] Hinduism”):

The traditional conception of holy war finds explicit formulation in sacred texts, e.g., the *Bhagavad Gita*: “Nothing is higher for a *kshatriya* (member of the warrior and ruling caste) than a righteous war”; “Fortunate indeed are *kshatriyas* to whom comes unsought, as an open gate to heaven, such a war” (chapter II)... One can say, citing Guénon [1996b:41-43], “that the essential reason for war... is to end a disorder and re-establish order... Yet this is but the ‘little holy war’, which is only an image of the ‘great holy war’<sup>235</sup> ...the struggle of man against the enemies he carries within himself” (1991:391).

According to the Traditionalist perspective, then, Huxley's prejudicial and entirely anti-traditional appraisal of holy war (nothing more than “anger ... hatred, pride, cruelty...[and] fear”) is deleteriously influenced by his exclusivist “personal [and individualistic]...preference” (Pallis, in Perry, 1991:8) for the peaceable and pacific aspects (of primarily Buddhist and Christian modes) of religion alone; as also by his inability to apprehend warfare other than in its modern, and purely profane modality.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> See the review of *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom* by Peter Moore (1972:61-64) wherein is contained an insightful comparison between the anthologies of Perry and Huxley.

<sup>235</sup> “These terms relate to a saying or *hadith* of the Prophet of Islam upon returning from battle: ‘We have come back from the little holy war to the great holy war’ ” (Perry, 1991:391n; See note 102 above). For a comprehensive listing of traditional texts concerning the Holy War, see Perry (1991:394-403); and Schuon (1994b:20-21; 52-53).

<sup>236</sup> For the Traditionalist, ‘holy war’ presupposes a properly traditional and religious basis: thus, for instance, in Islam “a just, holy war or *jihād*, strictly forbids the harming of non-combatants and their property – let alone women and children, the elderly, medical personnel, clerics and so on, be they Muslims or non-Muslims – and yet modern so-called ‘Islamic Fundamentalists’ seem to focus on doing precisely [this in their]...acts of terrorism” (Prince Muhammad, 1998:50n). Concerning the diabolical nature of modern profane warfare, see Perry (1991:392-3); and Guénon (1996a:129-130). Let it be said that modern warfare is by its nature ‘diabolical’ because it relies upon infernal machinery (bombs, guns, airplanes etc.) to achieve its ‘ends’; which last are invariably of a political and economic nature alone.

If Huxley is to be believed, then all the actions of the Native American Indian brave, of the Japanese samurai, of the Zulu *impi*, of the Hindu *kshatriya*, of the Christian Knights Templar, of the Muslim *mujahidīn* – not forgetting the warrior prophet-kings that were David and Muhammad, as also the Hindu *avatāras* Rāma and Krishna – all, in short, should be regarded as perpetrating acts of “anger...hatred, pride, cruelty...[and] fear” (1946:312), action that is nothing less than a “sacrilegious rebellion against the divine order” (1946:222-223) – and this, even when these very actions were divinely ordained!<sup>237</sup> In reality, battle and warfare (provided they be traditional, i.e. pre-‘Renaissance’) can very well serve as a support for the spiritual life; as is eloquently shown in the Eastern usage of the martial arts as a vehicle for the spiritual Way (Chinese: *Tao*; Japanese: *Do*); and which – by definition – involve spiritual attitudes in no wise resembling “anger...hatred, pride, cruelty...[and] fear”; which last would indeed vitiate any possible advancement on the path.

Proceeding now to the ritual symbols Huxley would so readily dispense with (“the fewer distracting symbols the better”)<sup>238</sup>, Traditionalist Whitall Perry again provides the

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<sup>237</sup> Warfare was divinely ordained for the warrior castes such as the Hindu *kshatriya*. The origin and principle of warfare, say the Traditionalists, is in the Divine Nature itself, namely in the Qualities of Rigour. However, these qualities do not comprise *all* of the Divine Reality, for the Qualities of Mercy *also* exist; and indeed, according to a *hadīth qudsī* in Islam: “Verily My [i.e. God] mercy taketh precedence over my wrath” (Cited in Stoddart, 1985:80).

<sup>238</sup> Huxley (1946:303) quotes St. Bernard’s *Apologia* (“So great and marvelous a variety of divers forms meet the eye [in the monastery] that one [i.e. the monk] is tempted to read in the marbles rather than in the books, to pass the...day looking at these carvings...rather than in meditating on the law of God”) to support his ‘ascetico-mystical’ contention for the wholesale reduction of ritual symbols and sacred art. Now, the

integral traditional viewpoint in his *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom* (1991:302-324); wherein is presented a comprehensive listing of extracts enunciating the universally attested truth of symbolism, famously encapsulated in this saying of Hermes Trismegistus: "That which is below [the symbol] is as that which is above [the symbolized], and that which is above is as that which is below" (Cited in Perry, 1991:302); to which shall be added these few traditional sayings:

"You cannot omit the outward [ritual symbol] if you wish to know the inward [spiritual reality]. The inward is reflected in the outward world." (Ananda Moyī; Cited in Perry, 1991:306)

"*Allāh* [God] citeth symbols for men in order that they may remember [the Truth]." (*Qur'ān*, XIV, 25; Cited in Perry, 1991:307)

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Traditionalist school readily admit the validity of the 'ascetico-mystical' thesis of sacred art as one possible perspective; but they could not countenance the absolutization of this perspective alone – to the detriment of the equally valid perspective of ritual symbolism and of sacred art (See Schuon:1987:30-31). Now, St. Bernard's words (as quoted above) – far from applying to all without qualification – were "a violent attack on the monastic art of the Benedictine churches. He [St. Bernard] makes it clear that he was not against the use of art in non-monastic churches, since secular clergy, 'unable to excite the devotion of carnal folk by spiritual things, do so by bodily adornments [i.e. by sacred art and symbolism in all its forms]' [St. Bernard]" (Harvey, in Evans, 1998:56-57). Huxley's thesis, however, becomes completely untenable when he asserts: "What sort of pictures did [Meister] Eckhart...look at?...I strongly suspect that...[he] paid very little attention to art...To a person...[who] can see the All in every this, the first-rateness or tenth-rateness of...a religious painting will be a matter of the most sovereign indifference" (1954: 21-22). "The answer to his [Huxley's] question", says Traditionalist Whitall Perry, "is that Meister Eckhart had the sacred iconography of the Middle Ages fresh before him; and that art was not of the most 'sovereign indifference' to Eckhart is eloquently proven in Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, chapter 2: 'Meister Eckhart's view of Art' [where he is quoted as follows]... 'art amounts, in temporal things, to singling out the best' (Evans, I: 461)' " (Perry, 1996:11-12). For the Traditionalist perspective on sacred art – able to reconcile the *apophatic* and *cataphatic* approaches to sacred art and symbolism, by an understanding of their common and positive intention (as a support for the contemplation of the Divine) – see Schuon (1981b:175-204; 1982a:61-88; 1987:25-51; 1993:61-78; 1994b:161-166); Coomaraswamy (1956a; 1956b); and Burckhardt (1967). For the Traditionalist approach to symbolism – in principle and in practice – see especially Guénon (1995a; 1995b); Coomaraswamy (1977a); Burckhardt (1987:75-97; 102-172; 193-199); and Lings (1991; 1996).

“God made this (terrestrial) world in the [symbolic] image of the world above; ... all which is found above has its [symbolic] analogy below.” (Zohar; Cited in Perry, 1991:306)

As for the traditional approach to ritual (“vain repetitions...holding back the soul from enlightenment”), the reader may note these quoted texts from Perry:

“He that thinks or holds that outward exercises [ritual] hurt or are too low for his degree of spirituality, shows...that his spirituality is only in idea...something that is in his head and not in his heart...[T]o think that the spirituality of religion is hurt by the observances of outward institutions of religion is absurd.” (William Law; Cited in Perry, 1991:287).

“Only the ignorant person disdains ritual practice.” (Ibn ‘Atā’illāh; Cited in Perry, 1991:286)<sup>239</sup>

“Observe the forms and rituals as set forth in the [Hindu] Scriptures, without losing sight of their spirit” (Srimad Bhagavatam, XI, 5; Cited in Perry, 1991:287)<sup>240</sup>

In order to situate the preceding remarks on (i) holy war; (ii) symbolism; and (iii) ritual in their proper context, it is well to recall that the traditional perspective – in its integrality – admits of the orthodoxy of *both* the perspectives of war *and* peace (Guénon, 1996:41-45)<sup>241</sup>; as also of the *apophatic* and *cataphatic* approaches to symbolism,

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<sup>239</sup> It is to be noted that William Law (1686-1761) and Ibn ‘Atā’illāh (d.1309) were illustrious representatives of the Christian and Islamic esoteric traditions respectively, and cannot be ‘accused’ of exoteric or legalistic bias. Indeed, Huxley quotes William Law profusely – and with especial approval – throughout his anthology of the *philosophia perennis* (See especially Huxley’s comments on William Law, 1946:355).

<sup>240</sup> For a comprehensive listing of traditional texts pertaining to ritual (unencumbered by any exoteric or legalistic bias), see Perry (1991:271-301).

<sup>241</sup> See Perry (1991:692-707) for an enumeration of the traditional perspective on ‘peace’; See also Frithjof Schuon (1995a:147-151; 1997:121-128) for a profound traditional elucidation of the esoteric and spiritual modalities contained in the perspectives of ‘war’ and ‘peace’ respectively.

respectively (See Perry, 1991:302-324; 719-730; 971-1000). As to the just proportioning of ritual, Frithjof Schuon summarizes the traditional viewpoint as follows:

[Ritual]...can be regarded in two divergent ways: one may either take the view that the primitive simplicity of the rites has to be preserved from any cumbersome accretions, or on the contrary, one may adopt the attitude that the liturgical framework contributes, if not to the efficacy of the rites, at least to their assimilation, and that consequently it is a gift from God...The first of the two points of view...that of original simplicity<sup>242</sup> is legitimate in the sense that the contemplative and the ascetic, although not always desiring this, are able to do without any liturgical framework...and would prefer to see the sanctity of men rather than that of ritual forms...[For] the second point of view, that of liturgical elaboration<sup>243</sup>, it is legitimate

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<sup>242</sup> The inability of the religious 'fundamentalist' to return the religious tradition to its 'original purity' is exemplified in the following extract from Ghazi bin Mohammad. The religious 'fundamentalist', he notes, "is iconoclastic and cares nothing for the concept of sacred art [because, precisely, it was not present in the original community; but ends]...up *de facto* accepting 'profane' or 'secular' art...[T]he same Evangelical Christian fundamentalists who reject the habits of monks and who reject the Latin Mass wear modern suits and preach on television. Equally, the same Islamic fundamentalists who reject the idea of a *minbar* (a wooden flight of stairs – usually intricately worked – with a seat atop them, upon which the *sheikh* sits during the Friday sermon in the mosque while he is preaching), under the pretext that the Prophet...used only to sit on a tree trunk, wind up bringing a Western lounge chair into the mosque and sitting on it! And this despite the fact...that the traditional Arab and Muslim practice is to sit on the ground, and not on a chair" (1998:37) For other such examples, see Ghazi bin Mohammad (1998:36-40; 49-50; and also Schuon, 1985:6). In the Traditionalist view, it is the doctrine of the "qualitative determinations of time" (Guénon, 1995c:50) that prevents the religious 'fundamentalist' from returning the community to its 'original purity'. This idea is contained in the already quoted saying of the Prophet of Islam: "The best of my people are my generation; then they that come immediately after them, then they that come immediately after those" (Cited in Lings, 1992:19).

<sup>243</sup> From the Traditionalist viewpoint, a distinction must be made between ritual and ritualism: when the Hebrew prophets inveigh against the ritual enactments of their community, it is because (as YHWH says): "[They] honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" (*St. Mark*, VII, 6; Christ quotes the words revealed to the prophet Isaiah; See *Isaiah*, XXIX, 13); that is, the censure is not directed at the enactment of the ritual *per se*, but at the 'mechanical' manner in which it is enacted (i.e. with the "lips" and not with the "heart"). Similarly, Christ's instruction to the faithful – that when they pray, they ought not to use "vain repetitions, as the heathen do" (*St. Matthew*, VI, 7) – cannot be understood as an injunction against ritual *per se*; for immediately afterwards He teaches the ritual prayer known in Christianity as the "Our Father" (the *Paternoster*; See *St. Matthew*, VI, 9-13). That which Christ speaks out against is the

because symbolism is, and also because of the demands of new situations...[such as the present] “dark age” [wherein it becomes]...necessary to make the presence of the sacred more tangible so that on the one hand people of an increasingly profane mentality...not lose sight of the majesty of the rites, and so that on the other, access to these should not be too abstract (1985:3-6).

Thus, the traditional perspective (in both its exoteric and esoteric modalities) allows of a variable degree of ritual, depending upon particular circumstances; and this is as far as possible from the rigid uniformity of Huxley’s absolutist position.

Huxley’s heretofore “very inadequate” approach to the *philosophia perennis* (as evidenced by his prejudicial attitude towards traditional warfare, symbolism, and ritual) becomes “completely false” (Schaya, 1980:167) when he asserts that:

It has always seemed to me possible that...by taking the appropriate drug, I might so change my ordinary mode of consciousness so as to be able to know, from the inside, what the visionary, the medium, even the mystic were talking about (1954:7).<sup>244</sup>

To which the Traditionalist Whitall Perry replies:

A persistent error [of Huxley’s]...is the theory that spiritual development may be had apart from the question of personal qualifications and individual effort...[I]t should be known that only the temple of God can receive God, namely, a soul predisposed by grace, grounded in

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“vain” and hypocritical form of prayer that is performed with inattention but with much show (Pallis, 1995:122); for it is quite evident that “repetition” in prayer is perfectly acceptable – else, how could Christ say that “men ought always to pray, and to not faint” (*St. Luke*, XVIII, 1; See also *St. Luke*, XXI, 36: “pray always”; as also St. Paul: “pray without ceasing” [*I Thessalonians*, V, 17]), unless they employ some form of repetition in prayer?

<sup>244</sup> Huxley’s ingestion of the hallucinogenic drug mescaline forms the basis of his book *The Doors of Perception* (1954), which is a detailed description of his experiences; See also the sequel entitled *Heaven and Hell* (1956).



doctrine, purified of sin, transformed in will, established in virtue – and all this with the aid of an adequate ritual or traditional affiliation... “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (*I Corinthians*, XV, 50) (1996:7).

Continuing, Huxley – having ingested the hallucinogenic drug mescaline – finds himself seemingly in the presence of:

The Being of Platonic philosophy – except that Plato seems to have made the enormous, the grotesque mistake of separating Being from becoming, and identifying it with the mathematical abstraction of the Idea. He could never, poor fellow [!], have seen a bunch of flowers shining with their own inner light... a perpetual perishing that was at the same time pure Being, a bundle of minute, unique particulars in which, by some unspeakable and yet self-evident paradox, was to be seen the divine source of all existence (1954:12).

Perry (1996:9) retorts:

In *Timaues* (28a), Plato distinguishes “that which always is and has no becoming” [i.e. ‘Being’] from “that which is always becoming and never is” [i.e. ‘becoming’]. “That which is apprehended by the [supra-formal] intelligence [i.e. the *nous*] and [assisted by] reason”, Plato continues, “is always in the same [eternal] state; but that which is conceived by opinion with the help of sensation and without reason is always in a process of becoming and perishing and never really is.” To identify perpetual perishing with pure Being not only contradicts Plato, it also contradicts Meister Eckhart, St. Thomas Aquinas, William Law and all of the Western (and Eastern) contemplatives... from whose teachings Mr. Huxley claims to draw his own ideas <sup>245</sup>

In the section continuing, Huxley identifies his experience with “the Beatific Vision, *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, Being-Awareness-Bliss” (1954:13). Responding, Perry asserts:

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<sup>245</sup> It could conceivably be argued that Huxley’s claim – that ‘becoming’ is ‘Being’ – is none other than the *Mahāyāna* Buddhist contention that “*samsāra* is *nirvāna*” (See Hakuin, 1996:91; N. Waddell translation, for the full text of the *Mahā-Prajñā-Pāramitā-Hridaya-Sutra*); but in reality what is meant in these lines (as in all doctrines of a non-dualistic nature) is that *samsāra* in its principal ‘essence’ – in contradistinction to its ‘substantial’ existence – is identical with *nirvāna*; and *not* that *samsāra* as “a bundle of minute, unique particulars” (Huxley, 1954:12) is identical to *nirvāna* (See Stoddart, 1985:49-50; 70-71)!

Grace pertains to God, and is not under chemical control. The Beatific Vision is not within the reach of the unregenerate soul, and neither, *a fortiori*, is *Sat-Chit-Ananda* – these expressions all connoting supra-individual states of formless [i.e. supra-formal] manifestation, which completely transcend physical, sensorial and psychic range (1996:9)<sup>246</sup>.

Summing up, Perry notes:

The basic fallacy of the book [*The Doors of Perception*; as also of the sequel *Heaven and Hell*] – the central error from which the others stem – is the “evolutionist” hypothesis, that would have the higher depend upon the lower, Pure Being upon becoming. His “Mind at Large” [1954:16] is evidently quantitative and not qualitative, equitable with the “cosmic consciousness” that belongs to the lower possibilities of the soul and the inferior states of the being. The confusion is between the psychic and spiritual planes of reality, where the unfamiliar, the strange, and the bizarre are mistaken for the transcendent, simply by the fact that they lie outside the ordinary modes of consciousness (1996:10)<sup>247</sup>.

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<sup>246</sup> Those who would advocate the use of “entheogens” (nonaddictive mind-altering substances) to induce a mystical experience – and thereby ‘improve’ the religious consciousness of the age – will no doubt point to the use of ‘drugs’ by numerous religious traditions throughout the world: whether it be the beer sacred to the Scandinavians; the wine sacred to the Bacchanalians; the *soma* plant sacred to the Hindu *brahmins*; the *haoma* beverage sacred to the Zoroastrian priests; or the *peyote* plant sacred to a sector of the Native American Indians. Now, from the Traditionalist viewpoint it is important to note the following: (i) that the ‘drugs’ were used in a ritual setting by an elect group – usually priests; (ii) that the sacred substance had often been ‘revealed’ to the elect group by the Divinity; (iii) that the religious tradition provided safeguards against any possible abuse; (iv) that the use of sacred substances as an adjunct to religious practices was reserved for an earlier period in the historical cycle, given the doctrine of the “qualitative (i.e. deteriorating) determinations of time” (Guénon, 1995c:50); (v) that the occlusion (or ‘disappearance’) of many of these sacred substances was providential, and a protection against any possibility of profanation (“give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” [*St. Matthew*, VII, 6]); (vi) that the ‘end’ of religion is not the ephemeral mystical ‘state’ but the enduring character ‘trait’ (i.e. virtue, or conformity to the Real). Given the above factors, it must be said that the use of so-called “entheogens” by an unqualified (or rather, disqualified) modern humanity, can only be both dangerous and irresponsible (See H. Smith, 2000; and T. Moore, 2000:249-255).

<sup>247</sup> For traditional details concerning ‘heterodoxy and deviation’, see Perry (1991:413-478); as also Frithjof Schuon (1995:1-42).

In conclusion, the Traditionalist verdict on Aldous Huxley and his individualistic representation of the *philosophia perennis*, is that he has syncretistically “filched from various doctrines...those elements which seem to support his own attitude to life” (Eaton, 1995:182); and, therefore, not provided an objective and impartial witness to the total Truth that is the *philosophia perennis*. This, no doubt, is why Ananda Coomaraswamy referred to Huxley’s anthology as no more than “transitional” (1988:198); its partial and incomplete nature being altogether evident to the erudite Hindu *pandit*.

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