

Hubert Benoit

THE INTERIOR
REALIZATION

Translated by

John Fitzsimmons Mahoney

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Contents

Translator's Preface.....	5
Introduction.....	10

Part One

The Metaphysical Domain.....	11
Metaphysical Views • Validity of Our Intellect in the Metaphysical Domain • The Noumenal Domain • The Creative Principle • The Nature of God	

Part Two

Cosmic and Human Phenomenology.....	25
Phenomena—Are They Real? • Why God Manifests Himself • Two Views of the Cosmos • Genesis of Creation • The Duality of Purusha-Prakriti • The Divine Indifference • The Law of Interconditionment • The Total Conditioning of the Human Being • The Mission of the Demiurge • God and Humanity	

Part Three

Agony and the Death of Human Egotism.....	46
Critique of Systematic Procedures • Theoretical Intellectual Comprehension and Knowledge True to Life • The Death-in-Order-to-be-Reborn	

Part Four

Humility and the Access to Deliverance.....	57
The Search for the Absolute Good • Duality and Dualism: Possibility of Perfect Humility • Good and Evil • Conditioning of the Realization • The Progressive Diminution of Pride	

Translator's Preface

You are about to read a rare book on an even rarer subject: the possibility of a radical transformation of the human psyche. During the last two thousand years or so of Western civilization, our philosophy, religion, psychology, and literature have, for the most part, seen only a temporal realization that is always some form of psychological becoming, either to be accomplished as a material or psychological success in this world or in an imagined afterlife. However, the true Realization in Dr. Benoit's words is a "complete revolution in our psyche which delivers us from every suffering and gives access to the Absolute and Eternal Good."

The earliest attempt in our Western Tradition to discuss Realization as a possibility open to man was a work by Dionysius the Aeropagite (St. Denis) translated from the Greek into Latin in about 850 A.D. by John Scotus Erigena, who has been referred to as the greatest mind of the Middle Ages.¹ This work was truly seminal in the formation of early Christian philosophy. Alan Watts in the introduction to his translation of this work from Greek into English states that had this work been lost to history it could have been restored from quotations in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas alone.² And St. Thomas declared toward the end of his life that all his words were mere straw compared to what was revealed to him while saying mass on December 6, 1273. Considering the fact that the latest edition of his work appears in 61 volumes, for St. Thomas to stop writing so abruptly after such a prodigious output, we can only hypothesize that what occurred was a complete

¹Frederick Artz, *Mind of the Middle Ages* (New York, Alfred Knopf, 1953).

²Alan Watts, *Theologia Mystica* (Sausalito, CA: The Society for Comparative Philosophy, 1971), p. 3.

transformation of his consciousness that brought him in contact with another dimension. Despite urging by his companions, this prolific metaphysical author said he would write no more and would merely await the end of his life. He died a year later, leaving his *Summa* unfinished.

Unfortunately, there has been a tendency to group these rare works of psycho-metaphysical insight into the vague category of mysticism and to treat them only as something to be contemplated by monks or other souls removed from the activities of ordinary life. However, these works, such as the one you are now reading, open up a world of great psychological insight and expose us to the possibility of a new frontier or dimension that is our ultimate need. Dr. Benoit refers to this complete revolution in the human psyche as Realization, and to the insights and principles of the "Teaching" as revealed Traditional Metaphysics or the Sacred Science of that which lies beyond the physical.

What especially distinguishes this book is the rare combination of a detailed psychological analysis of the nature of mankind projected against the background of the teachings of Traditional Metaphysics. Besides exposing the intimate mechanisms, processes and laws which govern our mental functioning, Dr. Benoit shows how these operations of consciousness are ultimately connected to the cosmos of which we form a dynamic part. You will find Dr. Benoit's speculations about the universe and the mind to anticipate those of modern science. For example, Dr. Benoit states that what is normally called the void of intergalactic space is not a nothingness, for nothingness simply has no existence. Modern research points to the fact that much of the matter of the universe, more than ninety-six percent, is invisible to our senses. One Harvard scientist recently exclaimed that it was rather embarrassing to tell this to astronomers who for years thought they were observing the universe.³ Concepts such as mutually determined events are replacing the traditional cause-effect model of the physical sciences. This is related to Dr. Benoit's model of the "Law of Interconditionment." The latest research in neurophysiology such as that done by Benjamin Libet of the University of California at San Francisco has demonstrated that a significant

³Dennis Overbye, "The Shadow Universe," *Discover*, May, 1985, p. 14. One must always be careful when using analogies from the phenomenal world and applying them to Metaphysical Principles. However, besides giving new meaning to the "Void," this is certainly an interesting pointer to what Dr. Benoit says about Prakriti, the primordial substance forming all manifestation. *Tr.*

amount of brain activity precedes all voluntary acts. This means that what we call free will is merely an illusion. Dr. Benoit refers to ordinary mankind as being totally conditioned and consequently having no free will. However, Dr. Benoit arrives at these concepts and others from a completely different direction than the empirical methods used in physical science.

At a time when the sources of knowledge about the nature of our minds and human destiny are being called into question and challenged in every conceivable way, Dr. Benoit's research stands as proof that the possibilities for mankind are far greater and much different than what has been taught. The foundations of psychoanalysis and its offspring, psychology, are now seen by many scientists to be pseudo-sciences and little able to help us solve our most fundamental problems. Religions are given to sensationalism and politics, and their only call to the masses is "to believe," as if belief were a magical key to the ending of human suffering. As difficult as it sounds, we are now forced to think for ourselves and journey alone on the uncharted seas of our own consciousness with a few teachings that still possess the power and resonance of truth. I often think of this particular book as a "metaphysical haiku" because of its conciseness and ability to get at the essence of the most important issues concerning mankind and the possibility of our transformation. The tradition of "direct pointing" is here in all its splendor by a man who is an authentic case of Realization.

I would like to say a few words about Dr. Benoit's life, for he exemplifies a combination of qualities seldom found today: wide learning, the highest degree of scientific and artistic skill, and great courage. After completing his medical and musical studies (he was a prize violinist at the Nancy Conservatory), he practiced surgery for twelve years. During the crucial period of the Allied landing in Normandy during World War II, he was trapped in a house during a period of annihilation bombing at St.-Lo and was severely wounded. He spent years in a hospital bed but miraculously recovered. He then went into psychiatry, which he has been practicing for the last thirty-five years in Paris. He has written a number of books that have appeared in many editions in both Europe and the United States: *Metaphysics and Psychoanalysis*, *The Supreme Doctrine*, *The Many Faces of Love*, and *Let Go!* He also wrote the introduction to the French edition of D.T. Suzuki's classic work, *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*. I might add that he personally feels that this work, *The Interior Realization*, is his best. It represents a distillation of his thought and research over the last thirty-five years.

Although Dr. Benoit continued to write in the twenty years since the publication of his last work, he has not sought to publish any of it until now.

Aldous Huxley, whom Dr. Benoit mentions briefly in this book, translated an article by Benoit titled "Notes in Regard to a Technique of Timeless Realization" which appeared in the March-April, 1950 edition of *Vedanta and the West* magazine. He corresponded with Dr. Benoit and also wrote the introduction to *The Supreme Doctrine*. On reading Dr. Benoit's first work, *Metaphysics and Psychoanalysis*, Huxley wrote to him saying:

A book like yours foreshadows the arrival, at last, for a true science of the Psychology of man. Until now we have only had partial glimpses. Men like Eckhart, Ruysbroeck, Suso knew by experience and recognized in theory the eternal basis of the temporal self—but they dealt with the psychology of the self as logicians rather than biographers, as Aristotelians rather than existentialists. On the other hand, in our time when the psychologists have finally learned to consider the self biographically, life has been completely stripped of the Primordial Fact of Eternity. Your merit is to have re-united the elements which historical accidents have separated and to proclaim a psychology which will relate the temporal facts to their timeless ground.⁴

Huxley, one of the most versatile intellectuals of the twentieth century, freely crossed the boundaries of science, literature, philosophy, metaphysics and religion. His research convinced him that a completely new dimension was open to mankind, whom he saw as being lost in a narrow activity of the brain which blocked access to this new state. Huxley became interested in the work of Krishnamurti, and exclaimed on hearing one of his talks that "it was like listening to a discourse by the Buddha." He also compared Benoit to Krishnamurti. In another letter, he praised his writings as being almost identical to Krishnamurti's but "formulated more explicitly and with a more rigorous explanatory analysis."⁵ Incidentally, Krishnamurti's writings have also attracted the interest of psychiatrists and scientists such as Dr. Jonas

⁴Grover Smith, editor, *Letters of Aldous Huxley* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 603.

⁵Smith, *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 612.

Salk, the discoverer of the polio vaccine, and Dr. David Bohm, the renowned quantum physicist. Dr. Bohm, in the introduction to *The Future of Humanity*, explains that "It is now fairly well established that . . . the brain cells and their functioning are profoundly affected by knowledge and thought, especially when these give rise to strong feelings and passions. It is thus quite plausible that insight, which must arise in a state of great mental energy and passion, could change the brain cells in an even more profound way."⁶ This insight, which completely transforms the conditioned brain, is actually what Dr. Benoit calls Realization.

Whether Dr. Benoit is writing on the laws of human psychology, the nature of sex, neurosis, or human conditioning, he always sees mankind as part of the cosmos and finally integrally identical to "the timeless ground" that is the one source of all phenomenal multiplicity. This book is what Huxley anticipated in Benoit's research over thirty years ago; a work that gives us at last "a true science of the psychology of man."

This book includes an additional Fourth Part that the original French publication did not contain. During my correspondence with Dr. Benoit, we discussed the possibility of expanding the text. This Fourth Part evolved out of that discussion.

John Fitzsimmons Mahoney
November, 1986

⁶J. Krishnamurti and David Bohm, *The Future of Humanity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 3.

Introduction

The essential subject of this book is our human condition, the possibility of our metaphysical transformation and the understanding of what leads to this transformation.

As soon as you begin reading, you will probably be very surprised at some of my views on the genesis of the cosmos, views inspired by Traditional Metaphysics. Mankind is part of the cosmos and shares its genesis. Therefore, the knowledge of this genesis—as you will see later on—projects on the functioning of the human being some extremely unexpected and paradoxical laws that are contrary to current opinion.

What is of utmost importance to us—such as we are—is that which concerns us personally, and in particular that which can deliver us from the painful slavery we undergo.

I hope that you will not be put off or let yourself be discouraged by the pure metaphysical abstraction that is found at the beginning of this book because this abstraction is necessary to the knowledge and understanding of our condition such as it truly is.

Part One



THE METAPHYSICAL DOMAIN

1. Metaphysical Views

For thousands of years many people have sought to understand the nature of the universe. The most intelligent among them realized that they perceived all things according to the structure of their sense organs and not according to true reality. Thus, all that they saw, heard, touched, and so on, they named phenomena (from the verb *phainein*, to appear). From these appearances, these phenomena that appear, they questioned themselves about what appeared out of the invisible and manifested itself in a visible way.

Many of those seekers, the ones most gifted with metaphysical intuition, thought that the origin of all things was one, that One Principle was the source of phenomenal multiplicity, and that this multiplicity was its manifestation. This discrimination between principle and manifestation is the basis of Traditional Metaphysics, the sacred science of that beyond the physical.

The very first texts we know of were written in ancient India: for the Vedanta exposes the purest metaphysics—the Traditional Metaphysics.

2. Validity of Our Intellect in the Metaphysical Domain

From that first discrimination between the Manifestation that we can perceive and the One Principle, which is its origin and which escapes our sense organs, a question presents itself: can our reflexive thought adventure beyond what we can concretely experience? Generally speaking, here our intelligence can know nothing by means of language. Language is composed of verbal forms and is certainly an instrument well suited for the study and knowledge of the perceptible phenomenal world, which of course is formal itself; but can we utilize language for exploration of the metaphysical world that is informal?

Yes, we can, but from a condition of knowing clearly how we must consider our formulations within its domain. Every word expresses something; every word considered by itself is therefore comparable to what remains of a fruit after one has squeezed out the juice. What remains is the formal skeleton of the fruit. Every word is some type of skeleton of what it designates; it suggests but doesn't contain reality.

When we speak of things belonging to the perceptible world, every word can be seen in the mind's eye as a suggestion because our memory has associated the pulp of a living experience with the verbal skeleton of the word. But things change when forming metaphysical notions because we never experienced nor lived what they designate, and our memory can add nothing to the nature of their verbal skeletons. So in a metaphysical text, one can be tempted to see only a verbal jugglery without true content.

Nevertheless, it is possible to speak accurately of the metaphysical domain. If the words employed in this domain do not designate anything that we can represent to ourselves, we can, however, conceive their meaning. Our intellect can conceive what we cannot perceive. And to the degree that a person reading a metaphysical text is gifted with metaphysical intuition, that person conceives the meaning of the text across its verbal formulation, although he or she cannot represent it. When Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," he invites his listeners to understand what his words have been able only to suggest. And when he said, "Happy are those who have not seen and who have believed," he affirmed the possibility for perceiving intuitively the evidence of certain intellectual truths that do not lend themselves to any representation or to any perceptible image. The person

who deals with metaphysical notions can utilize words belonging to this domain, but must often appeal to symbols, if not to parables, as the Gospel often demonstrates.

But intuition is a totally personal faculty. It is thus impossible that two people can have exactly the same intuitive idea. The idea is proposed, but not imposed identically to all. Also, this cannot be demonstrated logically from hypotheses as is done in the quantitative sciences. People will always have different opinions about metaphysical notions, and many will deny them entirely.

Chan¹ has an excellent symbolic image of a finger that points toward the moon, indicating it, and inviting us to see it. Here the moon represents Absolute Informal Consciousness, which is inexpressible, whereas the finger corresponds to the formal statement of the initiatic teaching, which itself can be expressed orally or in writing. And Chan has always affirmed the utility and very necessity of a formal teaching. At the same time, it has always placed its disciples on guard against the very human tendency of taking the "finger" for the "moon" and falling into the idolatry of words and texts; namely, of thinking that those statements are absolute truth.

The person who reads a metaphysical text must know that none of the words are true from the point of view of the Absolute, and that each idea is presented as: "All is, for our understanding, as if . . ."

This reminder, which places us on guard against the dangers of language, is necessary. Later on, there will be other warnings, so great is the peril of words and the many meanings that we can give to them. This applies all the more so to the Absolute Principle; it is informal, beyond the domain of form, and no word, being formal, can be permitted to represent it. Our understanding will not be impeded by the employment of such words if we have the metaphysical intuition of what they suggest to us.

¹It is misleading to say that the initiatic Far Eastern teaching known in the Western world is Zen. When Bodhidharma came to the Far East toward the beginning of seventh century, in order to bring the teaching of the Buddha, he arrived in China. There that teaching was understood and adapted to the Chinese genius under the name of Chan, the purest form of that teaching. Then Chan, passing through Korea, reached Japan, where it gave birth to numerous Japanese Buddhist sects, one of which was Zen. In reality, those that one calls the Old Masters were Chinese and lived in China. Zen soon became degraded, and the people who actually go to a Zen monastery do not find the purest teaching of Chan. Thus I prefer, in this book, to refer to Chan rather than to Zen.

3. The Noumenal Domain

Within Traditional Metaphysics, the central notion is that of "Being" (opposed to existence; to exist comes from *ex sistere*, that is to say, emanating from Being). But the Vedanta goes beyond Being up to the extreme summit—it names "Not Being" (that is to say, the Principle of Being) or Emptiness. R. Guenon defines Emptiness as "the infinity of the possibilities of manifestation and of non-manifestation," and Being as "the infinity of the possibilities of manifestation."² Being is not, therefore, the creator, but the power of creation, above creation. Beyond Being, there is the Principal Creator to whom many names have been given: Brahma, God, Yahweh ("what cannot be named"), Allah, and so on.

Do not think that this hierarchy includes three distinct entities. In reality, it presents three views of the Absolute, views of decreasing fullness from Emptiness to the Principal Creator. I will often reunite these three notions in one, that of Noumene, which means that which can be conceived but not perceived. It designates Emptiness, Being, and the Creator. One can see this represented schematically in figure 1 on page 15.

The metaphysical transformation of the human psyche is the awareness that mankind is Noumene in its total view: each of us is not only God, but Being and Emptiness. Meister Eckhart distinguished God from "the Deity" who was infinitely superior to him, and he affirmed that mankind can realize that we are this same Deity. Would not the liberated Buddha say, "I am infinitely superior to Brahma"?

I will only speak briefly of Being and Emptiness, and instead focus on the Creative Principle in order to study the genesis of the Cosmos. Mankind is part of the Cosmos; the human state is part of the multiple states of existence. The psyche, in the human habitual unliberated condition, is what I want to describe to point out the obstacles that oppose liberation. In this way, we can be carried to the goal in spite of the obstacles.

²Rene Guenon, *Les Etats Multiples de L'etre* (Paris: Les Editions Vega, 1947), p. 31. This is my own translation. In English, this book is available as *The Multiple States of Being*, translated by Joscelyn Godwin, and available from Larson Publications.

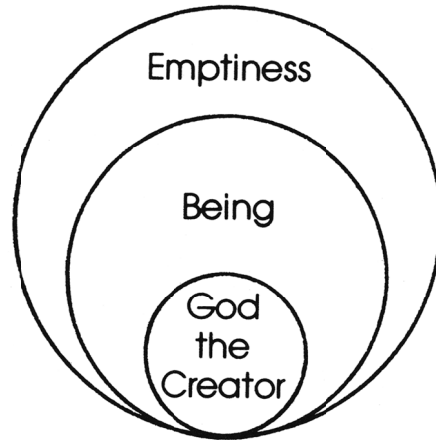


Figure 1. Three views of the Absolute in descending order, which is also referred to as Noumene.

Therefore, I am going to respond to the question of Noumene in its inferior view of God the Creator. Then, passing to the phenomenal world, we will see the specific way in which God and His creation are united and the consequences that arise for the human being.

4. The Creative Principle

God is the Unknowable, and it is impossible to speak of Him directly. But we can conceive certain of His infinite attributes.

God is *informal*: form, being the relation of distances between points situated in space, would not exist in the noumenal domain, which does not include space.

God has no *location*: by His immanence (residence), He is everywhere in his manifestation and nowhere in particular. But by His immanence and His transcendence (His totality), He is the divine nature of the human being, his absolute reality. He is the Self (capital S) in order to distinguish it from the individual self. Chan expresses that in saying: "It is in vain that, in the Total Cosmos, you seek God outside of yourself." And this in spite of the fact that the Self, which is in a state of possibility, does not reside in anyone as long as it is not realized.

God is *impersonal*: one can say that God is the One Absolute Personality. But because of the meaning that we give to the words *a person*, *many persons*—each person being limited—God must be said to be impersonal.

God is precisely *unlimited or infinite*: the use of the term *infinite* in the phenomenal domain of mathematics is an error, for all mathematical value is limited. You can only pursue indefinitely a progression of numbers that expand continuously; but this is just enlarging a limit without eliminating it. It is only accurate to speak of the mathematical indefinite but not of the infinite within that domain. We can conceive of the divine infinite, but we cannot represent it in any way. The liberated person does not see the infinite Noumene; that person knows that he or she is it.

God is *eternal*: that raises the question of time. The English language possesses two good words, *time* and *duration*, but in practice we use them synonymously, with a clear preference for the word *time*. India also has two good words, but they are not confused; *kali* is eternal time, *kala* is duration. God is in eternal time; He has no beginning and will have no end. In manifestation, created things appear and disappear necessarily, their existence is of a passing duration, but the total Cosmos is eternal; it has no beginning and will have no end. God did not create manifestation on one day, nor will He cease creating it on another day.

Duration includes the past, the present, and the future. Time is, itself, the eternal instant; thus, one can speak sometimes of the eternity of the instant.

The attributes that we are describing apply to the three views of Noumene. We are now going to speak mainly of the specific nature of Being insofar as it is the Creator, that is to say, of God.

5. The Nature of God

God is the name we have given to the Creative Principle. It is Being insofar as it manifests itself. To speak of the existence of God is an error. God "is" transcendent to everything that exists in manifestation. As Hui-neng said, "Not a thing is"; created things exist but they are not—only Noumene is.

The word *God*, like all the other names that have been given to the Creative Principle, has the serious inconvenience of evoking the image of a person and pushes one to personify the Metaphysical Principle. All religions have fallen into this trap, and they are, by that fact, erroneous. Every "religion"—a word that comes from *relier* (to join)—invites us to join ourselves to God, as if God and mankind were two "things" separated one from the other only by different modalities of the same nature. However, God being the Absolute All is nothing other than Himself; while mankind, in a state of existence emanating from Him, would not know how to reascend the current of the creator's emanation. Later in this book we will see the possibility of the Interior Realization, which is the insight that the Self immanent in each of us is identical to the Absolute Self and in this sense we are identical to God. But *identity* is not *relation* nor the same as *reunion*. That error is very evident in Christianity where mankind, once in "paradise," will remain *other* than God, allowed only to contemplate Him; and even where mankind would contemplate Him in their previous, earthly body.

In the "habitual" mentality of people who "believe in God," their imagined image of "God" is so subtle and naive that they think of Him as an anthropomorphic figure of a person who exhibits all the characteristics of the human psyche. For them, God is a person who has formal thoughts, sentiments, desires and the like.

For this reason, I have hesitated to use the word *God* in this book, because many people raised in our Judeo-Christian ethic have personified Him. I finally decided to use this word in the hope that some minds—for whom God is not dead—will be able to restore this word to its true metaphysical definition.

God is "that" who said to Moses: "I am who am," "I am that which is" (or who is). The definition of God is there, in its total simplicity. We will say, as we do in our everyday language, that God made nothing other than Being. Being that is absolutely sufficient to Itself; immutable, stable in Itself. It doesn't act. It is what Chinese metaphysics calls "Non-Action."

What I am going to say on the subject of God is "of God insofar as He is," not "of God insofar as He will manifest Himself in Creation," which could suggest to us the image of a "thing" supreme and fixed that, being in Itself and for Itself, will hover over the universe, in its splendid isolation far above the cosmic movement and without relation to it. This erroneous view comes, like all the others, from the fact that our language is structured to

describe, to study, and to comprehend the phenomenal world, the formal appearances of this world, of this apparent "multiple" where we see things illusorily as being distinct entities. In reality, Noumene is the Unique Entity—Entity that, moreover, cannot be said to be distinct because nothing being outside of It, there is nothing from which It can be distinguished.

Let us remember that our intellect is useful in conceiving the noumenal world and in speaking of it. Everything that I am going to continue to say on the subject of God will express only intellectual views on these discriminations. One should not take these abstract notions literally and mistake them for distinct entities. No statements of an initiatic true teaching can pretend to be a fragment of Absolute Truth, for the latter is One as the Absolute is One. Absolute Truth is the intellectual attribute of the One Principle of the All Absolute; it is the "Cosmic Mind" of Chan. Being an aspect of All, it is not a totalization of elements and cannot, therefore, be fragmented. But our reflexive thought can understand a question only by analyzing it, by distinguishing diverse notions in it, and by seeing the relationships that exist.

Every phrase that expresses our metaphysical intuition is therefore an analytic representation, endowed not of Absolute Reality but of a relative reality because our intellect is functioning in a formal or verbal way. This reality, relative as it may be, is not worthless, and we can build on it with confidence in our search for truth. Little by little, it builds itself as the "finger" correctly points toward the "moon," and it is possible, thanks to that "finger" being finally complete, that we can have one day the inexpressible evidence of our Buddha nature, of our divinity—evidence strictly individual, incommunicable because it is beyond all possible verbal expression. In reading what follows, do not think that these things are in the Absolute as I say them, but they are part of the formal knowledge without which you could never release yourself. That can occur one day in a sudden fashion: the transcendence of the mind and the irreversible evidence, not that we know absolute truth but that we *are* it.

Pardon this new and rather long "oral precaution," but it was necessary before continuing and saying that our metaphysical intuition can reveal to us, in the formal limits of human language, the nature of Absolute Being or God.

God, we have said, is one, not in the sense of quantitative unity but of qualitative unity. Thus, the Vedanta prefers to the word *one*, the expression

Not Two. Saying that God is One is to say that outside of Himself or other than Himself, nothing is. This One is therefore the Absolute All.

If we view God only in His global integrality, our intuition will remain silent after having Him revealed to us as being this One, which is the unique All. But God has an infinite number of attributes or aspects. It is from this view that our intuition is going to inform us about God according to our ordinary limitations. The divine attributes are not elements or parts of God-aggregate because God is the All and not a summation of parts; the attributes are divine aspects that appear to our mind according to its view of God in such and such a manner.

God is the cause of Himself. Since nothing is outside God, other than Himself, He is not caused (namely, created) by anything. One names Him sometimes the "uncreated," although Spinoza said that He is "Cause of Himself," that He is "that of which the essence implies necessarily that He is"; or that which would not know how not to be. In the *Ego sum qui sum* of the Bible, God so defines Himself.

God is Spirit. We just saw that God is cause of Himself and deserves to be called the Uncreated. But these two equivalent notions make us see God as being "created by Himself" or "auto-created." In other words, in the origin of that which one calls Creation, the divine principle of creation is God Himself. There is no incompatibility between the notions of Uncreated and Auto-created. Uncreated means "created by self." This leads us necessarily to ask how God creates Himself.

If we think according to ordinary thought that a person created something, and if we reflect on the "how" of this creation, we see this "how" divided into two parts. One part immediately precedes the appearance of the created thing and consists in a formal activity of the work, in a "doing," and this "doing" seems to command the appearance of the created thing. But the "how" we are studying includes another part, this time conceptual. For example, none of us knows how to make anything without having a prior conception of what we want to make, and it is this conception through the intermediary of the activity, of doing, that commands in reality the appearance of the created thing.

But God, who is Being sufficient to Himself, who is Non-Action, doesn't "make" anything, nor evidently creates anything through the intermediary of some kind of "doing." This would imply the inconceivable existence of a mechanism between God and Himself. Divine Creation doesn't

include any "making," and it consists *of a pure conception of the created thing*. God creates in conceiving without doing anything whatsoever. In other words, God is Absolute Consciousness, conscious of Himself; God is pure and absolute spirit.

God is Absolute Consciousness, conscious of Himself. We insist on this point. As we said earlier, God is "cause of Himself," meaning that he is conceived by Himself, therefore conscious of Himself. God, in effect, causes (that is to say, creates) whatever in conceiving it. It is in conceiving Himself, in being conscious of Himself, that God is cause of Himself. This leads us to the evidence that God is Absolute Consciousness, conscious of Himself.

God is the only free cause. As cause of Himself, God is the unique cause from which all things come. And he is the unique *free* cause because He *is* by the sole necessity of his nature. Thus, Spinoza said, "God is the only free cause."

*The Divine Triad.*³ The concepts of God causing Himself and of God caused by Himself, of God conceiving Himself and of God conceived by Himself, points us to two aspects of God: one active, the other passive. But the divine Absolute unites these two aspects and conciliates them in a Trinitarian Unity. Figure 2 on page 21 will aid us in better understanding this. The names of the three angles of the triangles do not need further comment. The two circumferences symbolize the Divine Absolute that unites, in its unity, all of His aspects or attributes, all the active and passive aspects of God that our understanding can conceive. These aspects of One God are identical among themselves insofar as they participate in the divine identity. The Divine Triad is at the same time three insofar as it appears to our mind, and One insofar as it *is*. The angles of the triangles in these diagrams are linked by three parallel lines because the triple line signifies in algebra "identical to" ($A=A$).

We see here the Divine Triad in its three aspects. This triple statement was expressed by Spinoza when he said that "God loves Himself infinitely." First of all, we misunderstand the word *love* as it is used here because this word is associated with the human loves that are so familiar to us. These are relative loves because they participate in the relativity of the phenomenal world where they take place. The love with which God loves Himself

³This triangular triad must not be confused with the Catholic Holy Trinity, which is a linear triad.

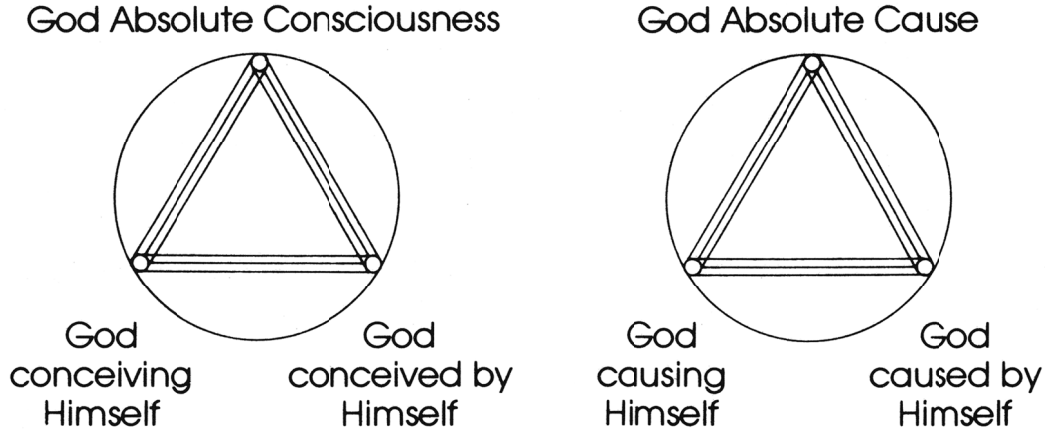


Figure 2. The Divine Trinitarian Unity.

infinitely is an aspect of his absolute nature, and it is a question therefore of Absolute Love. But what does this mean?

Let us leave that for a moment and instead try to understand the question based on situations that we can conceive as ideal love. Love is essentially "attraction"; we who love are attracted toward what we love. More exactly, the cosmic force that is love moves us toward what is loved. In our human loves, the impulse toward the other is expressed primarily by the will that the other exists through promoting its existence in various ways, even by the contemplation of its idealized image. In sum, we affirm this existence by favoring it in every way possible. It is clear that one who loves in this way wants for the other what the other wants for itself. "Love others as you love yourself," said Jesus. And do not loving couples often dream of "becoming one"? For want of identity, which is here impossible, the force that is love pushes the person who loves to identify with the one who is loved.

Let us now leave the limited domain of human loves and view this attraction in its cosmic generality. The law of gravitation or attraction is one cosmic law in which the general notion of love is manifested. When people discovered that a piece of metal charged with a particular energy attracted iron filings, did they not give to it the name of "loving,"⁴ as if the piece of metal wanted to be united to the filings? And all of the celestial bodies attract themselves, tending to unite, and only are prevented from doing so by the centrifugal force of their rotation.

⁴The French word for "loving" is the same as the French word for "magnet"—*aimant*. *Tr.*

Let us come back to Absolute Love, or to love insofar as it is an attribute of the Divine Absolute. This is difficult for us to conceive correctly because of the ambiguous meaning of our word *infinite*. When Spinoza speaks of the infinite love that God has for himself, the word *infinite* does not mean "of extraordinary intensity" because that word, in that phrase, has no quantitative sense. The infinite as a divine attribute is purely qualitative, as with the infinite of God, and it has consequently nothing in common with the mathematical indefinite.

However, if armed with this metaphysical evidence I begin to apply the notion of attraction to Absolute Love, which has a fundamental explicative value in the study of phenomenal loves, I see that this notion destroys itself. In effect, all the attributes or aspects of One God participate in unity, forming a unique All, each of them making only One with each of the others. They are all of the same nature; which is always identical to itself. If we express them in different ways, those differences concern only "the angles of vision" from which our intellect studies Divine Identity. Consequently, "God loving Himself" and "God loved by Himself" are identical in spite of their formulations. This is expressed relative to our intellectual functioning in saying there exists between "God loving" and "God loved" (a separate view for our analytic reflection) a metaphysical infinite attraction, meaning an identity; and that infinite attraction restores the identity of the two aspects that our analytic thought had artificially separated.

It is in the same manner that our intellectual functioning obliges us to distinguish "God loving" and "God loved" from "God-Absolute-Love," which conciliates them in a trinitarian identity.

These analytic discriminations are artificial because they are necessary for the technical apparatus that is our formal intellect, but they are not unreal. They are real relative to our structure, and we are right in using them to clarify our comprehension.

Divine love can be symbolically represented by figure 3 on page 23 for it shows us a form of the Divine Triad, the way all forms of universal love are presented to us. The three terms distinguished by our analysis—active, passive, and the Absolute that conciliates them in identity—points out that God, the Being who is sufficient to Himself, is not an inert, immobile block. Almost immediately, we are tempted to apply to the non-immobility of God the notions we are accustomed to in the phenomenal world we experience. We then attribute to each of the three terms of the Triad a particular role: the

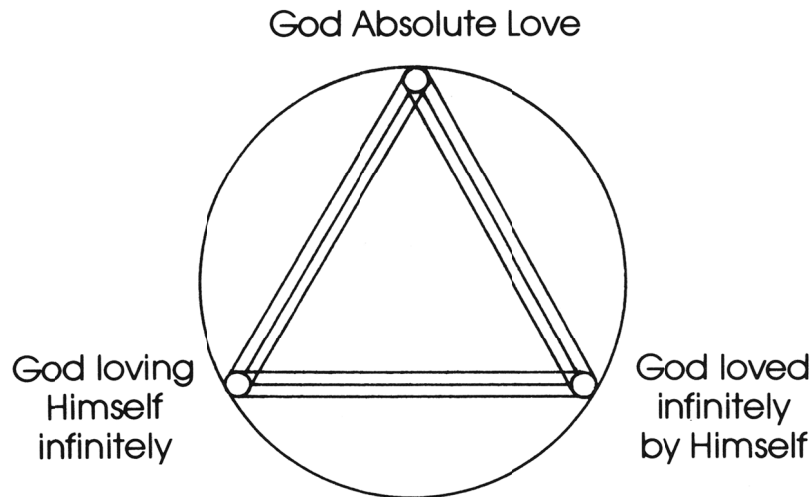


Figure 3. The Triangle of Absolute Love

active aspect of God will rush toward its passive aspect; the latter will welcome this impulse, whereas the Divine Absolute will maintain its ensemble in perfect harmony. This way of seeing is logically rigorous as long as we begin each of the phrases that expresses it by "All is to our eyes as if . . ." and not taking the words *active* and *passive* in their usually phenomenal meaning. From a strictly metaphysical point of view, we can speak only of the *non-immobility of the divine immutability*. And if we replace the negative expression of "Non-Action" with its corresponding positive, "All Powerful," we see God as Infinite Energy, principally contained in Himself. When we come to Creation, we will see it as resembling in some way the radiation of this Divine Energy.

But since we are obliged to utilize the mediocre tool that is our language, we will use the active and passive aspects of God in striving to remain in pure abstraction and not fall into the error of imaginative representation.

The passive aspect of God is non-dynamic and immobile. It is the principle of what we will call later the immanence of God in every created thing. Immanence signifies "residence," therefore non-movement. The active aspect of God is itself dynamic. It is the principle of what we will name the divine *transcendence* in relation to its manifestation. Evidently God, seen in Himself, is neither immanent in anything nor transcendent in anything, but the immanence and transcendence are already part of the attributes, latent attributes that actualize themselves in cosmic Creation.

The active and passive aspects of God, seen in relation to Creation, can be said to be "masculine" and "feminine" for it is the marriage of the two that results in cosmic Creation.

Part Two



COSMIC AND HUMAN PHENOMENOLOGY

6. Phenomena—Are They Real?

Manifestation consists in the ensemble of phenomena. "Phenomena" signifies "appearance," and our perceptions are dependent on the structure of our sense organs. If this structure were different, we would perceive all things in another way. Therefore, to say that our perception is illusory would mean that the perceived thing is equally illusory, and then there is only one conclusion that we are left with. In fact, the Hindu concept of Maya is often misinterpreted, giving the impression that phenomena are unreal. But how is it possible to think that Absolute Reality would be able to emanate an unreal anything? Maya does signify illusion, but what is it that is illusory? It is not the phenomena perceived by us but merely our belief in the absolute reality of our perceptions. The true dilemma is not the *reality* or *unreality*, but the *Absolute* Reality or relative reality. What I perceive and the thing perceived are real for me, relative to myself. In the same way, if I dream that I see a tiger, that tiger is not unreal. It is as real for me as if I saw a tiger in a waking state. After all, we perceive anything only through the intermediary of its mental image elaborated by our brain in its view or in evoking it, and this image does exist. We have reasons in practical life for taking into account the information given to us by our sense organs.

7. Why God Manifests Himself

We have indisputable sensorial evidence that creation exists. But the question "Why does God manifest Himself?" can be posed to the mind. God, seen in Himself, is the One without second—the All—and that All is perfectly sufficient to itself. It has need of nothing, of nothing that in some way extends itself as the radiation of the sun extends the sun.

Noon, Noon up there, Noon without movement
 In itself, it thinks and suffices to itself . . .
 Everything complete and perfectly crowned

—P. Valery¹

However, if Manifestation is not, it does *exist* (emanating from Being), and it is the object of our sensorial intuitions. Is it contingent or necessary that the phenomenal world emanates from God? Could Creation be the fruit of a divine fantasy that could be able not to be?

God is One, and He includes the three notions of Absolute Principle and their active and passive aspects. He has them in Himself, reunited by an attraction of infinite love. The Divine Triad includes infinite noumenal energy which has the possibility or virtuality of energetic radiation. Therefore, all possibility or virtuality is necessarily realized. The energetic radiation of God in a Cosmos which manifests it is necessary (meaning that it is not able not to be) and not contingent.

Moreover, the question "Why does God manifest Himself?" is posed in general through absurd words because it implies the assimilation of a human psychology to a divine psychology. Why do human beings make anything whatsoever? Because they desire to make it for such or such a reason. But to attribute to God any desire implies that God can lack something, which is absurd, since He is the All.

God creates Manifestation because His nature includes it. This is, in sum, the better way of responding to a question that deserves not to be posed.

¹Paul Valery, "Charmes," in *Le Cimetiere Marin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), p. 231. This is my own translation. *Tr.*

8. Two Views of the Cosmos

When we speak of Manifestation, we think right away of the created things that surround us, as we perceive them. In our egotism, we see ourselves as the masterpiece and king. We use, often foolishly, all created things for our personal convenience as if they were made for our use.

But Manifestation, which includes mankind, is first of all the way in which Absolute Principle manifests itself. Before all else we must ask what it is for God or, if it can be said, what is it "to His eyes." Only after that question is answered will we study what manifestation is to our eyes and what it is according to our scientific research. These two points of view are entirely different.

The Absolute Principle manifests itself through the Universe or Cosmos. Therefore, the Absolute, by an immediate creation, necessarily causes an Absolute Thing, perfect and eternal as itself. This thing we will name the All Cosmic One, of noumenal nature as God. (We will see in the next chapter whether the creation of phenomena in the Cosmos occurs directly or whether there is a gap between the noumenal and phenomenal domains.)

The All Cosmic One is eternal; from our ordinary point of view of "duration," we will say that it never began and it will never end, that it has always been and will always be the Principle of which it is the necessary Manifestation.

It shares, on the other hand, divine perfection. It is a perfect equilibrium among indefinite disequilibria; it is the principal conciliator of them. The phenomenal world is always and everywhere in movement. All movement implies an energetic disequilibrium—no waterfall occurs without a difference in height, no electric current without two poles of different tensions, and so on. Without a perfect conciliation between the disequilibria present everywhere, the world would not last. On the other hand, we see two forces playing in the world of phenomena: one of construction, the other of destruction. If the equilibrium was not perfect between these two forces, the world would also not be able to last. What I just said concerns the eternal Cosmos, not the created things that it contains such as our small earth, which appeared on one day and will disappear on another after a limited time.

To the eyes of God, Manifestation is therefore the All Cosmic One, perfect and eternal; it is a divine attribute, an aspect of Noumene; it is Being

insofar as it is manifested. One understands now that the divine vision of its Manifestation is totally different from our human vision. For God, the Cosmos is its proper splendor, informal and one.

For mankind, the Cosmos is an immense ensemble of phenomena of which each person is a part. Through the sole means of our sense organs, we have perceptions of created things. Our most fundamental error is the belief that things *are absolutely* as we perceive them.

If Manifestation is, to the eyes of God, its perfect splendor, it is radically different to human eyes. To illustrate this, Chan uses an ingenuous allegory: it evokes a piece of brocade, embroidered silk material of gold or silver. This material presents two faces, its right side and reverse side, which are totally different. It symbolizes Manifestation presenting its right side to God and its reverse side to mankind. Its right side is a divine splendor, but the reverse is made of threads disposed in an apparently chaotic fashion: it is the life of human beings "told by an idiot full of sound and fury." However, in different places, the threads of this face present ravishing forms in addition to frightening ones. This is so, especially from the moral point of view, where the contrasts of chaos are striking, going from the torture of the sadist to the saint who consecrates his life to the service of others.

What are created things made of according to the human intellect? Our modern scientists are making discoveries that penetrate more and more deeply into what they name the "constitution of matter." But to develop their results would take us away from the framework of our present study.

Let's say, rather, that according to ancient Hindu wisdom, the universe is entirely made of vibratory energy, undulating, unequally distributed. This energy has for its origin the divine energetic virtuality, infinite, of which we have already spoken and which is none other than the attraction or infinite Love of the Divine Triad. Within the "atom"—an erroneous word because Manifestation is indefinitely divisible—are what modern science calls "particles," which are very small energetic fields of sinusoidal trajectories subtended by the ether. These waves cannot be subtended by "nothing"; however, this seems to be the case with light waves when they travel through what scientists call the "void," whereas these various forms of electromagnetic radiation (bands of the light spectrum) are subtended by the ether. Sound waves are subtended by the air, and atoms are subtended by the ether. We reach across the centuries to rally together with the Ancients who saw the ether as an imponderable and indefinitely elastic fluid. There is no

emptiness anywhere in the universe; in the same way, nothingness neither is nor exists.

9. Genesis of Creation

God, absolute Creator, can have as a direct or immediate effect only an absolute thing that is one of his infinite attributes—such as the All Cosmic One, which is his manifested attribute. He is certainly creator of all phenomena, but indirectly through two intermediaries: symbolized on the one hand by the duality of Purusha-Prakriti and on the other by the Law of Interconditionment. These two intermediaries, although of noumenal origin, act in the phenomenal world as relative principles, and they make appear and evolve the phenomena that compose it. Therefore, there is a break, a gap, between the noumenal origin of these two intermediaries and their phenomenal action. This break is also between the All Cosmic One, which is noumenal, and the multiple phenomena that it contains. This gap of which we speak is inevitable. No progressive transition is conceivable between Absolute Reality and relative reality.

This break corresponds to the abyss in which the Old Masters invite their disciples to throw themselves.

Let us note that this gap-abyss plays the role of an obstacle only from bottom to top, not in the opposite way. If this gap is the last obstacle for humans to realize their divine nature, it doesn't hinder the divine omniscience at all in its knowledge of the whole phenomenal world.

10. The Duality of Purusha-Prakriti

The phenomenal world is founded on duality. Created things are in effect engendered, according to the Vedanta, by two relative principles, Purusha and Prakriti, because they are acting in the phenomenal world of relativity. Purusha is the active masculine principle; Prakriti is the passive feminine principle. They correspond to the notions of essence and substance in scholastic philosophy. The essence of a thing is the ensemble of

characteristics that make it what it is. The substance is what subtends or supports the created thing (*substance* comes from *substare*, to be under, to support). It is comparable to the screen onto which one projects a film and without which the contents of the film would remain invisible. The initiative of the formation of a thing is set by Purusha, but that formation necessarily implies the utilization of Prakriti. Nothing could be formed without this primordial reality.

One knows the Hindu parable of the potter modeling clay into different objects. The potter symbolizes Purusha, active, the force of change; the clay symbolizes Prakriti, the passive force of the resistance to change, or inertia. Purusha models the clay into the vase, cup, or amphora. The human eye can perceive only the forms and colors; thus it can see the forms and colors of the objects of clay, but not the clay itself. It is the same for everything that we currently call such-and-such a substance. Prakriti is the primordial, undifferentiated substance, evidently invisible, and all of its modalities share its invisibility.

We see that the duality Purusha-Prakriti is charged by God in the creation of things such as they are in each instant—the instant that Louis Lavelle² called "the intersection of time and eternity"—whereas later we are going to speak of the Law of Interconditionment, which is charged with the creation of things in duration, that is to say, of their becoming.

We have spoken a little of the duality of Purusha-Prakriti, but we will speak much more of the Law of Interconditionment because it presides over the becoming, the destiny of created things, for mankind places capital importance on this becoming when it relates to personal life and its attachments.

²Louis Lavelle (1883-1951) was professor of Philosophy at the Sorbonne and successor of Henri Bergson at the College de France. He is the author of many works, such as *Le dialectique de l'eternal present* (Paris: Aubier, 1946) and *Du Temps et de l'eternite* (Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1945). *Tr.*

11. The Divine Indifference

It would seem normal that we should now study the creation of things in duration and the law that determines it. But before we move on, let's return for a moment to what creation is for God or "to His eyes."

First of all, we have said creation is, for God, His own manifested splendor (the right side of the piece of brocade), and as such, the divine creation is direct or immediate. On the other hand, the human being considers the reverse side of the piece of brocade, and that constitutes divine creation indirectly or mediately. Indeed, God is the only true creator of the phenomenal world, but He is this through the intermediary of the Purusha-Prakriti duality on the one hand and the Law of Interconditionment on the other, and these mechanisms have their own dynamism and carry out the mission as charged by God.

This does not prevent God from knowing everything in the world of phenomena and that of time eternal. But how does His Absolute Reality see the relative reality of phenomena? It sees it as equal in all its aspects. On the reverse side of the piece of brocade—which is what we see—diverse aspects appear that are to our eyes hideous and at other times marvelous. God knows them perfectly, for Him all these aspects are equal, and He is not affected by anything whatsoever; nothing for Him has particular value. As Chan puts it, "All is the same." The divine point of view is the only one that is absolutely real. Thus, it is necessary to understand the divine "indifference" which is a non-differentiating view between phenomena and what human beings, in their ignorance, call its opposite.

We experience the need of representing all things to ourselves by making an image that affects us; we also attribute to God his own possibility of being affected—of experiencing sentiments—which is absurd. But can we not speak from the name of agape, of the infinite love of God for man? Let us not forget that we have two natures—one phenomenal, the self, and the other divine, the Self—and the Self, which is God, loves Itself infinitely. That love, we have seen, is not a sentiment, but a way of naming the identity reuniting the three poles of the divine triad in One. The distinction between the Self in a state of possibility and the Self realized has only a subjective sense for us, but it has no objective sense for God. Thus, Jesus said: "The kingdom of God is in each of you."

12. The Law of Interconditionment

In our curiosity, we desire to understand what causes the phenomena we observe. According to our first impressions, phenomena engender chains of causes and effects. This simplistic explanation does not withstand serious study. First of all, we can only comprehend this question if we use the word *cause* in its true sense, a sense different from what current language gives to it. The true sense is that of Original Principle. The word *cause* must designate only the Absolute Principle of the All Cosmic One, the unique Cause of the created Universe. The Scholastics distinguished the "First Cause" from innumerable "secondary causes," but that terminology hinders comprehension for it allows us to believe that "the Cause" and "the causes" are of the same nature, whereas they have nothing in common.

We will avoid this difficulty by saying these phenomena intercondition each other in a series of chains. In this way the Buddhist phrase, "This being so, that produces itself" (not this produces that) is applied. This formulation adequately expresses well phenomenal conditioning, but we are soon going to see that this conditioning is in reality an interconditioning. Buddhism expresses in like manner the Law of Interdependent Origins.

I want to insist on the radical difference that exists between the relationship of cause-effect and "phenomena conditioning-phenomena conditioned." The word *causality*, so often employed in this question, has rendered confusion by letting us believe that a phenomenon could be the cause of anything whatsoever. In order to clearly comprehend this, it is necessary, once more, to give to the word *Cause* its true meaning of One Principle or Unique Cause. I capitalize this word *Cause* in order to recall its noumenal or absolute nature; it designates what, in the Occident, we call God.

In Cause-Effect, Effect is in reality an attribute of Cause, and therefore it shares its One and Absolute nature. Thus the All Cosmic One is a divine attribute since it is none other than the Unique Cause insofar as it is manifested.

In "phenomena conditioning-phenomena conditioned," the latter is not identical to the former. Two phenomena can resemble each other, but they are not identical. On the other hand, conditioned phenomena that depend on certain conditioning factors produce themselves only if the latter meet.

A very simple example will clarify what I am going to say about the relationship between phenomena. I place the flame of a match under a blade of straw; the straw ignites. It is evident that the combustion of the straw is conditioned by its nature as well as by the flame of the match—if I had replaced the straw with a piece of iron, it would not be inflamed. The phenomena produced, therefore, has been conditioned by two conditioning factors.

But we can go back further than the match and straw; each of these objects comes from numerous conditioning factors—the combustible elements of the match and the organic material forming the straw. In truth, all phenomena in the space-time continuum are thus in interrelationship. In order to better understand this important question, imagine a net similar to a fisherman's net, but one with dimensions infinitely extended. Each of the innumerable knots is constantly affected by some movement that reverberates in all the other knots, which are themselves affected by movements which reverberate on the first, and so on. As Pascal said, "Had Cleopatra's nose been shorter, the whole history of the world would have been different."³

Thus is governed the becoming of created things. The conditioning factors are often so numerous and subtle—undetectable by us—that we evoke the word *chance*. This word is a modest veil thrown over our inability to know. In reality, it is meaningless; everything that happens must necessarily happen. In the game of roulette, when the croupier has thrown the ball, the winning number is determined; the ball cannot lodge itself, at the end, in a different compartment. There is no "chance and necessity" but only necessity unforeseeable or necessity foreseeable.

All phenomena appear, therefore, by virtue of a unique law, which we call the Law of Interconditionment. (This expression is preferable to the Law of Independent Origins because the word *origin* calls to mind, unduly here, the Original Principle, meaning the Unique Cause.) This law can be called the Mother Law of very numerous daughter laws: physical, chemical, thermodynamical, biological, psychological, and so on, which are all forms of the unique Mother Law for the human mind. This Law, thought by Divine Thought and created by the same Divine Thought, is to be distinguished from its effective play as we distinguish a legislative power from the executive power that carries out the laws. It is comparable to a computer of

³H. F. Stewart, *Pascal's Pensées* (New York: Pantheon, 1950), p. 50.

unimaginable complexity, created and programmed by Divine Thought, which realizes this program impeccably by governing the totality of the phenomenal world—and this in time eternal.

Let us agree for practical reasons to replace the term "Law of Interconditionment" by the word *Demiurge* but without giving this word the meaning that the Greeks gave it. The Demiurge (from *demi ourgos*, working through the people) was, in Platonic philosophy, a sort of God Creator. Here, this word will be used as a synonym for the Law of Interconditionment. We will also consider the Demiurge in charge of a mission created by God to rule the conditioning of phenomena. But this *chargé de mission* must not be anthropomorphized; it is a mechanism, a sort of robot, that functions impeccably and distributes good and evil without the least intention, neither good nor bad.

Of the two intermediaries existing between the Creator and the world of phenomena—the duality Purusha-Prakriti on the one hand and the Demiurge on the other—it is the role played by the second that interests humanity. That the duality Purusha-Prakriti has made me a human specimen is something that doesn't concern me, but rather the incidents, accidents, good luck or bad luck, that are waiting for me on the behalf of the Demiurge in my future. It is there that my hopes and fears debate themselves, for I ignore what is programmed for me and will arrive fatally.

Fatally—this word evokes the inert fatalism that some people believe knowledge of the demiurgic computer would reduce us to—it is the same as the Islamic adage, "That which is written is written." But if I am facing a difficulty, I can be conditioned to face it with eagerness, and that, was also written. One who understands fate correctly has no reason to be inactive.

The acceptance of the demiurgic function is rendered very difficult by the immense value that we attach to what we call free will. This question is of such importance in understanding the human condition that it deserves some profound reflections on our part.

13. The Total Conditioning of the Human Being

If God is immanent in every created thing, He remains transcendent to His phenomenal manifestations. Only one exception to divine transcendence

exists: the human being. The divine nature (the Self) resides integrally with the human individual (the self) but as a general rule, the Self is in mankind *in a state of possibility* only and remains in that condition during the entire life. It is only in rare beings, ruled by a totally particular conditioning, that the Self passes from the state of possibility to that of Realization.

Although the Self resides in us only in a state of possibility, it makes us the only intellectual animal on this earth. The intellect confers numerous possibilities, which we sometime put to good use but very often use in a useless or dangerous way.

After these short remarks on the nature of human-kind, let us see how the Law of Interconditionment plays in it.

Human beings are conditioned by three groups of factors: hereditary, biological, and circumstantial factors.

The hereditary factors: These condition us from birth. If we consider the bipartition of the chromosomes and the nature of the genes in the remaining chromosomes, we will point out the ever popular "probability." This signifies that we ignore what conditions these phenomena, although certainly they are conditioned by factors escaping our comprehension.

Thus is determined what we call the congenital essence of a human being. The word *essence* reminds us of the two principles of essence-substance, or Purusha-Prakriti. Congenital essence has a much less general significance. Where Purusha designates the ensemble of characteristics that makes a created thing be what it is in the instant, the congenital essence designates the ensemble of characteristics that a particular being will manifest in the course of normal development. The essence of which we speak actually determines what a being will show, little by little, as constant behavioral anomalies. These are permanent tendencies and aptitudes that are more or less brilliant in the many domains of human activities.

The question of aptitudes, or what we normally call gifts, is particularly important in the intellectual domain. This domain possesses many complexities, for the intellect resembles an optical machine with numerous possibilities that are relatively independent of each other. Besides intellectual intuition—which is a direct, immediate insight that can operate in different fields—there are many mediate intellectual operations such as deduction, induction, and the like, which the intellect can follow step-by-step to its conclusion. The aptitudes which concern us here are the ones that can be

involved in the extinction of illusory opinions. Here the ability to observe and conceive human psychological mechanisms is paramount. This process begins through the observation of oneself and others, and continues through the interpretation of these mechanisms and the discovery of general laws of the human psyche, all from the light of revealed Traditional Metaphysics.

I am only lightly touching on this subject for I want to be specific about the difference to be made between what I call Theoretical Comprehension and Knowledge. I have already employed these terms, but I want to show the immense difference in what they signify. Only Knowledge abolishes what the Buddha calls Ignorance, the source of all human suffering. People who have complete and correct theoretical comprehension and nothing more will be ignorant scholars; they continue to live according to all the illusory opinions that they have demasked in theory. Comprehension can be expressed formally, orally, or in writing. Knowledge cannot. Completely abolished illusory opinions are not replaced by "right" ones. Knowledge is inexpressible because there is nothing more to express. How can we express the solution to an illusory problem? We can only say there has never been a problem. A false problem having no solution—how would we express this?

The congenital essence is comparable to a vegetable seed that is capable of growth, of growing normally and producing a particular plant. But the growth of this plant will vary according to the conditions of its environment. There are two factors to consider:

The biological factors: The human psychosomatic organism evolves biologically from birth to death. According to the stage of life considered, all constituent organs of the organism modify and evolve themselves. To every age its functioning, its possibilities, its tastes. This concept is too evident to deserve development.

The circumstantial factors: The psychosomatic human organism develops itself in the course of the first twenty years; its growth is then terminated. Then it can perfect itself or degrade itself. But it is during early adolescence, when the infant is weak in every way, that circumstances can especially shackle the blossoming of its essence. When the circumstantial milieu in which the young child develops is unfavorable—negative to the infant—certain possibilities of its essence are more or less inhibited because psychic mechanisms appear that do not belong to this essence. These mechanisms

must be called neurotic. As the circumstantial milieus are never perfectly favorable, we can say that every human being is more or less neurotic; but a true pathological neurosis entails a certain degree of deformation that hinders the adaptation to what is called reality.

It is particularly interesting to study the play of the Demiurge in viewing separately the three functional centers of the human being. Let us recall the location and nature of the three centers:

The instinctive center is situated at the lower extremity of the spinal column; it commands the mechanisms that we share with animals.

The affective center is situated in the cardiac region and the upper part of the abdomen between the belly button and the sternum (epigastrium); it commands our affective mechanisms.

The intellectual center is located in the brain; it commands thought, both conscious and subconscious.

We are going to show that the phenomena emanating from the three centers result inexorably from Demiurgic Law, and the personal freedom that we attribute to ourselves in reality refers to nothing.

Instinctive Center: It functions partially from birth, at a time when there is no question of free will because the psychological consciousness is not yet awakened.

Later, at the age of puberty, when erotic desire awakens, it is evident that the appearance of desire does not result from a free decision by the subject.

Affective Center: It functions from the earliest age. Here again it is obvious that no free decision determines what human beings experience: "I love," or "I do not love." We do not love or hate because we have decided to do so in total freedom. We don't need to manifest sentiments, but they also cannot be provoked at will. All that is affective is interconditioned.

Intellectual Center: Are we going to discover in what we call our thought that we are finally free, unconditioned? No.

When we are engaged in an automatic activity, or when we are doing nothing, our imagination always unfolds an imaginary film, of which the

scenario is most often completely useless, therefore stupid. It is rare that the scenario is useful—that it has favorable consequences. In every case, it is obvious to us that we do not create this freely.

I do know that we can direct our attention to a subject and bring it back again, although our present mental stream tends to prevent it. But why do we continue in this mental fluctuation which requires concentrated effort and can be more or less painful? Because our desire to resolve the problem that is the subject of our refocused attention prevails over the pain and trouble that the effort requires. All desire is affective and therefore conditioned.

We can work to obtain mastery of the mind and through that to the interior silence. This revolt against mental functioning is evidently an intense desire to escape from this enslavement; again we find at the origin of these efforts the totally conditioned affectivity and a new slavery.

To intellectual functioning is attached the problem of choice. Hesitating between two solutions, we view them intellectually, analyzing the "pros" and "cons" (all the more if we are not slaves to our impulsivity). Our intellect is capable of functioning independently of our affectivity, with the same impartiality as though our situation would concern someone else; in sum, as an arbitrator free of all influence. If we deliberate in this sense, is it "free will"? Observe that we speak only of the deliberation that precedes choice. But what happens during the choice itself? If one of the two choices is reasonable and pleasant, while the other is unpleasant and painful, we are necessarily conditioned to choose the first. But in other cases, one of the choices may be seen as reasonable and painful, while the second may appear to be pleasant but unreasonable. Now in this situation if we choose our pleasure, however irrational, we are evidently conditioned by our affectivity, which is not free. Our choice can also elect the rational action, although it is unpleasant. We can then have the impression that we have been the free arbitrator of our decision and its accomplishment; however, we would be ignoring a very important conditioning factor, our need of the moral beauty of the image that we have of ourselves. Our moral narcissism can push us toward what is called "the satisfaction of accomplished duty," and incite us to flee the cowardice that would inflict on us the suffering of guilt; that is to say, the flaw in our image. This concern about our image is found in numerous circumstances. For example, for the people who take unreasonable action because it pleases them, the affectivity influencing the intellect makes them elaborate the "rationalizations," creating lies that legitimize their choice,

giving them a false rational aspect. Don't we all want "to have reason" to do what we do?

If we are honest with ourselves and sincerely seek the origin of our actions, we will always find an affective functioning, and beyond that, the demiurgic conditioning.

Affectivity possesses a dynamic nature, either attractive or repulsive. In contrast, the intellect only provides us with information that can show us, if our functioning is honest, a correct and productive action without taking into account our sensibility. Its domain is that of informed deliberation. But when there is a question of taking action, the intellect is without force and it is affectivity that conditions us; and affectivity is not free in any way.

What is called Will is in fact the result of numerous desires that are sometimes opposed to each other.

How can this be so surprising? The Absolute Self is only a state of possibility in us, while our person—this psychosomatic organism—is only an aggregate of phenomena. We have seen that the whole phenomenology of the Universe is submissive, through the intermediary of its daughter laws to the Mother Law of Interconditionment. If the realization of Self is named "Liberation," then as long as liberation is not produced we are not free, we are slaves of the Demiurge.

In summary, habitual man (I understand by that, a person in whom the Self is not realized, meaning practically all humanity) is quite comparable to a puppet of which body and thought are moved by a system of laws, a system of such complexity that it surpasses the imagination. These laws being invisible, we are necessarily persuaded that we do what we do because we freely think whatever we want to think. And what I am going to say about a puppet can cause a sudden revolt in us. However, it is so.

This question of human freedom or its absence is rendered confused by the non-discrimination between exterior freedom and interior freedom. Every human being desires to be free from oppression by another—and we can be. But how does this relate to our interior mechanisms? From the time of slavery, slaves were constrained to accomplish actions ordered by their masters, but they believed themselves free to think quietly what they wanted to think. In fact, they were thinking the thoughts that came to them or those they desired to think, but were they free to create their thoughts? In reality, their intellects were conditioned. We can turn to this question in all its meaning with the hope of finding an example of a motor or intellectual

activity, free of all conditioning. But our hope will be in vain if we reflect truthfully; we will always find a conditioning that will have determined it.

Things being as they are, how can we believe in "responsibility"?

14. The Mission of the Demiurge

The Demiurge, we have said, is comparable to a computer programmed by God. Accomplishing this program is similar to someone who is carrying out a mission. This mission is of such extreme complexity that we will speak only of what concerns human beings.

Let us say that this mission concerns the whole of humanity; everyone knows the Hindu cycles and their four periods,⁴ particularly the last, the *Kali-yuga*. As Rene Guenon has pointed out, all human history unfolds during those periods, and we find ourselves actually approaching its final apocalyptic. We cannot recommend too highly a book by Rene Guenon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*.⁵ But don't get discouraged by the first pages which suppose that the reader has a knowledge of Traditional Metaphysics. After the ending of Kali-yuga, we will enter a new cycle beginning with what is called "the golden age."

Human beings are very complex creatures. First of all, we have a psychosomatic organism analogous to those of the animals (with this immense difference, however: the human psyche has an intellect that animals do not have). This organism of relative reality is generally called the "Me." We define ourselves by identifying with it in an illusory fashion. On the other hand, the Divine Noumene resides in the human body, and this is the Absolute Reality to which we give the name Self in contrast to the Me.

The Me is evidently individual, whereas Self is universal. In effect, considered by Itself objectively, the Self is universal; nevertheless, from the point of view of the personality, the Realization of Self (and Realization is so very rare), involves individual differences. In fact, the sudden Realization of

⁴The four periods, or *yugas*, are: Krita-yuga (or Satva-yuga); Treta-yuga; Dwapara-yuga; and Kali-yuga. These periods correspond to the Golden, Silver, Bronze and Iron ages of Ancient Western Traditions. *Tr.*

⁵Rene Guenon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972.)

Self implies a process involving many years during which the modifications of human conditioning result in a totally particular conditioning (the "spiritual death"), where the possibility of Realization is transformed into actuality. Thus, we can say that according to the degree of mature Knowledge, individuals are more or less close, chronologically, to Realization. For the Self itself, the fact of being in the state of possibility or of Realization is one and the same state. The difference is purely subjective and requires a complete overturning of the individual's psyche, for this illumination to occur in an abrupt manner.

But let us depart from this subject because liberation from demiurgic slavery is not part of the mission of the Demiurge. This mission is first of all to manifest and maintain life. The Demiurge implants false evidence that life is a treasure (even though our life is actually unhappiness) of inestimable value. It is the source of hunger, thirst, sleep, and erotic desire (conservation of the species). I know that certain people say, in good faith, that their death is a matter of indifference to them, but that is due to the fact that their imagination works only in the abstract. If they should find themselves concretely menaced by imminent death, they would lose their pretended serenity. The fear of death resides at the base of the psyche, and if we come to realize imaginatively the destruction of our own body, we experience such a strong organic sentiment of horror that, irrationally, such a thing appears impossible or at least improbable. Conditioned in this manner, every human being is constrained to protect his or her life. In so acting, the Demiurge is not against illumination. As the proverb says, *primum vivere, deinde philosophari*. One must be an exceptional human sage to say as did St. John of the Cross: "Come, O death, so well hidden that I do not feel you coming, for the joy of dying can bring me back to life."

This attachment to life implies *compensations*. Let us examine them closely and ask ourselves what they compensate. Indeed the Self is, in most people, in a state of possibility, but the intuition, not conscious of this possibility, exists in them also. That is proved when we see that people are never satisfied with the compensations they enjoy; it is always necessary to have more: people in love with money can't have a million without doing all they can in order to have two, then three, and so on. Don Juan never conquers enough females; the politician believes wrongly that satisfaction will only come by being head of state. Let us be satisfied with these few examples. What the compensations compensate is the absence of the eternal Divine

Beatitude, and nothing can menace that. That is the profound nostalgia of all people. But humanity does not often seek to obtain this pure diamond, and with a lack of discernment we run toward the ersatz, the imitation, the worthless, believing that there is the supreme value. And this journey is without end. During all this time, the pure diamond is within, similar to the parable of the man, who, mounted on his ox, seeks his ox everywhere.

Habitual mankind is ignorant (in the sense that we truly believe our illusory opinions), and we conceive as satisfactory the compensations that others enjoy and we hope to enjoy ourselves one day. It is in these ersatz compensations that we believe we can find the Beatitude that is, in truth, our real need. Who among the Christians lives according to the words of Jesus: "Only one thing is important, the Kingdom of God in you"? Ordinary people pass life enjoying and hoping to gain; in that, they remain as infants, and only the Realized person is an adult.

Let us return to the mission of the Demiurge. With this in mind, let me tell a story conceived by Mr. Gurdjieff. An enormous meteor, having struck the earth, detached a part of it.⁶ By virtue of the law of gravitation, this part and the earth again took spherical form; thus the moon and the present earth were born. The Great Cosmic Individuals gathered together in order to determine the diverse radiations that, coming from the earth, would nourish its satellite as the sun nourishes the earth. They were aware that a very special kind of radiation would be necessary, which could come only from suffering humanity. "This is true," said one of the Great Cosmic Individuals, "but this creature who will only suffer and be without hope will commit suicide." Therefore, the assembly decided to graft at the base of the human spine a particular organ, which is none other than a compensatory apparatus. That apparatus blinds us and makes us take the ersatz as "the unique necessary."

What, in fact, would be our fate without this compensatory apparatus? Concealing the Divine Self in a state of possibility within ourselves and ignoring the Way of Realization, we suffer divine dereliction, which is the same as the pain of hell. In reality, we are all in hell, but we do not perceive ourselves in it, incapable as we are of distinguishing the many bright

⁶It is rather interesting that the Gurdjieff story related here by Dr. Benoit has its correspondence in the latest scientific theories concerning the origin of the moon. The flow of data from the Apollo moon mission and the latest computer simulations have convinced many astronomers that a planetary body collided with the earth causing material from the earth to be cast off forming our present moon. *Tr.*

imitations from the pure diamond. (Rodin, writing one day on sculpture, said to a friend: "Each time I write the word *sculpture*, I wanted to write *God*.")

Thanks to compensations and blindness, people experience what we call pleasure, joy, and even happiness (happiness other than the Divine Beatitude, of which we can have no idea). Besides, when every interior state is experienced as eternal, we often forget that our ersatz compensations are always transitory and that we live, in fact, under a bundle of Damocles' swords, held up by fragile threads.

The demiurgic program only concerns the phenomenal world. It has no relation to Realization of Self; it hasn't been ordered by God either to favor or prevent it. In fact, it so happens that the demiurge gives or does not give to such an individual a lucid intelligence and an independent affectivity, accompanied by an intense need of the truth and a precise metaphysical intuition. These characteristics are rarely associated, and in the immense majority of cases (at least in our epoch of the kali-yuga) the demiurgic program diverts most of us toward compensations which we believe will give true meaning to our lives, and Realization remains in the state of pure possibility.

One can compare the Demiurge to the myth of Satan. In effect, Satan has two aspects: one vis-à-vis God, the other vis-à-vis mankind. Vis-à-vis God, it acts as a faithful servant: in the Book of Job, God summons and tests Job in a thousand ways, a mission that Satan accomplishes impeccably. Vis-à-vis mankind, Satan is the liar who says no, the tempter who diverts us from the right way by offering compensations (the passover "diversions"), gold, voluptuousness, power, and so on. "Satan conducts the dance;" "the Prince of this world." The Demiurge acts as if it wanted to prevent Self Realization. And moreover, it is God, or the Self, who has programmed the Demiurge in this way. It is not necessary to consider this incomprehensible situation relative to mankind, but relative to the cosmic planning that we evidently ignore. All that exists in the Cosmos has cosmic reasons to exist, including the human condition.

15. God and Humanity

God, omniscient, knows everything that has taken place, is taking place, and will take place on this earth. But as we have said before, all phenomena, endowed with a relative reality, are equivalent to Absolute Reality. God infinitely loves the Self that is in each of us because the Self is God Himself. The pronoun for Self is not being used in order to distinguish it from the Me. But the self is to the eyes of God equivalent to any created thing. What we name Good and Evil are equivalent to God, as are all the opposites of our dualistic views.

Human beings relate everything to themselves, and know God as an infinitely superior "person," but a "person" just the same. If we pray, we think that God understands and that He will take our prayers into account. Most prayers are requests, as if God would direct the outcome according to an affectivity that He does not have. Let us imagine a situation in which a mother has a son who is gravely ill; this mother is going to ask God to cure her son. In fact, the son will get better or die, according to biological laws that are modalities of the Law of Interconditionment, and the mother will feel joy or sorrow according to the outcome. But to the eyes of God, the cure or death of the son, the joy or sorrow of the mother, all comes exactly to the same thing. It is as if the Cosmos were an immense machine of which God sees the functioning; He can see a small wheel turning in one direction, while another turns in the opposite direction. These directions of rotation are equivalent, as they participate equally in the perfect march of the machine.

"Morality" is only an esthetic felt by human beings; it is good action and bad. But what we call sins and virtues are equivalent. The word *sin* should be replaced by *error*, and indeed the error is human; we can be conditioned to make an error. Merit and demerit correspond only to different conditionings, of which puppets are not at all responsible. Hitler was conditioned to destroy, whereas the Priest of Ars was conditioned to construct; but one is as irresponsible as the other. God is amoral; for that pure Spirit, without affectivity among phenomena, the good and evil are equivalent.

But let us return to the prayer-demand; it is entirely ineffective. It can, nevertheless, condition the person who has prayed to hope more than before; this subjective affective efficiency is the only thing that it can have.

When such a prayer has been "answered," believing people are persuaded that it is due to the prayers. In the opposite case, the people think that "the ways of Providence are unfathomable," but in another circumstance they will pray again.

There is another kind of prayer—contemplative, a "prayer of quiet"—here the human being contemplates and adores divine perfections. This prayer can lead to ecstasy, but that is transitory and is not in any way Realization; it is only the most perfect compensation. As such, it is an obstacle to Realization, an obstacle that will disappear if Knowledge continues to progress. It has, however, the advantage of assuring an unbreakable faith. In effect, the divine splendor, instead of only being thought, is seen in a totally new light, a light without form or color, infinitely intense, which, moreover, does not dazzle the spiritual eye. It is not beautiful; it is Beauty itself. Thus, one would contemplate untiringly.

One finds again the illusory opinion of a direct relationship between mankind and an anthropomorphic God in the belief that in this life God rewards good actions and punishes the bad. Everyone knows the saying: "What have I done to Good God that he sends me such difficulties?"

Let us recall the abyss that separates Noumene from phenomena. The contemplative state cannot reach across this abyss with impulses of personal beliefs. The images formed in contemplation can be considered perfect in all aspects but they are formal in nature, phenomenal as well. Realization can never occur through the grace of emotional beliefs.

Part Three



AGONY AND THE DEATH OF HUMAN EGOTISM

16. Critique of Systematic Procedures

The Self that resides within can pass from the state of possibility to the state of Realization. This last state is sudden, instantaneous, but it must be preceded by an evolution of human conditioning.

From the beginning of its existence, the infant, still incapable of metaphysical intuition, falls fatally into what the Buddha called Ignorance. This word *Ignorance*, as employed by the Buddha, does not designate an absence of knowledge or comprehension but a solid ensemble of illusory opinions taken as evident truths. For example, will not the infant be assured that it is his organism, body and thought, that is his true identity? How could he not believe that he is free to obey or disobey, to do good or evil according to the morality of his surroundings, and therefore deserve its compliments or its reproaches? It is not natural for him to see himself as a totally conditioned puppet.

Between these first conditioned states and that which permits Realization, a very important evolution is necessary.

The first of these newborn states appears when the individual, adolescent or adult, receives a correct initiation into the theoretical

comprehension of Traditional Metaphysics. It would be better to learn from a Realized Master but in practice, in our epoch, the search for such a master and his teaching would never end for the absence of a true master. In India and Nepal, many pretend to be Realized Masters, but . . . the role is very pleasant to play. Fortunately, we have the Vedanta and translations of the original works of the first Masters of Chan. Bodhidharma and his teaching arrived in China around 600 A.D. This teaching was assimilated by his students and adapted to the Chinese way of thinking. During the period between 600 and 800 A.D., the teaching remained pure; it was then founded on the abandonment of illusory opinions. Thus it remained faithful to the teaching of the Buddha according to which all human suffering comes from Ignorance, and Realization can only take place as a result of the disappearance of that Ignorance.

Unfortunately, and this is one implacable law, all initiatic teachings lose, little by little, their true meaning as have those of Jesus Christ and Mohammed. They have been degraded into an ensemble of superstition. So it happened with Chan, which arrived in Japan through Korea, where it divided into various sects.

About two centuries after the arrival of Bodhidharma in China, the Masters of Chan observed that students wrangled endlessly about trifles over theoretical points. They decided to essentially shock their students away from these trifles and introduced the practice of the koan. The koan required that one understand a cryptic dialogue. For example, to the question "Why did Bodhidharma come to China?" the response was "the cypress tree in the courtyard"; and the attention of the student had to remain fixed on this strange dialogue until he understood it. The koan, unsolvable by the rational intellect, constitutes a kind of wall against which the student's mind butted endlessly (sometimes eight days in succession without sleep). This is the goal of the koan: the subtle cerebral musculature that assumes this mental work exhausts itself as would the gross musculature by continuously bearing a heavy load (at least if the student had the courage to martyr himself in this way). The intellect finally "arrives" by no longer being able to function; it has transcended the duality of the rational-irrational. As it is the habitual functioning of the mind that prevents access to Absolute Truth, the access to this truth, which is beyond form, then becomes possible. All of a sudden, the student doesn't think anything whatsoever; everything begins to pass as if the Self awoke in him. The Self then awakes, and he (or she) discovers more or

less the Divine Beatitude. But such a result is only transitory, for when the vital principle restores the ordinary possibilities and habitual conditioning of the brain, the Self returns to its previous state of simple possibility. And the student has to begin again in utilizing some other koan because the results will always remain transitory.

The practice of the koan is still recommended today. A young woman described to me how she was received in Japan at a Zen monastery. Someone told her upon her arrival that the intellect served no purpose and that there is nothing intellectually to comprehend. Then she was given a koan to solve. However, she was not among those rare ones who reach the transitory false liberation.

The koan was the first of the methods that have been recommended in order to obtain what the Japanese call Satori (Realization). There have been many others. An old Zenist squatted for thirty years in front of a wall; not feeling anything was being produced, he went to find Hui-neng, the sixth Patriarch, who convinced him in so many words that he was wasting his time.

Chen-houei (Dhyana Master of Ho-tso, who lived from 668 to 760 A.D.) recommended "the thought without dwelling." This procedure prevented the student from letting the interior monologue develop itself around the same subject. I don't want to waste time by proving why this experimental procedure fails—for I would have to expose in a detailed manner the complex mechanisms of our dreams.

There are other procedures that are recommended under the strange name of "meditation" (meditation signifying in reality profound thinking). For example, the constant fixation of the attention on a particular object, always the same, such as respiration. In the West, another procedure is used and practiced under the name of "Zazen," which is a sitting meditation discipline where the student gives faultless attention to posture, which prevents mental digressions. These procedures cannot lead to Realization any more than the others, but certain people can at least benefit from conditioning themselves by mastering comportment and developing a calm interior.

I myself deserve the same reproach because in a book titled *Let go*,¹ I recommended a procedure that I named "divergent language," and it revealed itself as ineffective as the others. The error, so human, is to believe that there

¹Hubert Benoit, *Let Go!* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1973).

is a procedure, a method—vulgarly speaking, a device—and that it is necessary to seek in this manner. Let us listen instead to Hui-neng:

I, Hui-neng, do not know any device
 My thoughts are not suppressed;
 The objective world ever excites my mind,
 And what is the use of maturing Illumination.²

Illumination has matured in Hui-neng, but he has not made it ripen through any systematic method. He has done nothing and there is nothing to do.

I want to say a few words on Hatha-yoga, even though it doesn't come from the Far East, but from India, because it has a certain popularity. I conversed one day with D. T. Suzuki, and Hatha-yoga came into the conversation. He told me, "One has to be human in order to think of such bizarre postures. Look at the animals; none of them do anything similar."

One can ask why those desirous of Realization have such an a priori predilection for systematic methods. In fact, rare are those who have the courage to think for themselves. Here is a common example: a man has lost an object in his apartment; he would rather upset everything in his apartment than sit down and ask himself calmly where and when he used that object and what places he could have left it. We strongly hate to think for ourselves. We read a lot of books without a critical spirit and will participate at conferences that are not clear to us simply because they are given by an Oriental, without realizing that the conference has no value at all. If Realization was assured to anyone who moved six thousand stones one by one the distance of a mile, many people would do this work agreeably. But to think for ourselves . . . ! This can be explained by the fear of failing, but the error reveals itself sooner or later, and it always results in progress toward the truth. Why the fear?

I have spoken of a few procedures in a critical manner, but it is much more interesting to consider that every procedure conceived by an intellectual mechanism, whatever it may be, is born under the domination of the Demiurge; therefore, it does not know how to function outside of its phenomenal domain. It does not know how to change puppet-human-beings

²This is from *Essays in Zen Buddhism* by D. T. Suzuki, p. 225. Published in the U.S.A. by Grove Press, New York, and in the U.K. by Rider, an imprint of Century-Hutchinson, London.

into puppets conditioned differently, but always situates itself on the phenomenal side of the abyss without ever being able to cross it.

On the other hand, to conceive a "method" is to propose an *ascendant* life, namely, a way in which we can progress, better ourselves every day, advancing little by little toward Realization. And such travelers would attain Shangri-La at the top of the mountain if they had the courage and necessary perseverance. During this ascension, life would become more and more real until we attained True Life, referred to by Rimbaud when he wrote: "The true life is absent; we are not in the world." It is to live what Jesus affirmed to Nicodemus: "In truth I say unto you, if man does not die, he will not be reborn."

The true way, of which we will soon speak, is *descendant*. Until we, at the very bottom, touch and possess *the axis* or *tree of Heaven* we cannot be carried up to the infinite height of Emptiness.

17. Theoretical Intellectual Comprehension and Knowledge True to Life

What is the role of the intellect in the interior evolution that precedes Realization? Certain people have argued that pure intellect serves no purpose, and instead constitutes an impediment; they say only Knowledge experienced through the entire being, true to life, is fertile. There is some truth in this thesis. But how can this knowledge, which transcends the rational domain, appear if Ignorance has not first been dissipated? Illusory opinions will remain the object of unquestioned beliefs because they are considered unconsciously as being incontestable.

No, it is necessary to examine and understand the current opinions that surround us in a paralyzing environment. The danger of theoretical intellectual comprehension does not reside in itself, but in its abuse. There is a varying time period that must pass across intellectual comprehension so that we can attain its essential truths—such as understanding that we are somnambulistic puppets who dream our lives.

When we are finally at this stage, we learn that we don't live by this intellectual clarity and we will remain like this as long as we view the problem of our human condition solely by means of intellectual reflection.

This reflection, which was once necessary, has now become an impasse. Then our nostalgia for True Life becomes like an informal question to which we find no answer. We live our ordinary life as the "true koan" and postulate beyond it this mysterious something for which we have profound nostalgia.

What differentiates Knowledge True to Life³—which will instantly accompany Realization—from purely qualitative and theoretical comprehension? What characterizes it is not that Intellect now functions less but that it doesn't function anymore as a philosopher. It functions in the consciousness of each instant, true to life, undisturbed.

18. The Death-in-Order-to-be-Reborn

The literatures of Chan and Zen keep us in the dark on the subject of death and rebirth; they speak to us of a number of cases of Realization that differ greatly from each other, and they are often silent regarding the way in which a master obtained Liberation. This shows the inefficiency of all methods and techniques; for if all techniques were the same, a liberated individual would be able to say how it was done and how long it took to reach that goal.

In the first place, all we know is that people destined for Realization are themselves at one moment or another detached from earthly compensation and are consecrated entirely to that unique goal. Their thoughts never seem to be turned toward anything else. Besides the detachment that is common to them, these people lead very different lives. But there is something that they all know: failure or successive failures, even if they have followed different paths. This is the descendant way of repeated failures until the final failure. I want to cite, in this vein, a remarkable intuition of Dag Hammarskjöld: "Led in the labyrinth of life, I arrived at a moment and at a place where I understood that the way leads to a triumph which is a catastrophe and a catastrophe which is a triumph . . . and the only possible elevation for man is in the depths of humiliation."⁴

³Benoit uses the term "Knowledge True to Life" to express a living Knowledge which is not mere intellectual knowledge. Knowledge "True to Life" radically transforms the human psyche. This transformation even alters the brain cells and removes our harmful conditioning. *Tr.*

⁴Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1964), p. 205.

The death of the ego and rebirth are simultaneous; the moments that precede "death" are the same for all in whom this has taken place. The interior state during these moments is a complete and accepted humiliation, a vision of being nothing. Thought, devaluated, stops its ceaseless activity. The affectivity also stops functioning for we experience two sentiments of equal intensity at this time: on the one hand, the despair in our own possibilities, and on the other, a total confidence in the "Self" in favor of abdicating the "Me." At this moment, finally, we stop doing anything for our Realization, while desiring it with all our being.

Let us cite a saying from Zen: "Satori falls on us unexpectedly when we have exhausted all the resources of our being."

These resources are forces with which the Demiurge endows us, forces constantly oriented toward earthly happiness, toward compensations, toward affirmation of the Me, toward success. In their entirety, these forces are our centrifugal frantic orientation in the labyrinth of life. They are traps of the intellect when it pretends to be capable of resolving the enigma of the human condition (by methods or techniques).

The instant when all the resources of our being are exhausted is the instant of Realization. Here is a description of it from Chan: "Slight contact of a thread under tension and then an explosion shakes down to the foundation of the earth; all that was lying in spirit bursts like a volcanic eruption or bursts forth as a thunderbolt."

The labyrinth of Greek mythology can be used symbolically to understand our evolution toward death-in-order-to-be-reborn, but we can only use this symbolism if we modify its traditional meaning. Our labyrinth is flat, built on the earth.⁵ There isn't any exit included in this plan. One can only get out through the center, where the Minotaur is, by a vertical trajectory. This trajectory passes through the milieu of the Minotaur and is none other but what Traditional Metaphysics calls the axis or tree of heaven.⁶ We are born, at the time of our first birth, in this center, but without having any consciousness of it. As soon as our intellect appears, we explore the external world in our search for compensation. There are many centrifugal trajectories which are revealed as impasses sooner or later. As the explored impasses are excluded, we are hemmed in toward the center little by little. The Greeks,

⁵Jean d'Encausse, *On the Initiation* (Paris: Le Courrier du Livre.)

⁶Rene Guenon, *The Symbolism of the Cross* (London: Luzac & Co., 1975) p. 50.

who humanized their gods and deified their heroes, have the Minotaur killed by Theseus. In our symbolic and metaphysical labyrinth, it is the Minotaur who devours Theseus. Theseus again finds the axis of Heaven; he is sucked into it, up to the Divine Absolute, and liberated from the prison that was for him the labyrinth. From our habitual point of view, this exploration of the labyrinth, going from impasse-failure to impasse-failure in order to end in being devoured, is necessarily seen as a descendant life. It is through zero that the road leads toward Infinity.

In sum, in the scale of the human microcosm, Realization is a fantastic revolution. In the habitual person, the Demiurge dominates affectivity, and affectivity dominates all behavior. Realization brings an about-face that leads the intellect, which has become Cosmic mind, above affectivity and gives to it the infinite beatitude. The Demiurge now only directs the animal and vegetative part of us. What legitimizes "spiritual death" is the disappearance of all of the egotistical architecture of the reigning self.

The duration of the interior evolution, which goes from the first desire of Realization to the last instants of this death-in-order-to-be-reborn, is very variable. If it had been only two years for Ramana Maharshi, it has been more often tens of years for other people. Is that what Buddha meant when asked about the greatest virtue and he responded that it was patience?

The descendant way is expressed, first of all, by the devaluation of compensation. When we envisage ourselves enjoying one of these, a voice is raised in us immediately: "And then what?" or "What's the use?" And the proposed illusory pleasure doesn't attract us anymore.

As the psychic screen on which the compensatory phantasms are projected loses its opacity, the spiritual eye perceives across it the profound night; namely, the principal nostalgia of our abandonment by God. It is what crucified Jesus expresses when he cries out, "Lord, why have you abandoned me?" It is in being born, when the soul—as Plato said—falls in the human organism, that everything happens to us as if we were really abandoned by God.

In the measure that we perceive the principal nostalgia—for the process is gradual—we experience a new sadness, apparently unconditioned, and seek immediately the reasons for its existence. Either we don't find any or they are totally disproportionate to this deep sadness. Moreover, in order to

utilize this suffering,⁷ it is necessary to begin to purify it by chasing these circumstances from our thoughts. Suffering does not weaken us, and we can therefore experience it consciously without thinking. It is a diffuse malaise in our whole being, in the whole body, with sometimes a localization at the level of the heart. This first purification of suffering is made possible and ennobled by the comprehension that all moral suffering, great or small, expresses our nostalgia for God. Those who are "liberated alive"—in whom this nostalgia has evidently disappeared—are totally invulnerable to suffering, precisely because the source of suffering no longer exists.

Such is the true acceptance of suffering, acceptance that has nothing in common with resignation. This acceptance is perfectly expressed by the saying of Jesus: "Lord, that your will be done and not mine."

When we touch the depth of the "night of the senses and of the mind" (Saint John of the Cross), sensibility and thought tend toward a complete functional stop, a stop that will release Realization.

To a disciple who demanded from him what was the ultimate word of Chan, his master responded: "It is yes." Habitual man, faced with what makes him suffer, has the attitude *No*, and he revolts. This revolt, often powerless, is painful. Let us learn in all circumstances to have the attitude *Yes*, to be in accord with our unhappiness as well as our happiness. Our good fortunes are very useful moments of relaxation, but let us also bless and experience entirely our misfortunes, our sufferings, and our boredoms because it is only in this attitude that our egotistical condition receives the blows that lead it to its disappearance. An unconscious work is then going on in us, work that our intellect would be greatly incapable of assuming and that only the Self can accomplish.

Our misfortunes? We rightly distinguish moral suffering from physical sufferings. Liberated mankind, whom no moral suffering can touch, remains sensible to physical suffering. Nevertheless, we no longer experience it as the ordinary person does; we feel it, but are indifferent to it. This proves that within the ordinary person physical suffering is always accompanied by moral suffering; this person, in fact, claims to have a body without pain, but this impossible claim provokes a sorrowful psychic revolt because the claim is often powerless—it doesn't eliminate the pain.

⁷This utilization of suffering does not evidently imply asceticism here nor, *a fortiori*, masochism.

Above all, we want to speak of moral suffering. Its appearance is not as easy to understand as that of physical suffering, where sensitive nerves are irritated and conduct this irritation up to the brain, into consciousness.

The explanation of moral suffering implies that we return to the primordial question of Hamlet, *the Doubt of Being*, which lives in every human soul. Human beings have intuition about the divine nature, of the Self that is our Absolute Reality. At the same time we define ourselves as particular people, who have, however, constant evidence that we don't possess any divine attributes. But the intuition of our divinity cannot be refuted by anything because it is right (in spite of the fact that the Self is in us only in a state of possibility). The simultaneous presence of this opposing evidence ends fatally in a Doubt-of-Being problem that thus posed is insoluble. All our lives are spent seeking to resolve this divine pretension, namely, by successes that affirm the Me.

Endlessly, habitual mankind makes exterior and interior efforts in order to be "happy"; they search for compensation. If bad luck comes, either they revolt in a more or less powerless way and suffer intensely, or they resign themselves and take refuge in a silent revolt where they suffer less and eventually time will relieve them.

In the state of moral suffering, we possess a variable quantity of disharmonic energy, contrasted bipolarly, which consists of a vicious imaginative-emotive circle. This energy finds an exit through the imagination. However, imagination reactivates the disharmonic energy that springs from the affective center at the same time. This energy is useful for Realization only if the vicious circle is broken at the level of imagination, of mind, and is stopped from constituting an energetic mass, a strange body that the organism must reject. In truth, the raw material of this bipolar energy is a portion of the vital energy, personal and homogeneous, of the subject. As soon as I focus my attention, without thinking, on what my body feels, the energy of suffering loses its disharmony and stops tearing me between two poles. Now it is at the disposition of the Self, which approaches its awakening in the same measure as the divine pretension of self diminishes.

If we know how to help ourselves through our sufferings in this way, the vain pretension of the self diminishes; our interior state descends in the direction of the principal nostalgia to which Rimbaud made allusion when he wrote:

Oh! So many widowhoods
For this poor soul⁸

Besides, we desire more and more often to physically experience this malaise that provokes the impression of the divine dereliction. In general, the compensatory system masks this malaise as if the malaise were a path that one must never take. But this pure and impartial observation unmasks the precious malaise easily; precious because it leads toward the principal nostalgia of which hell, hardly reached, is transformed suddenly into paradise. So it is true that the way of the Divine Kingdom in us must be preceded by the illusory evidence of its absence and that the way of true Goodness, infinite and eternal, must pass by the total loss of all hope in ourselves.

All sufferings are humiliations. Those humiliations, if they are accepted, are transcended in true humility, in visions of the self as "being" less and less. Then, instantaneously we see it as being nothing, as not "being." When the Self is realized, it invades us entirely, revealing to us that, without any consciousness of it until then, we have always been It in the splendor of Absolute Reality.

⁸John Porter Houston, *The Design of Rimbaud's Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 131. These lines come from the last verse poems of 1872 by Rimbaud, just prior to *The Illuminations*. *Tr.*

Part Four



HUMILITY AND THE ACCESS TO DELIVERANCE

19. The Search for the Absolute Good

Every human being seeks an absolute good. In most cases, this search takes place in the sphere of the phenomenal, namely, in the domain that we consider *the* Unique Reality. If ordinary people come in contact with the teachings of Traditional Metaphysics in a book or conversation (which is extremely rare), they consider it a mental game that doesn't correspond to any reality. They see it as completely useless and consider the person who thinks otherwise as a dreamer with questionable sanity.

However, we all have an unconscious longing for absolute good at the base of our psyche. For lack of anything better, we seek a relative good, which is totally insufficient; we often satisfy ourselves with this relative good if we are, as one says, philosophers. A proverb says this well: "You can't have everything." Another proverb describes it in a pessimistic vein: "Life is one damned thing after another." We know partial joys, sometimes great ones; but they are always threatened, and in every case death will put an end to them.

Many people are not philosophers, but passionately seek a particular success from which they expect immense good. Sometimes they accomplish their goal, but grow weary after this has been attained. Solomon possessed all the exquisite things that one could desire, but at the end of his life he concluded that "all is vanity and pursues the wind." To search for absolute good, total and eternal, in the plane of phenomena is an absurdity because it is impossible to achieve.

The metaphysician knows that Realization alone can confer the awakening of the Self and therefore of Absolute Good and all aspects of the Divine. The Living Liberated human being is immortal, eternal. You could object that the body will die and with it the self. Certainly, but this phenomenal body, this self, is already dead at the instant of Realization. Let us recall again the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "In Truth, I say unto you, if a man does not die, he will not be reborn." At the instant of Realization (or Deliverance, or Liberation, or Awakening, or Illumination, or Satori) it is not important that the animal body has to die biologically because what dies does not affect in any way the Living Liberated; a gap separates the illusory body, the self, from the Self, which is the unique Reality of this human being who is one of the Living Liberated.

The Realized human has a body just as you and I, but to his (or her) eyes that body is not a particular self; this person is the Self, and for the Self there is no difference between this body and any other body, or any other phenomenal object.

Here is an example: I received a visit one day from a doctor who had gone to India and had the privilege of meeting Ramana Maharshi. (Let us remember that everything that we know of Ramana Maharshi shows that he was one of the Living Liberated.) At that time, Maharshi was at the end of his earthly life; having an amputated arm, he also suffered from sharp attacks caused by a cancerous metastasis of the ganglions at the base of his neck. While the two men were entertaining each other, Maharshi's face changed quickly. There is a certain correspondence, in the expression of a face, between its inferior part (below the nose) and its superior part (the eyes, the forehead); the lower part expresses affective states, the higher part intellectual and spiritual states. When the visitor observed Maharshi's face, which had changed suddenly, he saw the lower part contract and tighten due to the pain; however, the higher part kept its expression of perfect serenity. Then one of his disciples said, "Master, you seem to suffer." Maharshi

responded: "Indeed, this body suffers." The disciple answered: "But you seem to suffer terribly!" "Indeed," responded Maharshi, "one can say 'terribly.'" Then, as the disciple was expressing his pain at seeing his master suffer in this way, Maharshi ended the dialogue in saying: "But what importance has that?" This story illustrates that although Maharshi continued to appear as a body, he was no longer that body. His brain felt and knew only what concerned the body, and therefore he experienced nothing consciously (except absolute and eternal good).

Let us come back to the partial and transitory joys that the ordinary, nonliberated person knows. They consist in the satisfaction of desires experienced by each of us. These desires are often conscious ahead of time (in a more or less exact way because people who desire often create an embellishing scene when they think of the success that will be, according to them, their satisfaction). Sometimes circumstances lead to unexpected satisfactions that were not desired beforehand.

The search for good becomes the search for the satisfaction of desires. The desires are forces, more or less powerful, that push us toward efforts that we judge as necessary in order to be effective. But we must not forget the complexity of the human psyche, which often includes simultaneous contradictory desires. The psychologist who understands that also understands the absurdity of the common belief in an interior force independent of desires, the imaginary force that the ordinary person names "will." What is so named is only the result of desires. To say, for example, that an infant lacks will, without considering, in order to understand the infant, the forms of its many desires, is truly a mistake. People have written about the "education of the will" without first seeking to know what "will" is. Let us leave this nonexistent notion and return to desires, which do exist. From where do desires come? What are their exact forms? As with all tendencies, they are conditioned by heredity and the circumstances of life.

20. Duality and Dualism: Possibility of Perfect Humility

The last chapter of the third part of this book described essential ideas of humiliation and humility and emphasized that in order to obtain perfect

humility it was necessary to have access to Deliverance. But numerous questions will have to be examined and understood in order to support this idea. Although this is the central question of this whole work, we will seemingly have to neglect it. If we seem to move away from the most important comprehension of all please understand that we do this so we can come back to it again with the necessary ideas, along with their evidence, so this comprehension can be gained.

The idea of humility becomes clear through the inverse idea of pride. Are you perhaps surprised that I do not say "the opposite idea"? Certainly the phenomenal world is constructed in the mode of duality (hot-cold, clear-obscure, great-small, good-evil, intelligent-stupid, etc.). But duality is not dualism. It is through the play of our subjective affectivity that we are led to oppose what pleases us with what displeases us, or what we admire with what we dislike. But for our pure, objective intellect, independent of our affectivity, nothing exists that is the opposite of anything else. Imagine a pole or stick; certainly it has two different, inverse extremities, but although inverse, these two extremities do not contradict each other; they are both necessary to the constitution and function of the pole. Figure 4 on page 61 illustrates this idea of inverse-complements.

A vertical, axial pole is used to drill a hole in the ground by way of a rotary motion. To this pole is attached a horizontal shaft and at the ends of the shaft two oxen are attached in an inverse way. When these oxen begin to move, one to the north, for example, and the other to the south, the transverse bar forces the oxen to follow a circle. But at each given instant, their effort is directed toward the tangent of the circle. One would think that they were going in opposite directions and that their forces would be paralyzing each other. It is nothing of the sort; these forces converge in the rotation of the central pole where the oxen collaborate, and their actions, far from being opposite, are inverse-complementary. In the phenomenal world the things that we call opposite are in reality inverse-complementary.

Let us come back to pride and humility. These ideas are not opposite but inverse-complementary.

One idea that concerns duality is very important here. We spoke of perfect humility. Is it possible that this contradicts the common idea according to which "nothing is perfect in this world"? In order to understand that humility can be perfect, one must see that every dual pair in the phenomenal world includes two quantitatively different extremes. Let us cite

an example concerning the phenomenon of heat. We distinguish heat from cold; they are two inverse-complements. They are obviously different, but besides this common difference known by the whole world there is another which, at first, seems very surprising. If the physicist studies levels of temperature he realizes that the highest level escapes all possible knowledge; our scientists always find temporary limits to the high temperatures they produce, but nothing shows or proves that one day they will be able to produce the highest. In raising the temperature more and more, a body will volatilize and transform into gas. But if new ways are found to raise the temperature of this gas again and again, it will never be possible to prove that one has attained an unpassable limit that would be called "absolute heat." On the other hand, if a scientist studies the cold level of temperature (which is only opposed to heat from a subjective view), he can, in his laboratory, almost attain the lowest limit, called absolute zero; but no additional progress will permit going lower nor attaining it completely. Let's avail ourselves of a symbolic example. Pride has unlimited manifestations; if several powerful men tried to conquer all the inhabitants of the earth, and some celestial body was discovered that was habitable by people, we can imagine that man's

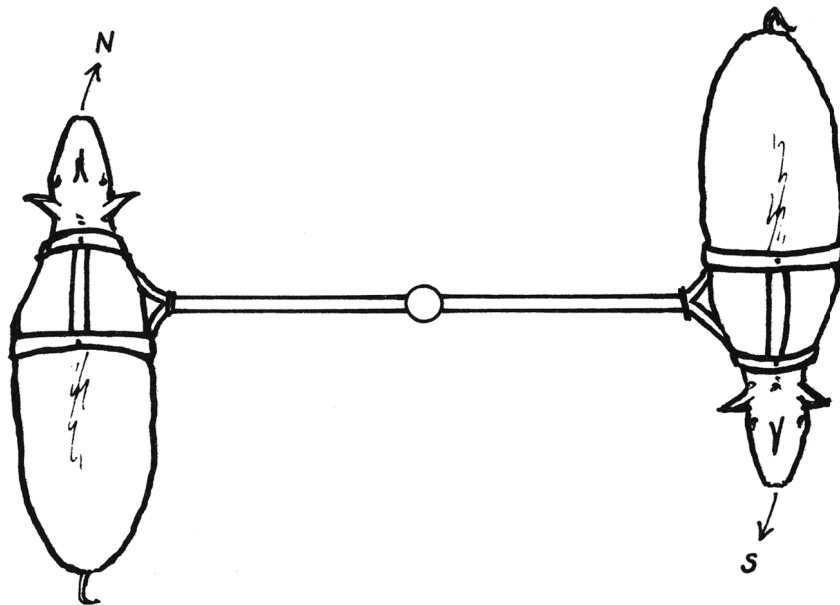


Figure 4. The forces of two oxen (seen from a bird's eye view) are seemingly opposed but really demonstrate how inverse complementary forces collaborate in the rotation of the central pole.

egotistical folly would push him to conquer that planet. The inverse, complement of pride is humility, and the manifestation of it has an unpassable limit that one could name absolute simplicity (or absolute humility). Therefore, perfect humility can be attained and be precisely the death of self. The person who reaches this absolute zero level of pride would be perfect and would never have the least consideration for self. Let us say that humility can, through the objective observation of self and others, almost attain perfection. Then one is fully open to the Self, which invades him entirely. Humility is then absolute, perfect. The total acceptance of death (such as Ramana Maharshi realized) would be absolute humility. This ultimate leap is analogous to grace coming from the Self, and there the self is nothing.

In the entire first part of this chapter, I utilized symbolic examples belonging to the phenomenal domain. One must be careful not to consider them as being perfectly adequate. But where else is it possible to find examples since these by their very nature must reside in the phenomenal plane where our psyche resides? In fact, these examples assist us in understanding the difference between dualism (the opposites) and duality (the inverse-complements) and the possibility of perfect humility. Later these distinctions will be indispensable.

21. Good and Evil

In the first part of this book, we saw that human life was ruled by two laws, the Law of Heredity and the Law of Interconditionment. These two laws are carried out through the play of numerous factors, hereditary and interconditional, and the possible combinations are innumerable. Even if twins have the same heredity, they live different circumstances, and their psychological resemblance diminishes little by little through their lives. We saw the nonexistence of free will and of responsibility. However, let us return to the absurdity of fatalism. Fatalists have desires and repulsions like everyone else; if they do nothing to satisfy the first and neutralize the second, they interfere in modifying the normal course of human reaction. They believe that they do nothing, whereas in reality they are guilty of an error.

We now want to study the notions of sin and virtue. They will lead us to a vaster notion, that of Good and Evil.

The word sin implies free will and responsibility, which in reality do not exist. In order to understand the truth, one must banish and replace error with its inverse-complement which is action exactly adapted. If, in the Christian religion, morality has been stressed a great deal, it is only due to the fact that St. Paul preached morality with extreme insistence. The tendency to conceive a morality is, through all ages, a fundamental human tendency. In Genesis, one sees the presence of the tree of Good and Evil, and Yahweh (Jehovah) forbids our first parents from eating the fruit. Eve, then Adam, induced into error by the Serpent, broke the law decreed by Yahweh and were severely punished. The error into which the dwellers of Paradise had been induced was the "original error" that morality transformed improperly into "original sin." Certainly, Genesis is a myth, but it contains a great symbolic truth.

Morality received a strong push from "the Commandments of God" imposed by Moses on the Jewish people. As soon as a legal interdiction is imposed, Good and Evil are affirmed according to whether the interdiction is respected or not. Let us point out that the moralities of several groups of people will be different and that some action forbidden by such-and-such a group of people may be approved and customary with another group. Hitler promulgated a morality preaching the denouncement and execution of the Jews. The vision of such an action as good and another as evil is completely relative because they depend on current belief. Our translations of the Gospel show Jesus saying to a female adulterer: "Go and sin no more." I do not know the language spoken by the Jews at this epoch, but I think it is very probable that Jesus said: "Go and err no more." Nevertheless, our morality has changed, and there is no longer any question of stoning a female adulterer. Let us cite a statement from Chan: "As soon as you have Good and Evil, confusion follows and the mind is lost."

Consider the list of what we call the seven capital sins: Pride, Envy, Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Anger, and Sloth. I do not know if it was intentional that Pride was placed first, but it deserves that place. It deserves the name "principal error." Here is a detailed explanation of Envy, Lust, Gluttony, and Greed as forms of pride.

Envy: You envy another person because that person possesses something that affirms him and flatters his pride. You are envious and

humbled in your own eyes and in those of others. Sometimes envious people hate the one who so humbles them.

Lust: Every pleasure enjoyed by humanity affirms you, at least every pleasure surpassing the ordinary.

Gluttony: What we just said of lust applies equally to gluttony.

Greed: Greed is the love of, the search for, and the accumulation of money, which confers a power that affirms the self.

In summary, everything that affirms you in your own eyes and in the eyes of others reawakens pride—at least in the measure to which one person is compared to another, and this occurs frequently.

Also, when you progress toward humility, you escape little by little from the other capital sins.

These capital sins are nothing other than capital errors, namely, illusory opinions. And pride is at the origin of these illusions.

It is essential to understand the causes of pride. Ordinary man is a self that exists, but the Self that Is is immanent in him.

We discussed earlier that all people have a profound subconscious intuition of the Self (although the Self is as if it were asleep in us) and want to possess its attributes, its omniscience, its omnipresence, its all-powerfulness, its eternity, and its absolute good. I had a friend who recalled that he had believed in God at four years of age and thought that the reason his family did not give him that belief was so he would not get a case of excessive vanity from it.

But the Self immanent in us, although asleep, is often confused with self. Certainly we are well aware that we do not possess divine attributes, but for lack of something better we strive to approach them as much as we can. As the obscure intuition of the Self exists in varying degrees, efforts to approach the divine vary in intensity. Some people make minimal efforts toward this goal, whereas others strive intensely.

Therefore, the original error is nothing other than an illusory opinion that causes us to confuse the differences between the "Me" and the "Self." As it is said, we are all, in our subjective lives, the center of the world. And others only have value in our eyes to the degree that they are close to us (relatives, friends, or lovers).

The original sin is, in essence, an illusory opinion (or error) that does not deserve any punishment, but a true teaching directly related to Traditional

Metaphysics.¹ (Nevertheless, even if this error had been a transgression freely desired, it is difficult to see why all the descendants from the first humans are doomed to suffer.)

No, as mankind has been created, we were destined to fall into the trap of original error, and that depends, as does everything, on the constitution of the Universe as it is—conceived by God Himself from all eternity, and the causes will always escape us.

Let us return to the myth of Genesis, which is so rich in teaching. The Serpent, the Tempter, the Fear assures the naive couple, Adam and Eve, that if they eat the fruit of the tree of Good and Evil, they "will be as Gods" and the death with which Yahweh menaced them is a vain menace. In reality, the punishment fell on human beings and all their descendants; they will die and indeed will know unhappiness during their transitory life. The notion of self and its absurd pretensions appear (Adam and Eve hide their nudity in order to mask that which is ugly) and what remains to the first couple (from their divine possibility) is only the inherent Self in them, but the Self is asleep. On the other hand, they conceive fatally of Good and Evil with their unhappy consequences; Evil is shadowed by remorse and good by pride.

Note that pride did not wait upon the original error in order to appear in the human psyche; in effect, the error of Eve, when she fell under the influence of the Serpent, had been determined by this promise: "You will be as Gods." It is easy to see that this promise was seductive, and our first parents found themselves flattered in their pride. Yahweh created us "in his image and resemblance" but had not made us equal to Him. The pride of Adam and Eve pushes them to become "as the Gods" which represented, in them, the supreme pride.

I have utilized the symbolic myth of Genesis extensively because it illuminates the resemblance of man to God and the original error that renders mankind infinitely inferior to God because of our ignorance and illusory opinions. It also shows that pride is only one of the capital errors, but it plays a principal role among them.

As soon as we fall into the realm of illusory opinion, which is the consequence of pride, our intellectual functions change completely; we confuse the duality of the phenomenal world with dualism, and as a

¹Some clarification seems necessary here. Original sin and sin in general are errors resulting from the unenlightened consciousness of mankind. They don't deserve a punishment but a teaching that removes the darkness. Dr. Benoit refers to these teachings as Traditional Metaphysics. *Tr.*

consequence we have false opinions in all things. Our lives are labyrinths, so inextricable that Socrates arrived at the following conclusion: "If I am certain of something, it is that I know nothing."

Let us conclude. Pride is the principle error, and it engenders all the other capital sins; it plays a central role in the functioning of ordinary, non-realized people. We are always in action (except during profound sleep), and every activity affirms us, even our thoughts and interior monologues, because every activity nourishes the illusion of being and renders us blind to the fact that we are really conditioned puppets who only act to exist. Descartes founded his philosophy from his celebrated phrase "I think, therefore I am," which is entirely false. I affirm myself by moving, in doing anything whatsoever, even the most insignificant thing. Pascal, in his *Pensées*, wrote: "All the unhappiness of man comes from the fact that he doesn't know how to remain seated in his room"; but if he was prevented from doing things in his room, in particular from thinking the ideas that come to him, he would be intolerably unhappy. These great minds are wrong; the error, is it not typically human?

If one gives to pride the apparently more modest name of self-love, it is again even more evident that pride impregnates the human psyche (what is the human being who is devoid of all self-love?). Pride creates in varying degrees the ignorance that Buddha's teaching designates the ensemble of illusory opinions that generate suffering. The search for good, if understood correctly, will lead to the disappearance of illusory opinions (which is difficult to obtain) and, most important, to the disappearance of pride, which is their principal origin.

22. Conditioning of the Realization

You probably see a contradiction between the way of obtaining perfect humility—of which I will speak later—and the notion that we are conditioned puppets without free will and responsibility. I must explain this apparent contradiction. Apart from Ramana Maharshi—who had only to simulate his own corporeal death (which was accompanied by the acceptance of this death) in order to enter into a spontaneous evolution which led him within two years to his Realization, indeed as spontaneous—all the Great Masters

will come up against the temporary impasses that last varying lengths of time and from which they have to free themselves in order to seek another way. Look at the history of Buddha himself: he lost years studying philosophy without success and he nearly died from asceticism; then he sat, suspending all thought, under the Bodhi Tree and there arrived at Satori.

In reality, the attainment of Satori is conditioned first of all by four factors: (a) knowledge of the theoretical possibility of Satori, (b) the intense desire to obtain it, (c) coming into contact with a true teaching, and (d) the intensity and quality of the metaphysical intuition of the subject.

These conditions are part of the destiny of the Living Liberated; if not, these people would have remained similar to ordinary humans. Do not consider this some kind of an injustice; in one way or another, we are all conditioned differently. One person is beautiful, another ugly; one is intelligent, the other stupid. We have already said that there are innumerable conditionings; in this domain there is no equality.

Let us comment further on some of the conditioning factors we have cited:

1. Knowing the theoretical possibility of Realization that can deliver us from every suffering and confer absolute and eternal good is something most people totally ignore.

2. The intense desire to attain this theoretically known Satori. This condition is very complex. I said "intense desire" because no one learns of the possibility of Satori without learning at the same time its rarity and the extreme difficulty in obtaining it. And one can observe in certain people a proud ambition of arriving at Realization because then the subject would be superior to everyone else. Pride always.

Moreover, the beings who seek deliverance are not absolutely exceptional, and their motives can be very different.

There is one motive with which personally I do not agree but which Professor Suzuki exposes in one of his books; according to him, many seek Realization in order to be able to communicate it to others. But do these people understand that when realized, they will have the task of proselytizing? Chan is not a religion avid of conquests, and the realized

person sees all things as equal in the phenomenal plane where fellow beings live.

Another motive is the desire for Absolute Good. But we cannot have the least idea of this Absolute and Eternal Good. A more suitable desire is the desire of being delivered from having to suffer. Let us quote the Buddha: "The whole problem of mankind is the problem of suffering." But that is not the conditioning we seek to understand because every desire presupposes the imagination of some interior state, and we cannot, when we are unhappy, imagine and desire the inverse state, nor imagine and desire a joy that would return to us sometime in the future. Our interior state seems eternal to us.

In reality, the four conditioning factors that we saw in the beginning of this chapter would not satisfy our curiosity on the conditioning necessary for Realization even though their presence is indispensable and they play an active part. We cannot know destiny in all its aspects. Instead, we say that those who arrive at Realization will necessarily follow the winding path of a predestination that escapes us, as the entire future does.

A word on our present epoch. It is easy to see, in our day, the triumph achieved by empirical research over metaphysical research. The pretended progress realized on the phenomenal plane intoxicates the mind. Certain aspects of this progress partially deserve that name, but are people happier and wiser because engines are more and more rapid, or because we disintegrate and fuse the atom? Our perverse instincts ride over this pretended progress. Even the advantages that progress brings in daily life do not give, after a wondrous moment, any improvement in our morals. From time to time an intellectual idealist, such as Aldous Huxley, is persuaded that it is mankind who must progress in wisdom, in goodness, and the like. He said it, he wrote it, he acted in forming groups of wise people. But how can one not see that this "good will" is a drop of water in the sea?

This evolution toward progress on the phenomenal plane leads one to think that our environment is becoming more and more unfavorable to human spirituality and to the appearance of realized people. Present-day humanity, so proud of its progress on the material plane, becomes more and more ignorant. And the frequency and intensity of hostilities between nations and people is the result of this. It is possible that one person (or even several) stranded in some faraway isolated place (rather in Asia than elsewhere) obtains Realization to live again, Realized, without having the least reason for making themselves known. Those that we know who call themselves

realized are relatively numerous in the East, but all that I have been able to know about them leaves me with more than some doubt about their pretention. This present state of humanity does not surprise those who know that our age is the Kali-yuga. After an apocalypse, there will be a new "golden age."

That is in the cosmic order, and even if we understand that we have had the bad luck of being born at the end of the Kali-yuga, we would not be able to change it in any way. In every case, we must recognize that the one who now seeks Realization is faced with particularly great obstacles.

23. The Progressive Diminution of Pride

Here we will consider the foremost question of the passage from intellectual or theoretical comprehension to practical Knowledge true to life. We have mentioned this before, but it is necessary to clarify certain points now.

The first idea that occurs to an ordinary person who has understood that Perfect Humility is the key to Realization is to attempt to cultivate humility. It is impossible to cultivate true humility since self-love constantly dwells in us. Therefore, the possibility of Perfect Humility becomes strictly hypothetical. As long as Satori has not taken place, human beings from the most tender age (as soon as the intellect appears) consider themselves as being the "Me"; the comprehension of Self, even if one explained it to an infant, is not possible. It is only at adolescence that the notion of the Self (exposed by a master or a book) can be understood in a theoretical fashion. The "Me" or self is always present and active from the moment the intellect awakens in the baby at the time of initiation into language. In sum, before Realization, we can never live a moment of true humility. How can we cultivate humility if there doesn't exist the least grain of it?

What I just said can surprise or annoy you. You may think of many people who do not show the least self-love. For example, the polite, elevated, and civilized person does not show self-love; but non-manifestation of pride, which others judge and think little of, is not humility. When I was very young, I remember being carried in the arms of an adult; she stopped in front of a farm and chatted with an old female farmer who was toothless. Suddenly

I said: "But she has no teeth," and the poor old lady responded: "As infants they are wretched." I was not then elevated or "civilized."

If everyone told everyone else what they thought of each other, life would be impossible—full of struggle and hatred. This discretion is destined to keep a certain peace among humans but it has nothing to do with humility. It shows rather that one protects the self-love of others and that one avoids angering them in order to avoid making an enemy. These friendly resolutions do not prevent those who hold them from thinking quite different thoughts just the same! Such pious lies! And it is the self-love of the highly elevated person that forms this attitude, not true humility.

In sum, self-love, the primordial concern for self, is implanted so profoundly and so solidly in the psyche from the beginning of life that pure humility is impossible as long as the spiritual death of the self has not taken place. Realization alone brings forth pure humility.

We cannot gradually acquire humility that we don't have. Our attention must be directed at self-love in order to drive it out and to recognize it with certitude, for self-love causes suffering that alternates with the precarious pleasures that come from our self-contentment.

However, perfect humility can invade us abruptly (Realization) when it instantaneously overturns the psyche. This does not mean that this overturning may not be preceded by the progression of a partial, imperfect humility.

Those who understand profoundly and repeatedly that humility is a unique and desirable goal, and that self-love and its manifestations are beasts, vulgar entities that separate us from Absolute Good, revolt at flattery. To love humility because it alone leads us toward Good and to detest pride because it has opposite consequences, that is the correct attitude.

This theoretical comprehension is transformed little by little into Knowledge true to life when we are watchful over manifestations (outwardly or simply inwardly) of pride and reject them as displeasing and harmful.

It is impossible to observe the appearance of partial humility because humility has no observable manifestation. However, it is possible to note that on flattering occasions, we feel less flattered and experience less agreement with the moment. But this observation is not a recommendation because it would risk releasing the pride of having progressed in humility. This "pride of being humble" reminds me of an amusing story, that of a bishop saying:

"When it comes to humility, I believe no one." St. Francis of Assisi is a typical example of the pride of being humble.

In summary, the entire work of self observation is the seeing and understanding of the various manifestations of pride, such as self-love, vanity, pretention, presumption, sensitiveness, boastfulness, or praise of oneself in one's daily relationships.

Why does true knowledge render us capable of watching over our congenital pride and not being capable of even partial humility? It is because pride is, alas, the "normal" rule in the agitations of the self in order to at least simulate Realization. When I say "normal" I only want to say "habitual," for most people are prone to the consequences of the original error. Pride being the general rule, we are capable of recognizing its manifestations for we are familiar with them. Humility is a momentary opening in a habitual attitude of self-love, or a general diminution of that attitude, when we see the constant self-love that remains and not anything to indicate the lessening of it. In essence, we would be able to define humility as a diminution of habitual self-love or as its disappearance in the liberated person.

There is an excellent way to strike blows at pride—humiliations. In order to utilize a humiliation, we must strive to accept it, while recognizing freely that the humiliation, by a person or circumstance, was indeed deserved. On the other hand, we should strive not to ruminate about this suffering and its cause by fixing our attention on something else, without forgetting that we have received some very important and beneficial information. This is not the customary way of receiving a humiliation. I often have had the occasion to say to one of my patients: "In sum you have been angry," and I hear the response: "Angry? Not at all. I have only had much pain." This response is so common that I always stop there. Sometimes the person who desires the disappearance of pride realizes that they are angered by such-and-such an attitude of someone or other; here he has the opportunity to carry out this same work of acceptance, which sometimes demands great patience.

Perfect humility is one of the characteristics of Realization. Indeed the self is spiritually dead, and we very simply receive what could have at some other time injured this self that is now completely indifferent.

What I just said in relation to the diminution of pride needs to be completed. One would think that humility progresses in the measure that pride diminishes. That is not exact. One can utilize a diagram to clarify this question. We now understand that Perfect Humility is the zero of pride; I

have represented it by the lowest point in figure 5. Above this point, a vertical line represents the diminution of pride in its entirety. This line certainly descends toward zero, but a small interval represents what Chan calls *the abyss* situated between the phenomenal and the noumenal. I have already spoken about the instantaneous leap that the awakened Self accomplishes in the person who arrives at this stage. In effect, all we can do in order to obtain the diminution of pride belongs to the phenomenal world and therefore does not affect the leap to cross the abyss and arrive at the Noumenal. We cannot conquer Realization; we can only, by nearly perfect humility, open to the awakening of the Self.

What we just saw and what our diagram illustrates is descriptive of what is called the Negative Way. Indeed, if we were conscious of the amount of humility that we possess on the edge of the self-love that constantly plays in us, we would be able to strive directly to augment this partial humility. That would be the positive way. But as we have seen, perception of our degree of humility is impossible. We can only obtain a progressive increase in humility by destroying pride through slow erosion. I propose a vignette that represents this idea. Let us imagine a group of buildings constructed on some piece of land, and suppose that for one reason or another, I wanted to

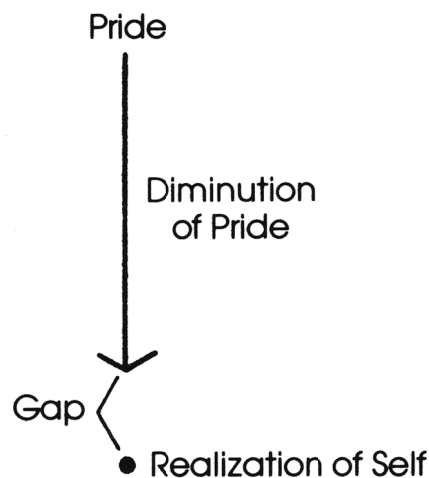


Figure 5. The Negative Way of Humility. The solid line as it descends represents the diminution of pride. Finally, when perfect humility occurs, there is still the abyss which separates the phenomenal from the noumenal. However, the subject is now open to the realization of Self.

enjoy this terrain (symbolizing humility). I can do nothing to fulfill my desire to enjoy this land because it is crowded with buildings. Therefore, with great effort, I will have to destroy these detestable buildings. I will have to demolish the construction and remove the debris, and then there will be nothing left. Unless my land is flat and bare, I cannot occupy the least part of it. Therefore, to demolish is negative, and the way I have followed must be called the Negative Way.

Destroy your pride progressively. As for humility, do not dwell on it, and let it grow without even seeking to be aware of it.