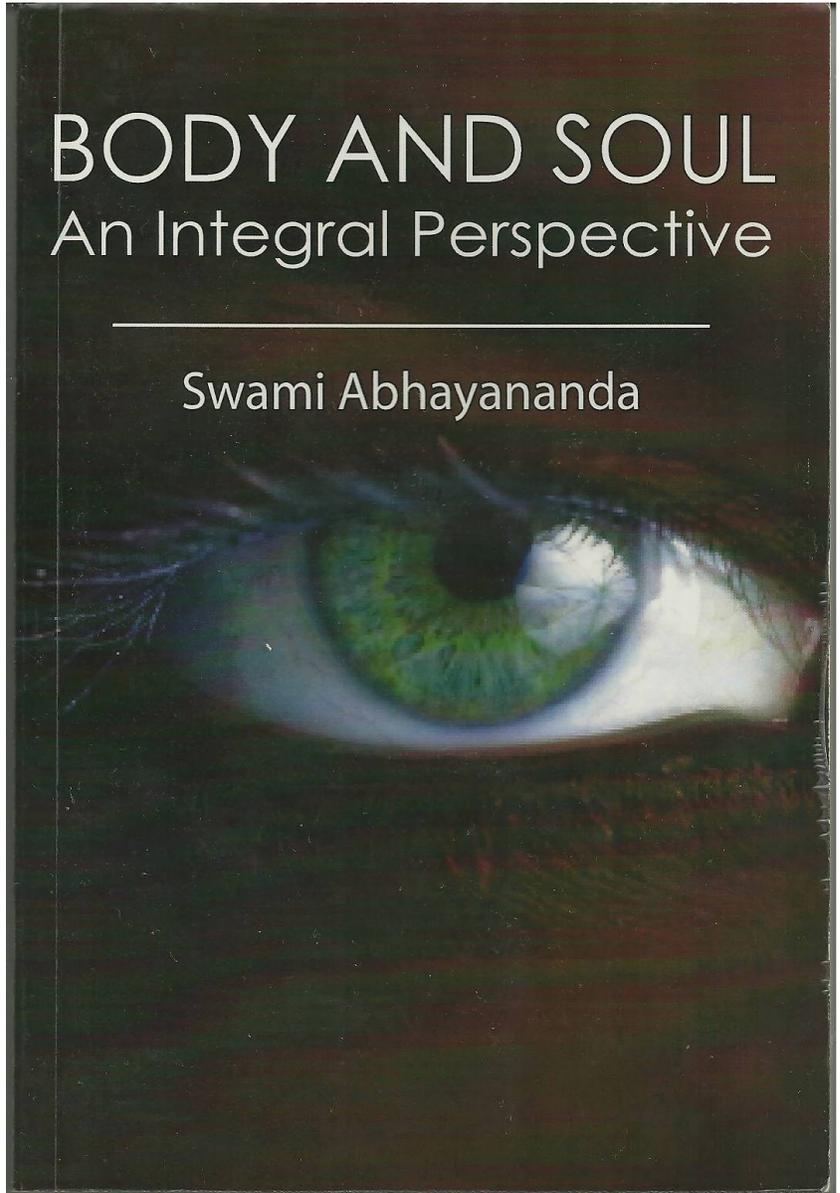


BODY AND SOUL

An Integral Perspective

Swami Abhayananda



BODY AND SOUL

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BODY AND SOUL:
An Integral Perspective

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Swami Abhayananda

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Swami Abhayananda may be contacted by email at:
abhayananda@bellsouth.net; or on the web at:
www.themysticsvision.weebly.com.

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Introduction

For much of human history, it has been assumed by nearly everyone that God manifests Himself as two complementary 'substances': a subtle one of spirit, or soul, that experiences itself as a subjective conscious awareness; and a coarser one of matter, or body. And that, at human conception or birth, the two are joined, and at the cessation of life in the body, they separate. At death, the body returns to its elements, eventually decaying back into its original Energy state, while the soul continues to live in its subtle Spirit realm, until such time as, according to some, it is re-embodied in a newly born creature; or, according to others, it is relegated eternally to a place of punishment or reward, depending on the deserts accumulated in its earthly sojourn. This dualistic scheme is all very reasonable, and very neat: there is the material world, and the spiritual world, both made of God-stuff, but of different kinds. They combine and interpenetrate during the lifetime of the body, and then separate when the body is no longer an apt host.

Throughout much of our history, every major theology has agreed with this conception of a dual-faceted Divine Reality, consisting of a transcendent/immanent Mind, or Consciousness, and an active Energy emanating from that absolute Consciousness, by which the universe of forms is made manifest. Throughout that history, these two aspects of Reality have been given innumerable names, such as *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, *Brahman* and *Maya*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*, *Jahveh* and *Chokmah*, *Theos* and *Logos*, *Tao* and *Teh*, *Dharmakaya* and *Samsara*, *Haqq* and *Khalq*, and on and on.

This classic dualism between Soul, or spirit, and the matter-producing Energy has not only been the conventional Eastern metaphysical view; it has been the conventional Western metaphysical view as well, from the time of Pythagorus and Plato, on through the Neoplatonists, Hermetics, and Jews, carried forward by Christianity and Islam, and reaffirmed analytically in the seventeenth century by René Descartes. Its rationality and broad acceptance has firmly established this Spirit-Matter dualism in the depths of our collective psyche.

When we speak the word, "I", we are usually referring to that invisible being who lives in our heads, and who is known intimately only to ourselves. When we speak of 'our' body, it is spoken of as a possession of, or appendage to, that invisible "I". Though we rarely, in the course of our daily lives, separate out these two clearly distinct aspects of our being, when we *do* attempt to examine them separately along with the mechanics of their relationship one to the other, we find ourselves on very uncertain and misty terrain.

Whether they are called Matter and Spirit, Body and Mind, or Body and Soul, these two aspects, or components, of what we regard as our personal identity have been examined and discussed throughout history from every vantagepoint: from the perspective of religion, of philosophy, of science, and of mysticism. In the following pages we will entertain each of these vantagepoints in turn; and my own perspective, which contains something of each of these honored perspectives, will become evident as we progress through this exercise and as we reach toward some integral conclusions.

* * *

PART ONE
THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

1.
In The Beginning

How we view the nature of our bodies and souls, and ultimately the nature of all mind and matter, wholly depends on the story of Creation to which we subscribe. And, certainly, one of the oldest religious traditions whose account of the Creation of the universe has been widely influential over the ages is the Judeo-Christian tradition. The scripture of this tradition, the Hebrew Bible—what the Jews call the *Tanakh* (which includes the five books of Moses, or *Torah*, the *Prophets*, and the *Writings*), and what the Christians call ‘the Old Testament’—tells the Judaic version of the Creation story in the very first book of that scripture.

While it purports to be a first-hand account of historical events from the beginning of time to around the 2nd century B.C.E., the text of the Hebrew Bible was not actually edited and assembled as one scripture until a Greek translation (the *Septuagint*)

was made of the various original Hebrew texts around the 3rd century B.C.E., probably in Alexandria. The Christians added a "New Testament" to the Old, containing stories of the life and teachings of Jesus, and a Christian priest known as Jerome completed a Latin translation of these books, known as the "Vulgate Bible", in 405 C.E., which became the version authorized by the Catholic church. The Hebrew text currently in use by practicing Jews is a reproduction of a Masoretic text that was not compiled and edited until the 10th century C.E., while the first complete English translation of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible was made by John Wycliff in the late 14th century; and the 'King James' English version of these books was published in the year 1611.

Since the older portions of the 'Old Testament' of the Bible represent an ancient religious tradition, predating philosophy, one mustn't seek a sophisticated metaphysics in the scriptural texts of the early Jews. God (*Yahweh* or *Elohim*) is never treated metaphysically in the Judaic scriptures. He is presented rather as a mythological and anthropomorphic deity who molded his creatures from clay, and sometimes walked with them in Eden. He made

covenants, spoke to His prophets, and took a fatherly role in leading His chosen people, the Jews, in their wanderings and in their promised conquest of Canaan.

The story of Creation, from the viewpoint of the Judeo-Christian tradition, is contained in the *Torah*, in the book of *Genesis*—which contains two conflicting versions, *Genesis:1* and *Genesis:2*. Neither version, we are told by later commentators, is to be taken literally; rather they are to be understood as allegories only. God's first act of creation, according to one version of *Genesis*, was to utter the words, "Let there be light!" And there was light.

Today, contemporary astrophysicists also assert that the material universe had a beginning (around 14 billion years ago, they think), and its original manifestation was an immense burst of light, which they call "the Big Bang." The current science of astrophysics, however, attributes this burst of light, not to God, but to the explosion of an extremely dense speck of condensed matter that just happened to be floating in the eternal void prior to 'the Big Bang'.

This dimensionless point of infinite density is referred to by physicists as a *singularity*. The concept of a 'singularity' came about as a result of the attempt to mentally run the expansion of the universe in reverse, whereby we see in our imagination, as in the rewinding of a film, this expanded matter brought back into a proximity which at some point becomes an infinite density, compacted into a single point; hence, a 'singularity'. But that is merely the picture that the imagination offers in its attempt to envision a reversal of the present universal expansion. It is not necessarily true, however, that our universe actually began as an infinitely dense point.

Some theorists speculate that perhaps there was no singularity, but instead a quantum vacuum, seething with activity; and the fluctuating activity of the quanta in this vacuum spontaneously produced matter particles, and hence the manifestation of the entire material universe. In what may seem an attempt at misdirection, the advocates of this theory say that, before the Beginning, the vacuum of space contained a "zero-point" energy whose random quantum fluctuations produced the explosive expansion of matter. But, before the Beginning, there *was* no space in which a zero-point energy could

exist, and therefore no possibility of any fluctuations in that non-existent energy. The introduction of Energy where before there was nothing *was* the Beginning. And so, this "quantum vacuum replete with zero-point energy" theory leaves open the question of 'from whence came this quantum vacuum and all these fluctuating quanta?' just as the singularity theory begs the question of 'from whence came this singularity?'

According to the standard scientific Big Bang model of the origin of the universe, the Big Bang was the explosive expansion of a pre-existent primary state consisting of an ultra-dense concentration of mass-energy. Yet those scientists who accept this model have refused to speculate on where, why, and how such an ultra-dense concentration of mass-energy came to be in the first place. That, they say, is beyond the purview of 'empirical science'; and, of course, it is.

One has to wonder, however, why these scientists so easily accept the idea of a pre-existent *singularity* or *quantum vacuum* but have been so unwilling to hypothesize the "creation" or "emanation" by a transcendent Mind of a sudden initial burst of Energy that subsequently resulted in the formation of an

expanding universe of matter by a process of energy-matter conversion. Is it simply to avoid allowing the possibility of a supernaturally initiated cosmos? Is it possible that the Big Bang cosmology of contemporary physics is merely an ideational framework constructed to avoid acknowledging a supernatural origin and to support instead a materialistic cosmogeny?

Whatever the answer to that question might be, let us now depart from the traditional materialistic model, and make a bold and adventurous enquiry into the possibility that it might have been (Divine) Energy that started it all, and let's see where this theory takes us. If we hypothesize that it was the appearance of a sudden flash of Divine Energy that precipitated this expanding universe, we must ask, "What kind of Energy could result in a material universe?"

There is an ancient, pre-scientific, tradition in India according to which, the material universe was produced from sound: specifically, the *pranava*, said to be audible as the sound, "Aum", or "Om". No one, however, has succeeded in producing matter from this or any other sound, or even formulating a process by which this might be accomplished.

Indeed, it appears that *sound* itself is in all cases produced by matter; not the other way around. However, it is a proven fact that *light-energy* is transformable to material particles—energy and matter being interchangeable states of the same thing.

We must ask, then, “Mightn’t it have been a Divinely produced burst of what we have come to call ‘electromagnetic radiation’—in other words, *Light*—that produced this vast universe of forms?” Such a beginning would not only provide a confirmation of the account found in many religious documents; it would clearly account for the initial heat and expansion known to have been produced in the earliest stages of the universe’s origin.

Scientists of our contemporary world have not seriously considered this theory, however. Rather than positing a spiritual source, or even a radiant energy source, their immediate instinct is to suppose that there was an original phenomenal entity that somehow ‘blew up’, scattering matter throughout the length and breadth of space-time. But, just for the purpose of following out the supernaturally produced Light theory to its logical ends, let us imagine for a

moment that in the beginning there *was* a supernaturally produced burst of high-energy light, and examine whether or not the existence of space-time and this material universe could possibly have formed and evolved from such an initial Energy burst:

2.

The Phenomenon of Light

Anyone familiar with the peculiar nature and behavior of light must be profoundly struck by the stubborn incomprehensibility of this unique and elusive 'stuff'. Many scientists and philosophers over the ages have sought to comprehend the nature of light without success, among them Albert Einstein. Though Einstein made extraordinary discoveries involving light's invariable speed, its relation to time and space, and its corpuscular nature, he was never able to fathom just what this 'stuff' called "light" *is*. In 1917, long after the publication of his Special and General Theories of Relativity, he wrote: "For the rest of my life I will reflect on what light is!";¹ and thirty-four years later, in 1951, he admitted: "All the fifty years of conscious brooding have brought me no closer to the answer to the question, 'What are light

quanta [photons]?' Of course, today every rascal thinks he knows the answer, but he is deluding himself."²

Why is light so difficult to comprehend? Einstein's perplexity over the nature of light was based on the recognition that, at the submicroscopic quantum level, the properties of light are indescribable. Light is neither wave nor particle, though it can appear in either guise. It is not a substance, but an intangible and indefinable *essence* that some have likened to a mental rather than a physical reality; and yet all that we perceive as the physical, 'material' world is made of it. This 'stuff' called *light* is miraculously endowed with the ability to transform itself into what we call 'material' particles. And, even though we can describe and predict this transformation, it is clearly an *a priori* capability that can only be described as "miraculous". In addition, light, by its very nature, expands from its source at a constant and absolute 186,000 miles/sec. Space-time is measurable only in relation to the absolute speed of light radiation. So, if the initial appearance of light created space-time, those space-time parameters would have expanded initially at the rate of 186,000 miles/sec. Space-time, it seems, is merely an effect of light, and as it

expanded, that light cooled and transformed itself into material (mass-bearing) particles, and as those wave-particles cooled, the expansion rate of the material universe decreased accordingly.

Perhaps the *most* mysterious quality of light is that it apparently requires no medium through which to propagate. Ocean waves propagate through water; sound waves propagate through the air or other material object; light waves propagate without an apparent medium. Up until the late nineteenth century, scientists believed that light propagated through an indefinable ethereal substance that they called 'the luminiferous aether', or simply 'the ether'. But the experiments by Albert Michelson and Edward Morley, as well as by many later experimenters, failed to confirm that such a material medium existed.

Light—electromagnetic waves—travel even through the emptiness of space; but how? No one has any idea! Furthermore, regardless of the speed and direction of the observer, light is always observed to travel at an absolute speed: 186,000 miles per second. Einstein discovered that time and space are so integrally related that the attempt by an observer to catch up to light brings the observer no closer to the

light, but only results in the slowing of time for the observer; and the increase of energy used to approach the speed of light only converts to an increase in the observer's mass. Light is undeniably a unique, mysterious, and inscrutable thing!

But it is the ability of light to transform into matter which is the focus of our interest here. Light, or electromagnetic radiation, does not consist of matter; that is, it has no mass of its own, but is an insubstantial, though ubiquitous, form of energy. Nonetheless, in its most intensely energetic states, it is convertible into 'matter'; and *vice versa*. This is due to the now well-known interconvertibility of mass and energy, according to Einstein's formula: $E=mc^2$. For example, when an electron bound to a nucleus makes a "quantum jump" from a higher energy level (orbital) to a lower one, it loses (gives off) that same amount of energy in the form of a photon of light. When an electron and a positron (its antiparticle opposite) collide, they both are annihilated and are transformed into a flash of light (photons). When a proton and an antiproton collide, they are both annihilated and transformed into a flash of light (photons). Why are mass and energy interconvertible? No one knows. They just are.

Though it appears alternately in two different states, it is just one stuff: mass-energy. Apparently, when particles and antiparticles are reduced to wave-photons of light, they are merely returning to their 'ground' state. From light they came, and to light they must return.

"Visible light", as we all know, forms but a small segment of the electrical and magnetic field that extends outwardly from its source in wavelike undulations of varying frequencies and wavelengths, called the electromagnetic (EM) spectrum. In the vacuum of space, EM radiation travels nearly 300 million meters (186,000 miles) per second, or 18 billion meters per minute; and can be variously described and labeled according to its different wavelengths. But, as Albert Einstein has shown, it is also measurable as tiny packets or *quanta* of energy called *photons*, measured according to their energy in electron volts (eV). Light can be described either as a wave or a particle, depending on the method used to measure it. And though no one seems able to rationally describe or account for this wave-particle duality, in order to make some verbal sense of it, we say that EM waves are *associated with*, or *complementary to*, the light quanta known as

photons. Naturally, *matter* also possesses this characteristic of wave-particle duality, since *matter* is nothing more than light-*energy* transformed into form and substance.

The entire EM spectrum includes gamma rays, x-rays, ultraviolet light, the visible spectrum, infrared, microwaves, radar, FM radio, AM radio, and Direct electrical current; ranging in wavelength from 10^{-15} (a point with fourteen zeros, and then a one) meters to indefinitely long. At one end of the EM spectrum, this charged field vibrates as short transverse waves of very high frequency; these are the gamma-rays and x-rays. At the other end of the spectrum, wave lengths can be indefinitely long and the frequencies very low; these are the radio and long-wave radio waves. In between the high and low-frequency waves of this spectrum are varying EM wavelengths such as those of visible light. Visible light is but a small portion of the EM spectrum, consisting of wavelengths from 0.4 to 0.7 micrometers (one millionth of a meter)—i.e., about half the length of a bacterium.

As in all wavelular phenomena, the shorter the wavelength, the higher is the wave's frequency; and the longer the wavelength, the lower is the wave's

frequency. Frequency is measured in units called hertz (abbreviated Hz.), after the nineteenth century German physicist, Heinrich Hertz. One hertz means one oscillation per second. For example, radio waves in AM broadcasting have a wavelength of 300 meters and vibrate at the frequency ranging from 530 kilohertz (530,000 hertz) to 1.6 megahertz (1,600,000 hertz). By contrast, gamma rays, with the extremely short wavelength of 10^{-15} meter, may have the incredible frequency of 300 Ehz (one exahertz=one quintillion [10^{18}] hertz).

Though light is energy, and massless, it can be converted, or transformed, into mass-bearing material particles (according to the formula: $E=mc^2$). In fact, high energy, short-wavelength light (such as a gamma ray) routinely decays spontaneously into particle-antiparticle pairs—and vice versa. When we speak of high-energy light as an EM *wave*, we speak of it as high-frequency (300 Ehz), short wavelength (10^{-15} meter) radiation. When we speak of it as *particulate*, or *corpuscular*, we must regard it as consisting of photons, each photon with an energy in the realm of 1.24 MeV (million electron volts).

Gamma rays, then, are the highest frequency EM waves, consisting of the highest energy photons, so far discovered. These waves are found in the nuclei of atoms and may be released by nuclear explosions. They can also be produced in certain laboratory experiments, for example, by certain radioactive materials, or when a particle and an antiparticle annihilate each other. Conversely, gamma rays are capable of decaying spontaneously into particle-antiparticle pairs, such as an electron and a positron. Gamma rays also exist naturally throughout the cosmos, even showing up in the formation of terrestrial lightning bolts. In 1997, astronomers using the Compton Gamma Ray Observatory (GRO) satellite, found evidence for a gigantic, diffuse halo of gamma rays around our own Milky Way galaxy that they are currently endeavoring to know more about; and distant cosmic gamma ray bursts appear almost daily to astronomer's telescopes.

Cosmic gamma ray bursts are brief bursts of high-energy light that come to us from up to 12 billion light-years away (in other words, light that was emanated 12 billion years ago). Astronomers have speculated that they are from distant supernovae, giant collapsing stars in their death-throes; although

researchers could find no supernova associated with a 2006 burst observed by NASA's Swift satellite. In March of 2008, the same NASA satellite recorded "the brightest explosion ever seen" when a massive star, 7.5 billion light-years away, collapsed to form a black hole, driving powerful gamma ray jets outward. In September of 2009, another gamma ray burst (designated GRB090902B) produced even higher energies—up to 33.4 billion electron volts or about 13 billion times the energy of visible light.³ Such cosmic gamma ray bursts are so energetic that their brightness appears equal to the brightness of all the stars of the entire universe combined. One burst of 10 seconds duration can release more energy than the light emitted by our sun in its entire 10 billion-year lifetime.

It is affirmed by both Western science and the Western religious tradition that all the matter in this universe originated from a spectacularly large burst of high-energy light, or electromagnetic radiation regularly referred to as "the Big Bang". Science asserts that, in the very earliest moments of the Big Bang, in that unimaginably hot, spreading radiation field, some of the densely packed, intensely active, high-energy photons, incessantly colliding with one

another, spontaneously decayed (transformed) into mass-bearing particles and anti-particles.⁴

Spontaneous decay is a common fate of densely concentrated, colliding high-energy photons, such as gamma rays. And, while nearly all the resulting particle/antiparticle pairs created by photon-decay would have been annihilated upon contact with each other, as it happens, there was a slight disparity or "asymmetry" ⁵ in the total number of particles over antiparticles; and for that reason, there was still one-in-every ten billion particles remaining—in the form of electrons, protons, and neutrons—to constitute the building blocks of our present material universe.

The religious theory holds that a sudden burst of Divine Energy in the form of an intense field of electromagnetic radiation, *and not the explosion of a pre-existent super-dense speck of condensed mass-energy*, as physical scientists believe, constituted the origin of our universe. But, of course, neither religion's "Great Radiance" theory, nor science's 'Big Bang' theory, are subject to experimental confirmation; both theories must be viewed as merely nonfalsifiable speculations. In other words, both theories are equally plausible, and equally

unconfirmable. Even the Cosmic Background Microwave Energy that was detected by Penzias and Wilson in 1964 might be cited as evidence equally for the 'Great Radiance' scenario *or* the 'Big Bang' scenario. However, scientists are extremely reluctant to even consider the possibility of a supernatural source and origin to our universe since there is no way to empirically substantiate it.

It must be admitted, however, that whether it was a sudden pulse of Divinely-produced Energy, or the explosive Energy of a prepackaged "singularity" that created the universe, it would have to have been a tremendous amount of Energy. We know this because of Einstein's formula which declares that the amount of initiating Energy that would account for all the mass in the universe would have to have been the product of all the mass in the universe times the speed of light squared. I don't know how much mass the universe contains, but you would have to multiply that figure by 90 trillion (the speed of light squared in meters/sec) to get the amount of Energy required to produce it. It is easy to see that it would necessarily have been quite a sizable burst of Energy!

If a thousand suns appeared
simultaneously in the sky, their light
might dimly resemble the [radiant]
splendor of that Omnific Being! ⁶

Such an immense burst of electromagnetic energy would have undoubtedly followed the same progressive development, whether we assume the Biblical thesis or the scientific thesis of the physicists who advocate a 'natural' origin of the universe: In the first moments, the Energy-Matter and Matter-Energy transformations would have alternated in rapid flux. Expanding at the speed of light, some of that Energy would have been converted to particle-antiparticle pairs, most of which would have been annihilated, and some of the remaining matter in the form of quarks, along with their interacting gluons (what is called a *quark-gluon plasma*),⁷ would have eventually combined to form protons and neutrons; other particles, the free electrons, would have inevitably bonded to the protons, forming the element, hydrogen.

These hydrogen atoms would have collected in the form of a gas; and this gas, reaching a large enough volume, would have been affected by the

gravitational force (that Einstein says is a function of the geometry of spacetime), which, in turn, would have drawn such gas nebulae into a density great enough to initiate nuclear fusion; and thus stars, and whole galaxies of stars would have been born. In the interior furnaces of these stars, heavier elements would have been created; and when the cores of the stars collapsed, they would have exploded into space; and their remnants would have formed into a second generation of stars, like our sun and its satellite planets. And, of course, all of this would have been initiated by the great burst of light known as "the Great Radiance!"

We may suppose, further, that what we call *spacetime* is a correlate of light and its innate proclivity for very rapidly spreading itself in all directions. Where there is extension, there is *space* (i.e., spatial dimensions); where there is a sequence of events, there is *time*. And while time and space are relative to the speed of light, light itself, the primary 'stuff' of the universe, is the sole constant by which time and space are measured. Like Einstein, we can describe and measure it, but we struggle unsuccessfully to know and understand just what it is.

Is such a scenario plausible? Or even possible? Of course, it is. But does the 'supernaturally produced burst of Energy' explanation fit all the available physical and mathematical data associated with the origin of Creation? I don't know. I leave it for those scientifically trained experts familiar with the properties and possibilities of high-energy radiation and the intricacies of nucleo-synthesis to determine.

But we must ask ourselves: 'How could such a thing as an immense and awesomely productive burst of light come to be when prior to it there was nothing? Can a burst of light occur without a physical source?' This same question of origination presents itself, whether it is the pure energy of light we speak of, or a super-dense entity (singularity) about to explode, or a fluctuating quantum vacuum that spontaneously sprouts universes.

There could have been no *natural* cause, for prior to "the Great Radiance," there was no "nature" as yet. There could have been no *material* cause; for there was no "material" anything as yet. There could have been no *place* for such an event to "occur", for there was no space, or spatial dimensions, as yet. There was not even a *when* for it to happen, for there was no

time as yet. Only now we are able to place it at the beginning of time by counting back in earth years to that beginning. In attempting to speak of the origin of time, space, and mass-energy, our very language, our calculations, become meaningless, having no reference or basis. Can something appear without a cause? Why no, of course not. But can something appear without a 'natural'—that is, *material*—cause? Well, it had to have, didn't it?

The 'scientific materialists' hold that all forms of matter, including biological (living) matter, is the product of 'natural' causes, 'natural' processes. But what do they mean by 'natural'? They explain that there is no need to postulate a 'supernatural' agency in the creation and evolution of the universe, for, they say, "It is simply the nature of light-Energy to "decay" into material particles; and it is simply the nature of those particles, such as quarks and electrons, to act under the attraction of the electromagnetic and 'color' charges inherent in those particles." Further, they say, "It is simply 'natural' processes that account for the fact that the aggregates of particles that we call "atoms," collect together to form the molecules that make up the various 'elements' of chemical, material and biological

substances; and these molecules have a 'natural' propensity to mutate into biological tissue and to evolve by 'natural' means into the various life forms that populate the earth." "In short," they say, "the entire universe is a product of 'natural' material processes."

One even hesitates to point out to such people that it is illogical to assert that the 'Great Radiance' from which the entire universe is formed spontaneously and 'naturally' arose from *nothing* and from *nowhere*, as they so intently wish to believe. By seeing such Energy as a 'given' condition, as a 'natural' phenomenon, they are able to regard all its subsequent transformations also as 'natural'. How easily we take it for granted that we live in a universe where a great burst of Light-Energy just suddenly appeared, with no causal agency; and that formless Energy and tangible Matter are interconvertible! And by seeing that condition as 'natural', we fail to see how extra-ordinary and *supernatural* it truly is.

It is by labeling the manifestation of that initial supernatural Energy as 'natural', that the rationalizers of materialism justify their simplistic and utterly false view of all existence. The manifestation of that initial

Energy is indeed 'natural'—for a supernatural Creative Power. The transformation of that initial light-Energy into material particles is indeed 'natural'—for a supernatural Creative Power. The attractive and repulsive forces inherent in the particles causing them to cluster into atoms is indeed 'natural'—for a supernatural Creative Power. The spontaneous congregation and organization of clusters of atoms into molecules is indeed 'natural'—for a supernatural Creative Power. Given the incredible properties of light and of matter, all these developments are indeed 'natural', but mustn't we ask, "Given by what or by whom?"

If we believe the theory of a supernatural Source, the Light-Energy that emanated from God at the moment of Creation around fourteen billion years ago was, and is, a *spiritual* substance. The *material* universe which developed from it is still a *spiritual* substance, though we call it "material" due to its form, mass, and apparent substance. The differentiation between *spiritual* and *material* is imaginary, is nonexistent; matter is Energy, and Energy is God's Creative Power. Nothing exists but God, whether manifest or unmanifest. All matter—all that we experience as the world about us, including ourselves—is born of the

Divine Light. Our bodies are formed of the 'matter' that was produced from that Divine Light, and therefore we consist of a Divine substance.

From that initial 'Great Radiance' comes all that exists as material objects and all activity in the universe today and for all time. Every exploding star, every movement of gaseous nebulae far-off in space, every object and every motion—including the blinking of your eye, has its source and origin in that initial burst of light. According to the First Law of Thermodynamics ('the Law of the conservation of mass-energy'): 'the sum of the mass-energy within a closed system (such as the universe) remains constant'. In other words, the total initial Energy of which all material forms and all manifestations of energy in the universe are constituted, remains always the same total. It means that all that we perceive, including our own bodies, is made of that initial Light, and is nothing else but that original Light.

But there is another existent, isn't there: the consciousness by which we perceive, by which we are aware, by which we think and reflect and conceive and dream, the living consciousness, by which we *know* ourselves to exist.

3. The Breath of Spirit

Following its account of God's Creation of light, the Biblical book of Genesis states that God then continued creating. But little did the author of Genesis know that there was no further creation necessary; for all subsequent manifestations and creatures were contained in and were evolved from that initial light. Nonetheless, Genesis goes on to describe the specific case of the creation of *man* in the following words:

Then the Lord God formed a man (*adam*)
from the dust of the ground (*adamah*)
and breathed into his nostrils the breath
of life. Thus, the man became a living
creature.⁸

The ancient author of Genesis (traditionally thought to be Moses), had no reason to suspect that scientists of a later age would discover compelling evidence that man was not 'created', but evolved from previously existing life-forms; he further assumed

that God's Spirit, or Soul, was imparted to man alone. The author of Genesis had subjective knowledge of his own conscious intelligence, but it seemed to him unlikely that this Divine quality existed in other life forms. Of his own Spirit, he was certain; and it was apparent to him that the original *adam* formed of dust (matter) would have remained nothing more than an inanimate clay figurine without the Divine Spirit animating it and making it sentient and conscious. For man to become what he is — "a living creature", he had to be infused with the enlivening Spirit of God Himself. And so, this Biblical account establishes a very important metaphysical truth, one that is fleshed out by Philo Judaeus, a Platonized Alexandrian Jew of the 1st century C.E., and one of the earliest interpreters of the Bible as allegory:

Moses says that "God made man, having taken clay from the earth, and He breathed into his face the breath of life."
...[He] asserts that the formation of the individual man, perceptible by the external senses, is a composition of earthly substance and divine spirit. For that the body was created by the Creator taking a lump of clay and fashioning the

human form out of it; but that the soul proceeds from no created thing at all, but from the Father and Ruler of all things. For when he uses the expression, 'He breathed into,' etc., he means nothing less than the divine spirit proceeding from that happy and blessed nature, sent to take up its habitation here on earth for the advantage of our race in order that, even if man is mortal according to that portion of him which is visible, he may at all events be immortal according to that portion which is invisible; and for this reason, one may properly say that man is on the boundaries of a better and an immortal nature, partaking of each as far as it is necessary for him; and that he was born at the same time both mortal and the immortal: mortal as to his body, but immortal as to his intellect [soul].⁹

Philo, as well as the author of Genesis, had no reason to doubt that man had been created independently, rather than having evolved from earlier life-forms. The view that Philo shared with the author of Genesis was in fact widespread throughout history until the

discovery in the nineteenth century of the undeniable evidence of evolution. This discovery changed everything. Man, we learned, did not suddenly appear, but gradually evolved. Soul, therefore, could no longer be thought of as something imparted to man alone, but had to be seen, as Plato and Plotinus regarded it, as an all-pervading Intelligence guiding and directing every aspect of existence, sentient and insentient. But, clearly, all of them—the author of *Genesis*, and Philo, as well as Plato and Plotinus—agreed that man consisted of a Divine spiritual aspect as well as a material aspect.

Since the Biblical account of the infusion of God's Spirit (or Soul) into the first man fails to explain the presence of Soul in all subsequent men, this Biblical account must be viewed as an allegory. Also, if the Biblical account of man's creation were to be taken literally, Darwin's discovery of evidence for the evolutionary history of man would have utterly repudiated it. But if the Biblical account is accepted as mere allegory, well then, the Biblical account is able to stand alongside Darwin's. So, in order for this account to jibe with current physical and evolutionary knowledge, we must take this allegory to mean that God created the matter (the dust) by His

own light-energy, and then breathed into it His own Spirit, causing the universe to evolve according to His will, eventually giving birth to living creatures, including man in whom His Spirit resides.

But, of course, this is more than allegorical interpretation; it is revisionist interpretation. We have to ask ourselves 'by what measure do we determine what is allegory and what is merely inaccurate in the light of current knowledge?' But perhaps it doesn't really matter, since acceptance of the account of Creation in Genesis as an ancient allegory presents us with a plausible scenario: God manifested (created) the material universe, and then (by one means or another) infused His living Spirit into it, thus initiating life and consciousness into all Creation, including man.

This profound understanding of the dual nature of man, which Philo pointedly described, did not, however, carry over in an evident manner into the remainder of the Bible, which consists primarily of a rambling account of the early history and folklore of the Jewish people and their struggles. Aside from a brief mention in the Book of *Ecclesiastes*, that, upon death of the body, the soul or spirit (Hebrew,

nephesh) goes upward, i.e., returns to God from whence it came, there is little further mention of the soul in the 'Old Testament' Bible. There is certainly no mention of the capability of the soul, while embodied, to ascend to the conscious realization of its identity with the Creator. There are, however, some interesting metaphysical touches in the books that make up what is called 'the Wisdom literature' of the Bible. But these books are of late origin and seem to have borrowed much from the Greek Platonist tradition already well established.¹⁰

4.

The Scientific View

In the pre-scientific eras, it was widely assumed and believed both in the East and in the West that the duality of body and soul was simply a God-given feature of life. In the seventeenth century, the brilliant Frenchman, René Descartes, proved rationally to nearly everyone's satisfaction that these two 'substances' were indeed two quite different and distinct entities. Indeed, everyone experiences themselves as a mind, and knows that they possess a body. The difference in the characteristics of these two is equally recognized by everyone. When we

subjectively examine mind, and objectively examine matter, we realize at once that they are of two different orders of being. While we may insist that they both derive from the same Source, they are nonetheless entities different in kind: they are in fact two very distinct, albeit interpenetrating, realities: one noumenon, one phenomenon; one essence, one substance; one consciousness, one energy.

But by many today, this dualistic worldview is increasingly considered archaic and moribund. Relying primarily on empirical science, we tend to base our knowledge, our convictions, solely on what is revealed by our sense-experience; that is to say, by what is revealed to us through empirical evidence; and the living Spirit, or Consciousness, which is only experienced subjectively, remains, from the standpoint of the empiricist, an inexplicable mystery at best. From the perspective of materialistic science or scientific materialism, the question of how life and consciousness arose on earth appears to be one of the greatest mysteries. And, clearly, if we attempt to explain the arising of the phenomena of conscious life on earth, relying solely on the physical sciences and our rational faculties, we run into many difficult-to-answer questions.

Both the Western spiritual tradition and contemporary science assert that the original creative act was the initiation of a great burst of Energy, which generated "matter" through the 'spontaneous' process of energy-matter transformation, thus forming the universe of time and space. But in order to account for the development from inorganic matter (minerals, gases, and liquids) to micro-organisms that resulted in bacterial and vegetative life arising on earth, we need to assume some rather remarkable additional transformations. However, there is as yet no scientific evidence to account for how the mere handful of ingredients existing on earth prior to the existence of life might have spontaneously produced *living* organisms.

According to contemporary microbiologists, the first life-forms to emerge fall into three classifications or 'domains': *Bacteria*, which appeared soon after the earth formed around four and a half billion years ago, and are still with us today; *Archae*, which are believed to have appeared in extreme environments such as boiling sulphur Springs and the warm surface waters of the oceans around a billion years after the earth formed; and *Eukaryotes*, which evolved a couple

billion years later, and are the source of all plants, animals, and fungi.

Our present evolutionary theory, including our understanding of natural selection and the apparently spontaneous mutation of genes, begins with the transformations that occurred from these simple microbiological forms, specifically the *Eukaryotes*, to more complex animal forms, and subsequently to humans. But the *prior* elementary transformations, from the inorganic minerals, fluids, and gases present on a prebiotic earth to these early microbial life forms, and subsequently to vegetation and more complex life forms, are wholly unexplained. The lack of evidence for a causal progression of those 'elementary transformations' represents a gap or 'missing link' in the evolutionary story that materialistic science is currently unable to bridge. Despite a couple of centuries of active scientific research, the transformation from inorganic to organic matter has not been observed to occur, and no scientist has been able to account for its having occurred.

Nevertheless, in the latter part of the twentieth century, the accumulation of knowledge regarding

the biological mechanism of heredity, and its working, has been nothing short of awe-inspiring. We have learned how the cells of living tissue encode instructions, store information, and manufacture the necessary nutrients to form the new cells that maintain all bodily functions. The complexity and productivity of the manufacturing process going on every second within each of the seventy-five trillion cells of our bodies, producing four to five million new cells every second, as other cells die and are replaced, dwarfs any concepts of complexity and productivity that we may have previously had. Truly, what a marvel of God's Energy, Consciousness and Joy we are! If only we had eyes to see!

Biological scientists celebrate having found "the secret of life" in the information storage and processing factories discovered to reside in the nucleus of every living cell: the tiny strand of genetic material called *deoxyribonucleic acid*—DNA for short. For they have discovered that the information that instructs every one of the amazingly complex processes of life is encoded in the DNA molecules located in the nuclei of the cells that make up our bodies. It is the encoded information in this double-helix strand of nucleic material that directs,

empowers, and produces the dazzling complexity that is our living body. But the *source* of that intracellular information, the *designer*, the *organizer*, the *programmer* of that information, is hidden from them, and from us.

Clearly, there is some intelligent force bringing about so marvelous a machine as the human body. No one could conceivably imagine that the encoded information in a strand of DNA just randomly arranges itself in such a way without an indwelling intelligence. And if it is conceded that there is some manner of intelligence at work here, what is its source? Science has no answer to this question. But mustn't it be an invisible yet pervasive intelligence similar to what has been described as "Soul"?

I think it is entirely possible that we may never fully understand the details of the transformations which gave rise to life on earth, but of this much we may be certain: Matter alone is insentient; life and consciousness did not simply *emerge* as an epiphenomenon in the process of material evolution without a supernatural influence. According to the Judaic scriptures, it was the one eternal Consciousness, He whom we call God, who infused

His own Life as Soul into all that is created. It is that God-essence, that Soul, that is the Life in all life-forms. He is the substratum of all that lives and breathes, of all that is sentient and aware, and of all that appears in our world. He is the only Awareness, filling the entire universe, enlivening, animating, and constituting the consciousness of all beings. Life—in fact, all existence, including the material entropy we call death—is contained in and supported by His Life.

Science denies this spiritual account in principle but is able to offer no viable alternative to this Divine biogenesis. The representatives of science have failed to discover the means by which the essence of life and Consciousness can be reduced to an epiphenomenon arising solely from the increasing complexity of material structure occurring over the passage of time. The only logical Source of this universe and the Source of the presence of life and consciousness in living forms is the one transcendent and eternal Spirit who is the Source of all. According to this theory, life arose on earth by God's Creative Power, enlivening matter through His extension as Soul in order to manifest His own Life in among the stars. According to this theory, Spirit, or Soul, is not only the origin, but the substratum and substance of all individual

forms; it is the Spirit that enlivens them as individualized conscious souls.

In our present, scientific era, however, that spiritual view is not universally accepted. It is clear to our modern understanding that, from an empirical point of view, this universe is comprised of an Energy-field that was initiated 14 billion years ago. The body-brain complex that I call 'mine' is an evolute of that Energy-field and consists entirely of matter generated by that Energy-field. Also, there is no doubt that there is a subtler reality that we know as mind, or consciousness, and that we refer to as 'I'.¹¹ In fact, this 'I' is the most undeniably evident of realities. And yet, today, the overwhelming trend is toward a Material Nondualism, a materialistic worldview in which Spirit (or soul) has no place, and Matter (or body) is all that is said to exist. This is, in fact, the nearly unanimously avowed position of the contemporary scientific community, which has, in effect, drawn the entire civilized world toward a purely materialistic worldview; and handily solved 'the mind-body problem' by declaring that there is no problem, because there is no such entity as the soul or mind, but only material bodies, which includes brains and their activity.

Materialists are spoken of in some types of literature as 'physicalists,' *physicalism* being the preferred scientific term for the position that everything is in fact physical, that *consciousness*, for example, is simply an attribute of a particular physical state of the animal or human brain, and not the attribute of an indwelling *Soul* or *Spirit*. One representative of this group of skeptics, a professor of philosophy at UC Berkeley, here epitomizes the doubt of the scientific community regarding the existence of such a thing as "soul":

It is a logical possibility, though I think it extremely unlikely, that when our bodies are destroyed, our souls will go marching on. I have not tried to show that this is an impossibility (indeed, I wish it were true), but rather that it is inconsistent with just about everything else we know about how the universe works and therefore it is irrational to believe in it.¹²

But perhaps what we assume to *know* about how the universe works is not correct. For our distinguished professor, as for so many others, consciousness does

not require the necessity of a Divine Soul: "Consciousness", he says, "is just a brain process. It is a qualitative, subjective, first-person process going on in the nervous system."¹³ And he takes the somewhat unusual position that Descartes was wrong to define *mind* (soul) and *body*, or *consciousness* and *matter*, as two separate experiential realms; that in fact the phenomenon of *consciousness*, along with its subjective nature, is just one of the ways matter—biological matter—appears and behaves, and therefore, despite its unique attributes, consciousness falls under the heading of *matter*—a biologically enhanced aspect of matter (which remains unexplained), but matter nonetheless. "At the most fundamental level," he says:

Points of mass/energy are constituted by the forces that are described by the laws of nature. From those laws the existence of consciousness follows as a logical consequence, just as does the existence of any other biological phenomena, such as growth, digestion, or reproduction.¹⁴

From the viewpoint of our representative materialist-physicalist philosophy professor, life is somehow

inherent in matter, and “consciousness is *caused* by microlevel processes in the brain,”¹⁵ though all that has ever been actually shown by neurological evidence is that consciousness *corresponds to*, or is *accompanied by*, microlevel processes in the brain. Here is one neurobiologist addressing this issue:

Consciousness indubitably exists, and it is connected to the brain in some intelligible way, but the nature of this connection necessarily eludes us.¹⁶

Another says:

I doubt we will ever be able to show that *consciousness is a logically necessary accompaniment to any material process*, however complex. The most that we can ever hope to show is that, empirically, processes of a certain kind and complexity appear to have it.¹⁷

Over the years leading up to the present (2010 C.E.), little progress has been made in the attempt to formulate a satisfactory theory of the material origin of consciousness. In the beginning of a recent book of

memoirs (2006) by Nobel prize-winning Neurobiologist, Erich Kandel, a hopeful and promising picture of future progress is offered:

The new biology of mind ...posits that consciousness is a biological process that will eventually be explained in terms of molecular signaling pathways used by interacting populations of nerve cells.... The new science of mind attempts to penetrate the mystery of consciousness, including the ultimate mystery: how each person's brain creates the consciousness of a unique self and the sense of free will.¹⁸

But then, in the latter part of the book, he admits that:

Understanding Consciousness is by far the most challenging task confronting science. ...Some scientists and philosophers of mind continue to find consciousness so inscrutable that they fear it can never be explained in physical terms.¹⁹

...What we do not understand is the *hard problem* of consciousness—the mystery of how neural activity gives rise to subjective experience.²⁰ ...Biological science can readily explain how the properties of a particular type of matter arise from the objective properties of the molecules of which it is made. What science lacks are rules for explaining how *subjective* properties (consciousness) arise from the properties of objects (interconnected nerve cells).²¹

It is clear to me that the disappointed expectations of materialistic science in solving the mystery of consciousness have their roots in the basic assumptions of materialists regarding the origin of the universe and the origin of life on earth. Their position on consciousness is logically dependent upon the theory that life (biological phenomena) occurs spontaneously and is intrinsic to matter, without the necessity of any extraneous operative; and that theory is in turn dependent upon the assumption that the universe itself originated spontaneously from a natural (material) source

without the involvement of any supernatural cause. The materialist-physicalist theory of consciousness is founded on those precedent assumptions; and without those assumptions, the physicalist theory of consciousness crumbles. It is a theory based on a theory based on a theory, each one dependent, not upon the accumulation of evidence, but upon the *lack* of empirical evidence to the contrary.

Neither is there a foundation of *empirical* evidence for the 'archaic' theory of the *Soul*, since it is a thing unseen. It has been suggested by some of its advocates that the individual human brain is constructed, through the process of evolution, to act as a receiver and processor of Soul-consciousness in a manner similar to a radio that receives and processes radio signals. The radio receiver is not the source of the broadcast signal, but its range and quality determine the range and quality of the signal produced. Is it not possible that our brains act in a similar manner in relation to Soul-consciousness?

One might also compare the human brain to the power and hardware drive of a computer, and the Soul to the software used to program that computer. But, despite such analogies, we clearly do not yet

have a precise comprehension of how the consciousness of Soul and individual physical brains might interact.

How, then, are we to explain this intermingling of Soul and Matter in a manner consistent with our current understanding of the nature of Matter? We can't, of course. For Soul is not a substance; it cannot be described in a way similar to material particles or to photons or wave frequencies. It leaves no physical imprint; it requires no medium; I suspect it has no spatial or temporal signature at all. It is utterly undemonstrable to the senses. It is a Divine and eternal Consciousness which, despite its nonmaterial nature, permeates and interacts with the world of phenomenal reality; and which, though undetectable by the senses, is clearly perceived subjectively as human awareness.

Today, neuroscientists know a great deal about how brains function, develop, and grow in capacity. The brain of a newly born infant processes perceptions and various stimulations, then language; and, as it assimilates experience, the neuronal capacity of the brain increases, and with that growth the ability to handle more complex and more creative thought-

processes increases as well. Beginning at birth with a simple conscious awareness, the human brain expands autonomously in accordance with an unrecognized yet deliberate will toward the full expression of a unique selfhood and a unique purpose. What is that elemental conscious awareness with which every brain is born? Where do the proclivities that guide that inner will come from? That consciousness is an extension of the radiance of the universal Consciousness; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that those proclivities are deeply etched into the evolving individual soul and find expression only through the evolution and full flowering of the human brain.

However, in the absence of concrete empirical evidence to the contrary, neurological science continues to pin its hopes on one day discovering the material mechanism by which organic life-forms arose from inorganic matter, and by which the human brain manufactures consciousness and self-awareness.

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PART TWO
THE PLATONIST PERSPECTIVE

1.
Plato And Plotinus

Having looked at the view of Creation contained in the Biblical tradition of the Jews, and having compared that view to that of contemporary science, let us now consider another widely influential tradition slightly less ancient than that of the Bible: the philosophical tradition of Platonism:

The twentieth century philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, said that “all philosophy is but so many footnotes to Plato”—and it’s certainly true that Plato furnished many of the core ideas upon which all subsequent Western philosophy draws. Plato’s main teacher and predecessor, Socrates (469-399 B.C.E.), himself drawing on the Orphic and Pythagorean teachings, had apparently been disinclined to set his thoughts in writing; rather, it was his student, Plato (427-347 B.C.E.), who, by putting his master’s teachings into the form of written conversations, or

dialogues, gave voice to the philosophy of the Soul that has come to be known as Platonism.

Plato established the notion of the immortality of the soul, and its distinction from the body, in his Dialogue, *Phaedo*, where Socrates, while awaiting execution, assures his companions that his impending departure, as a soul, from the body was not a matter for sadness or regret:

Socrates: In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible intercourse or communion with the body, and are not surfeited with the bodily nature, but keep ourselves pure until the hour when God himself is pleased to release us. And thus having got rid of the foolishness of the body we shall be pure and hold converse with the pure, and know of ourselves the clear light everywhere, which is no other than "the light of truth."

...But, O my friend, if this be true, there is great reason to hope that, going whither I

go, when I have come to the end of my journey, I shall attain that which has been the pursuit of my life. And therefore, I go on my way rejoicing, and not I only, but every other man who believes that his mind has been made ready and that he is in a manner purified.

Certainly, replied Simmias.

And what is purification but the separation of the soul from the body, as I was saying before; the habit of the soul gathering and collecting herself into herself from all sides out of the body; the dwelling in her own place alone, as in another life, so also in this, as far as she can; —the release of the soul from the chains of the body?

Very true, he said.

...And the true philosophers, and they only, are ever seeking to release the soul. Is not the separation and release of the soul from the body their especial study?

That is true.

And, as I was saying at first, there would be a ridiculous contradiction in men studying to live as nearly as they can in a state of death, and yet repining when it comes upon them.¹

While here and there throughout the meandering Dialogues of Plato we may find sparkling jewels of mystical insight, we find nothing like a systematic metaphysics, or even a clear outline of a consistent metaphysical vision. But, more than five hundred and fifty years after the death of Plato, Plotinus (205-270 C.E.), born in Lycopolis, Egypt, and transplanted to Rome, would formulate a more comprehensive metaphysics, a spiritual perspective, based, not only upon the teachings of Socrates cum Plato, but upon his own visionary experience as well. It is this perspective which would ultimately be labeled by scholars as *Neoplatonism* ("the new Platonism").

Both Jesus and Plotinus had experienced the union of the soul with God. Jesus attempted to explain this experience in the language and context of his Judaic

heritage; Plotinus attempted to explain it in the language and context of Platonist philosophy. Plotinus had experienced 'the vision of God', and, in his attempt to explain it, he formulated a metaphysics relying heavily upon the terminology of Plato that was still current at the time. However, it is not a metaphysics based *solely* on a prior metaphysics or on rational speculation, like some others, but one that is based on his own unitary vision in the contemplative state, which vision he is said by his contemporary, Porphyry, to have experienced on at least four occasions.

Following Plato's lead, Plotinus describes the one Spirit as emanating or radiating itself outward to inhabit the subtle and manifest universe. He describes the successive realms of Spirit as three: The One, The Divine Mind (*Nous*), and Soul, in a manner analogous to the successive stages of radiation expanding from the Sun. Here are his own words:

There exists a Principle which transcends Being; this is The One, ...Upon The One follows immediately the Principle which is at once Being and the Divine Mind. Third comes the Principle, Soul. ... Thus,

our soul, too, is a divine thing, belonging to another order than sense; . . .²

There is, we may say, something that is the Center; about It, a circle of light shed from It; then, around Center and first circle alike, another circle, light from light ...³

It must be noted that, in this representation by Plotinus, these three “principles” are not to be thought of as separate, independent entities; it is a *causal* progression only. It is the One whose Creative Power is called ‘the Divine Mind’; and it is the Creative Power of the One whose radiance spreads as Soul. Despite the names given to these “layers”, there is never anything but the One, and only the One, filling all.

‘The One’ represents for Plotinus the transcendent Absolute, the unmanifest Ground. It is prior to the creative activity of the Divine Mind; and so, in the One, the universe of time and space does not even exist. The One is the absolute Void, the indescribable Godhead. It is the ultimate Identity of all. In the Vedic tradition, It is called “Brahman”, in the Taoist

tradition, the "Tao," and in the Christian writings of Meister Eckhart, "*Gottheit*". The active principle, the Creative Power of the One, Plotinus calls 'The Divine Mind' (*Nous*). And 'Soul' (*psyche*) is the radiation of the Divine Mind into the intelligible as well as the phenomenal universe.

Plotinus pointed out in his *Enneads* that the Absolute, who is the ultimate Source and foundation of all, cannot be described or even named accurately, since He/It is prior to all qualities, prior even to the designation of 'Being'. Nonetheless, he names It "the One", or he uses Plato's previous designation, "the Good." But he is always quick to stipulate that any descriptive name limits and qualifies the Absolute, and thereby misrepresents It:

The All-Transcendent, utterly void of multiplicity, is Unity's Self, independent of all else... It is the great Beginning, wholly and truly One. All life belongs to It. ⁴ ...The One is, in truth, beyond all statement; whatever you say would limit It; the All Transcendent has no name. ⁵

... [It] is That which is the truly Existent.
... It is the Source from which all that
appears to exist derives that appearance.⁶
... Everywhere one and whole, It is at rest
throughout. But ... in Its very non-action
It magnificently operates and in Its very
self-being It produces everything by Its
Power.⁷

... This Absolute is none of the things of
which It is the Source; Its nature is that
nothing can be affirmed of It—not
existence, not essence, not life—It
transcends all these. But possess yourself
of It by the very elimination of
[individual] being, and you hold a marvel!
Thrusting forward to This, attaining, and
resting in Its content, seek to grasp It
more and more, understanding It by that
intuitive thrust alone, but knowing Its
greatness by the beings that follow upon
It and exist by Its power.⁸

Today, we use the word "Godhead", after Meister Eckhart's *Gottheit*, to represent the ineffable One,

with the understanding that this too is merely a shorthand pointer to That which can never be conceived or expressed by the human mind. The Godhead may be directly *experienced*, but never adequately captured in thought or language. For this reason, a clear and rational comprehension or description of the One is denied to us. An ancient saying, quoted by both Plato and Saint Paul, reminds us that "We see now but vaguely, as through a darkened glass; but then (meaning: when we have direct *vision* of God) we shall see as though face to face."

While the One cannot be described or clearly comprehended by the intellect, nonetheless, we can get a sense of It by analogy with our own nature, since we are made in Its image. Like the eternal Consciousness, our own individual consciousness is singular and unchanging, while the energetic outpouring of thought is multiple and subject to flux. Our thoughts are contained as potentiality in our own consciousness which is the substratum and source of those thoughts, and yet these thoughts, even when given expression, do not in any way affect that consciousness, any more than clouds passing through the sky alters or affects the sky. This, I

believe, is analogous to the unity of the One and Its Creative Power; for while the One remains transcendent, unaltered, and unaffected, Its energetic outpouring of creativity continues apace.

And so, we are able to recognize these two aspects of our own minds as in some way comparable to the two aspects of God: The One (the pure Absolute), and His Creative Power. They are not two separate entities, of course, any more than those two aspects of our own minds are separated. They are one, yet they have a semblance of duality, since one is causally primary to the other, just as, while the Sun and the light it radiates are one, the Sun is primary to its radiance.

The Divine Mind is the first Act of The One and the first Existence; The One remains stationary within Itself, but the Divine Mind acts in relation to It and, as it were, lives about It. And the Soul, outside, circles around the Divine Mind, and by gazing upon it, seeing into the depths of it, through it sees God.⁹

According to Plotinus, we may think of Soul as a spreading Field radiating from the Divine Mind. It is

the outspreading light of Divine Intelligence, the invisible radiation of the Divine Consciousness, that manifests as the intelligible (spiritual) world. Soul is one undivided radiance, and though it contains individualized souls, they are as yet unmanifest, undifferentiated. We must remember that, for Plotinus, Soul does not consist of an ethereal substance; it is a projection of the conscious intelligence of the Divine Mind.

Unlike the conception of Moses, in which God's Spirit, or Soul, had been imparted to man alone, Plotinus regarded Soul as a radiation of God's Spirit imparted to the entire universe, permeating and residing in every existent form. Here is Plotinus' vision of this Divine Soul emanation in his own words:

Let every soul recall, then, at the outset the truth that Soul is the author of all living things, that it has breathed the life into them all, whatever is nourished by earth and sea, all the creatures of the air, the divine stars in the sky; it is the maker of the sun; itself formed and ordered this vast heaven and conducts all that

rhythmic motion; and it is a principle distinct from all these to which it gives law and movement and life, and it must of necessity be more honorable than they, for they gather or dissolve as Soul brings them life or abandons them, but Soul, since it never can abandon itself, is of eternal being.

How life was purveyed to the universe of things and to the separate beings in it may be thus conceived:

[To conceive of the entrance of Soul into the material world,] ...Let not merely the enveloping body be at peace, [and] body's turmoils stilled, but all that lies around, earth at peace, and sea at peace, and air and the very heavens. Into that heaven, all at rest, let the great Soul be conceived to roll inward at every point, penetrating, permeating, from all sides pouring in its light. As the rays of the sun throwing their brilliance upon a lowering cloud make it gleam all gold, so the Soul entering the material expanse of the

heavens has given life, has given immortality. What was abject it has lifted up; and the heavenly system, moved now in endless motion by the Soul that leads it in wisdom, has become a living and a blessed thing. The Soul domiciled within, it takes worth where, before the Soul, it was stark body—clay and water—or, rather, the blankness of Matter, the absence of Being...

The Soul's nature and power will be brought out more clearly, more brilliantly, if we consider how it envelops the heavenly system and guides all to its purposes: for it has bestowed itself upon all that huge expanse so that every interval, small and great alike, all has been ensouled.

...By the power of the Soul the manifold and diverse heavenly system is a unit; through Soul this universe is a god. And the sun is a god because it is ensouled; so too the stars; and whatsoever we

ourselves may be, it is all in virtue of Soul...

This, by which the gods are Divine, must be the oldest God of them all: and our own soul is of that same Ideal nature, so that to consider it, purified, freed from all accretion, is to recognize in ourselves that same value which we have found Soul to be, honorable above all that is bodily. ¹⁰

For us, the most obvious manifestation of God's Spirit, or Soul, is our very life and consciousness; but if Plotinus is correct—that Soul is the guiding Intelligence in all of creation—then Spirit, or Soul, must be regarded as a presence informing the very evolution of matter and the cosmos from the Beginning. For Plotinus, Soul is the intelligent organizing principle that impresses its order upon all the matter in the universe. In the language of contemporary knowledge, we would say that Soul is the all-pervading Intelligence that coalesces wave-particles into structures such as atoms, molecules, cells; and organizes them into microbiological structures such as amoeba and bacteria, into

photosynthesizing vegetation and aquatic creatures, becoming the very life-pulse of all that lives and moves. Matter alone has no abilities such as these; it is Soul that permeates the expanding heavens and earth, bringing living organization into matter and enabling replication and evolutionary change. Soul is the guiding intelligence, the evolutionary force, and the breath of Life permeating all the universe.

The organizing influence of Soul in the structuring of the material universe, on either the microcosmic or macrocosmic level, is not empirically evident; but cumulatively, the various "fine-tuned" developments in the ordering of the simplest atoms to the grandest galaxies leads us to discern a purposeful Intelligence at work that has been recognized even by hardened empiricists, who have dubbed it "the anthropic principle". The name of this principle derives from the increasing recognition on the part of scientific observers that nature appears from the beginning, at every step, and in countless ways, to be teleologically structured with an innate intention toward the emergence of human life-forms. May we not accept this principle as evidence of the presence of an invisible guiding Intelligence such as that Plotinus labelled "Soul"?

We may also wonder if Soul, the all-pervading Intelligence of God, is, indeed, the “unified force” responsible for the manifestation of the weak, strong, electromagnetic, and gravitational forces, binding the elements of this universe together. Could it also explain the phenomenon of quantum interconnectedness known as ‘quantum entanglement’, which requires a medium of transmission allowing for the instantaneous relaying of information? Mightn’t this currently unexplained phenomenon also be attributable to an all-pervading Consciousness extending throughout the universe, such as that Plotinus refers to as ‘Soul’?

An all-pervading Consciousness permeating all the universe may be difficult to recognize in what we regard as *inert* matter, but what of living forms? A mother’s ovum becomes impregnated by the father’s sperm, and a single cell is formed in her uterus. The cell divides and then divides again and again. Some of the cells become eyes; others become fingers; others become brain cells, others blood or ears. Who tells each cell what it is to become? How does it know where to go, and what form it is to take? Biologists haven’t a clue. Perhaps it is an invisible

Intelligence that operates within each cell of the nascent embryo to direct and guide its formation—something akin to what we've described as an all-pervasive Soul.

And if that conscious Soul lives throughout the universe, in the billions of galaxies, and in the countless stars and planets, then our own soul is connected to and influenced by that universal Soul. No doubt, it will one day be universally understood that the archetypal energies and angular relationships of the proximate heavenly bodies of our solar system do indeed correspond meaningfully to the physical and psychical activities of humanity on earth through the medium of an all-pervasive Soul. Such correspondences do not operate by any law of physics, but by a universal sympathy too subtle for physical measurement. There have always been a few who have been aware of and understood these meaningful correspondences, but the universal comprehension of their full significance we must leave to future generations.

What is currently apparent to most of us, however, is that Soul is the life-force that transforms inert matter into living, breathing entities; and that Soul is the

conscious Intelligence that stirs the minds of men, acting as an evolutionary force to lead them to the knowledge of their true source and being, their own all-pervading Divine Self.

This pervasion of the material universe by Soul is at the foundation of Plotinus' metaphysical vision. In his vision, Soul, an extension of the Divine Mind, has no physical parameters; It does not consist of mass or energy; It is not a substance that extends as a radiation into space. It is entirely beyond comparison with physical spatio-temporal phenomena. And yet, because our language is grounded in phenomenal temporality, and we have only these language tools in use when attempting to convey the concept of a noumenal Soul, we are often at a loss to even formulate a clear conception of Soul.

One might reasonably ask, "Is it even necessary for God to extend throughout space as Soul in order to manifest in bodies? Isn't He already all-pervasive, and inherent in everything that exists?" And the answer is "Yes, He is all-pervasive throughout the universe—and it is just this all-pervasiveness of God that we call 'Soul'".

Unfortunately, however, "Soul" is a word that carries with it some negative overtones for many of us. It reminds many of us of the misty imaginings conjured up by the religious instructions of our childhood. It is a word that has dwindled from our modern vocabulary due to such associations, and due also to its seeming vagueness. But let us understand "Soul", as Plotinus did, as a term intended to represent the ineffable Intelligence that wafts from the Divine Mind, pervading everything, invisibly present in every place, enlivening every life-form, imbuing us with vitality, consciousness and intelligence; and constituting the medium by which we are connected to God. Soul is invisible and immaterial; it cannot even be conceived of or imagined, and yet it is impossible to deny that such a Divine principle exists, and operates, and rules over all. And so, if we must represent this Divine universal presence with a word, let us agree to call it "Soul."

Soul pervades, and it is the universe of time, space and form that is pervaded; and that too is His production. But, unlike Soul, which is the eternal radiance of God's very Consciousness and Being, the material universe is made of a transient form-producing burst of Divine Energy.

So, we must see that it is not the material form that constitutes our true and eternal identity, but it is, rather, our soul that is our true being, our eternal source of life and joy, being the niche we currently inhabit on the spectrum of Consciousness, which we may, with His grace, ascend to the highest Divinity. Our material form is merely a transient appearance that serves as our terrestrial vehicle.

Is this vision of Plotinus a duality then? No; for since both the matter-bearing Energy and the indwelling Spirit have their source in the One, there is nothing else but that One. It's true, He causes the appearance of two; and so, we could call It 'a duality-in-unity'. The duality, however, is only apparent.

2. Matter

Plotinus had experienced, through contemplation, his identity with the Divine, and his insights into the nature of God and the soul are deeply authentic and valuable; but his speculations on the origin and constituency of Matter were greatly hampered by the

insufficiency of the accumulated knowledge of the nature of the physical universe during his time. Plotinus lived in the third century, at a time when little was known of the constituent elements of Matter.

Matter had been broken down by Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) into the so-called 'elements' of earth, fire, wind, water, and aether; and, despite the earlier atomic theory of Democritus (460-390 B.C.E.), Aristotle's 'elements' (which are in fact compounds) comprised the extent of the accepted physical analysis of Matter during Plotinus' lifetime. Also, his knowledge of our cosmic environment was extremely limited; in fact, it was widely believed at that time that the universe consisted of a series of concentric spheres, with earth at the center, surrounded by the sub-lunar sphere, and that surrounded by a revolving stellar sphere, on the inner surface of which the planets and stars were fixed. This cosmic view had been established by Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.), and later modified somewhat by Ptolemy of Alexandria (90-168 C.E.).

While there had been a heliocentric cosmology suggested by Aristarchus of Samos (320-250 B.C.E.),

the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic geocentric universe was the one academically and popularly accepted during Plotinus' lifetime. Plotinus seems to have accepted this cosmology as well; and so, he had only an inadequate and unrealistic base of knowledge from which to make an assessment of the nature of the physical universe. We must not hesitate therefore to doubt his conclusions regarding the origin of the material universe, and to revise his assumptions in this area to accord with present-day physical and cosmological knowledge.

Taking the emanation metaphor to its extreme, Plotinus imagined that, like the radiation of light, Soul, reaching the outermost extent of its radiation, lapses into the darkness of non-being, which he equates with Matter. Ignorant of the nature of matter, Plotinus engaged in a long series of erroneous reasonings, coming finally to the conclusion that Matter is beyond the fringe of "Being"; it is "indeterminateness", "a non-existent"; he even calls it "evil",¹¹ though in some other contexts he appears less condemnatory. His intention, of course, was simply to assert that matter has an inferior status in relation to the Soul which is of God's very Being. Material forms are ephemeral, like smoke; whereas Soul is of

the eternal Essence. In his view, the material universe must have been brought into being by wayward souls, in their outward projections far afield of their source, the Divine Mind.

Plotinus formulated a linear progression of generation: from the One to the Divine Mind, to Soul, to the material universe. For, since the Divine Mind was engendered by the One, and Soul was engendered by the Divine Mind, the material universe, thought Plotinus, must have been engendered by Soul. It appeared to him that it had to have been Soul that imaged forth a material universe of forms in which to reside. Here are his words:

In the absence of body, soul could not have gone forth, since there is no other place to which its nature would allow it to descend. Since go forth it must, it will generate a place for itself; at once body also exists.

When the Soul...comes at last to the extreme extent of its light and dwindles to darkness, this darkness, now lying

there beneath, the soul sees and by seeing brings [it] to shape...¹²

But we must see that such a causal scheme is logically untenable. For one thing, it would contradict Plotinus' condition that Soul could not have gone forth without the pre-existence of body, or Matter. Also, his suggestion that Soul is analogous to light, that it dwindles as it recedes, and has the power to create a universe out of darkness, is an incorrect and fanciful one. We now know the origin and constituency of Matter to a degree unknown in Plotinus' time. Today, much knowledge has been gathered regarding the origin and constituency of the material universe, both empirically and in mystical vision; and on both counts the Platonist-Neoplatonist view is rejected as unsatisfactory. And so, we must "revise" the vision of Plotinus somewhat, asserting that it is not Soul, but the Divine Mind Itself that projects, by a Power secondary to Soul, the Light-Energy that becomes a universe of substance: a periodically appearing world of 'matter', in which Soul is disposed to play.

In Plotinus' scheme, Soul is the eternal radiation of the Divine, inhering in an eternal universe. But

today we know that the universe is not eternal; it is originated and extinguished in a periodic cycle. We must see, therefore, that in those periods in which there is no temporal universe to inhabit, Soul must either remain confined solely to the intelligible (spiritual) world or remain unmanifest in the Eternal as mere potential. For it stands to reason that, while the Eternal contained in Itself the capability of radiating Itself eternally, It had nothing for Its all-pervasive Soul-essence to permeate until a universe was 'created'.

Had there been someone to actually see the origin of the universe from a temporal vantagepoint, its cyclic initiation would have been seen to manifest around 14 billion years ago as 'the Big Bang' or 'Great Radiance' by which the phenomenal universe is produced. At that instant, an immense radiation of Energy was released that resulted in the formation of elementary bonding particles of matter, which then formed the stars, galaxies, life forms, and eventually us. That universe of forms is coextensive with and interpenetrated by God's Spiritual essence manifesting as Soul, which guides and moves everything "together of one accord." And, since we partake of both the periodically emanated Energy and

the Consciousness inherent in Soul, we are comprised of, and contain within us, a dual-sidedness: we have both a material and a mental constituency; we are both mortal body (evolved Energy) and immortal mind (Consciousness, or Soul), as Philo Judaeus explained in his commentary on Genesis.

Though these two aspects of our being appear, from the spatio-temporal perspective, to be separate, they are, from the eternal perspective, one. Both Consciousness (Soul) and Energy (Matter) originate in and are united in the Divine Mind, the Creative Power of God. And together, they constitute all being. At the end of the universal cycle, all material forms revert to Divine Energy, which ceases its transformations and merges into the Divine Mind from which it came. Soul also reverts to the Divine Mind. There, they are one. In fact, Soul and the Divine Mind were never two; Soul is merely the Divine Mind *in extentia*. At the end of Its manifestory cycle, the Divine Mind of the One rests, dormant, prior to projecting once again an apparent universe of conscious souls and forms, another seeming duality upon His/Its eternal oneness.

3. Individual Souls

We are all cognizant that each of us is an individual soul that is distinct and unique in its development and experience, and, in the manifest world, has an apparent "identity" of its own, regardless of its unitive identity with other souls in the one Oversoul. This simultaneous unity and multiplicity was readily acknowledged by Plotinus; but neither he nor any other has been able to satisfactorily explain the manner in which the one Soul becomes a multitude of individualized souls; how Soul, though one and indivisible, is also, at the same time, divisible and manifold, becoming separate, individually responsible, souls. Nevertheless, Plotinus does offer an explanation:

There is one identical Soul, every separate manifestation being that Soul complete.¹³
The differentiated souls ...issue from the unity while still constituting, within certain limits, an association. ...They strike out here and there but are held together at the source much as light is a

divided thing upon earth, shining in this house and that, while yet remaining uninterruptedly one identical substance.¹⁴

... Diversity within the ONE depends not upon spatial separation, but solely upon differentiation; all Being, despite this plurality, is a Unity still.¹⁵ ... The souls are apart without partition; they are no more hedged off by boundaries than are the multiple items of knowledge in one mind. The one Soul so exists as to include all souls.¹⁶

The entity described as “both the undivided soul and the soul divided among bodies,” is a Soul which is at once above and below, attached to the Supreme and yet reaching down to this sphere, like a radius from a center. Thus, it is that, entering this [earthly] realm, it possesses still the vision inherent in that superior [indivisible] phase by virtue of which it maintains its integral nature unchanged. Even here [on earth] it is not

exclusively the partible soul: it is still the impartible as well...¹⁷

The nature, at once divisible and indivisible, which we affirm to be soul has not the unity of an extended thing. It does not consist of separate sections; its divisibility lies in its being present at every point of the recipient, but it is indivisible as dwelling entire in the total, and entire in any part. To have penetrated this idea is to know the greatness of the soul and its power, the divinity and wonder of its being, as a nature transcending the realm of "things."

Itself devoid of mass, it is present to all mass. It exists here and yet is [still] There, and this not in distinct phases but with unsundered identity. Thus, it is "parted and not parted," or, better, it has never known partition, never become a parted thing, but remains a self-gathered integral, and is "parted among bodies" merely in the sense that bodies, in virtue of their own sundered existence, cannot

receive it unless in some partitive mode.
The partition, in other words, is an
occurrence in body and not in soul.¹⁸

That such individualized souls exist is clearly evident to us who know ourselves as separate, individualized, self-governing, units of self-awareness. We may understand that Soul is nothing less than an extension of the Divine consciousness; and yet, we must also acknowledge that each soul's perspective is unique due to the differing characteristics and histories of individuals. Differences in perspective seem to arise and persist through the accumulation of individual experience, inference, and willful intent. And so there appears a multitude of souls, united in the Divine Consciousness, but separate in manifestation. Later, we will examine the alternative theory of the Buddha, which suggests that there are no individual souls, but only aggregates of tendencies.

In Plotinus' scheme, however, because body-bound souls are uniquely distinct, they are able to formulate desires and set out to fulfill them in the (lower) material world, thereby losing sight of their Divinity. And so, in place of the one Soul, which is truly their

common Source and Reality, a multitude of separate selves comes into existence, each driven by its own independent desires and circumstances, as well as by its false identification with the material body.

These individualized souls, we must not forget, are manifestations of the Divine. Nonetheless, while inhabiting or being associated with bodies, they pass through various experiences which may serve to forge a strong bond with the material world. However, over time, the indwelling Divinity instructs those 'individualized souls' by those very experiences in the errors of their ways and returns them by various and sundry ways to the awareness of their true nature, guiding them by the most blessed path to the reformation of their loving intent and the restoration of their inherent bliss. This is known as 'the evolution of the soul'.

According to Plotinus, the Divine Mind, in its infinite wisdom, allows more than one 'incarnation' for the soul to traverse this evolutionary path. The soul's excursion into the material realm is fraught with difficulties and dangers and may bring with it many painful and binding impressions. These must be resolved and released in order for the soul to regain

its blissful freedom. And so, the process of soul-evolution may be prolonged and stretched over a number of soul-incarnations. Whatever necessity requires will inevitably find a means for its accomplishment in the evolutionary journey toward truth and freedom.

Jesus put it well when he said, "You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free." According to this understanding, a man is free insofar as he is cognizant of his essential identity with the Highest, and he is bound when he departs from the knowledge and awareness of his Divinity, identifying with the body/brain complex. He then succumbs to the rule of earthly necessity and is moved willy-nilly by the causative forces inherent in Nature. He has the power, as the Divine Self, to will freely, unencumbered, uncompelled by circumstance; and, for that reason is responsible for his individual actions. All souls are linked by inclusion to the one Soul, and by extension to the Divine Mind; but only he who is cognizant, aware, of his Divine Identity, is truly free.

Meanwhile, along the way, in the soul's evolutionary journey, an inescapable justice continually operates.

As Saint Paul warned, “Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”¹⁹ Plotinus, acknowledging this same universal law of justice, then known as *adrasteia* (named for a Greek goddess associated with the dispensation of rewards and punishments), and today known as “the law of actions, or *karma*”, says:

No one can ever escape the suffering entailed by ill deeds done. The divine law is ineluctable, carrying bound up, as one with it, the fore-ordained execution of its doom. The sufferer, all unaware, is swept onward towards his due, hurried always by the restless driving of his errors, until at last, wearied out by that against which he struggled, he falls into his fit place and, by self-chosen movement, is brought to the lot he never chose. And the law decrees, also, the intensity and the duration of the suffering while it carries with it, too, the lifting of chastisement and the faculty of rising from those places of pain—all by power of the harmony that maintains the universal scheme.²⁰

Thus, a man, once a ruler, will be made a slave because he abused his power and because the fall is to his future good. Those who have misused money will be made poor—and to the good poverty is no hindrance. Those who have unjustly killed, are killed in turn, unjustly as regards the murderer but justly as regards the victim, and those who are to suffer are thrown into the path of those who administer the merited treatment.

It is not an accident that makes a man a slave; no one is prisoner by chance. Every bodily outrage has its due cause. The man once did what he now suffers. A man who murders his mother will become a woman and be murdered by a son. A man who wrongs a woman will become a woman, to be wronged.²¹

We human souls are, undoubtedly, of a two-fold nature: we are, essentially identical with the Divine Consciousness, our Divine Self, which assures us of immortality and a free will; we are only secondarily individualized souls, with our accompanying karmic

tendencies, by virtue of our embodiment in time and space. We are a combination, a duality, of identities existing together in the one spectrum of Consciousness: we are the Divine Self, and we are also the projected (superimposed) individual soul. Our essence, the one Divine Consciousness, is the only true 'I' in all the universe and beyond; It is everyone's eternal Identity. But, by God's mysterious Power of illusion, everyone born into this world takes on a limited set of characteristics as well, constituting the limited temporal identity of each, what we refer to as 'the individualized soul'. According to that soul's previous history and its corresponding mental tendencies, the characteristics of each soul are made manifest. As the ancient sage Heraclitus remarked, "character is destiny."

The 'soul' is essentially the Divine, but as it appears within the material universe, it manifests both the Divine and the illusory—just as in a dream, we partake of both our true conscious selves and an illusory self. The analogy is exceedingly apt, as in both instances, we retain our fundamental reality, while operating in an illusory 'imaged' reality. The individual soul is, to a great degree, who we experience ourselves to be in this world; and we

operate in this life from the past karmic tendencies we embody. However, at a more fundamental level, we are identical with the Divine Self, which comprises, not only our freedom to will and act from a level of consciousness beyond our soul properties and characteristics, but It comprises the very consciousness by which we, as souls, exist.

Here is Plotinus again, with some pertinent comments on this subject:

If man were... nothing more than a made thing, acting and acted upon according to a fixed Nature, he could be no more subject to reproach and punishment than the mere animals. But as the scheme holds, man is singled out for condemnation when he does evil; and this with justice. For he is no mere thing made to rigid plan; his nature contains a Principle apart and free.²² ...This, no mean Principle, is... a first-hand Cause, bodiless and therefore supreme over itself, free, beyond the reach of Cosmic Cause.²³

We may indeed identify solely as an individualized soul;

...[But] there is another [higher] life, emancipated, whose quality is progression towards the higher realm, towards the Good and Divine, towards that Principle which no one possesses except by deliberate usage. One may appropriate [this Higher Principle], becoming, each personally, the higher, the beautiful, the Godlike; ...For every human Being is of a twofold character: there is that compromise-total [consisting of soul conjoined to body], and there is the authentic Man [the divine Self].²⁴

But how does Plotinus explain how soul interacts with body? Plotinus, utilizing his flawed third-century knowledge of natural science, attempts to draw an apt analogy:

May we think that the mode of the soul's presence to body is that of the presence of light to the air? This certainly is presence

with distinction: the light penetrates through and through, but nowhere coalesces; the light is the stable thing, the air flows in and out; when the air passes beyond the lit area it is dark; under the light it is lit: we have a true parallel to what we have been saying of body and soul, for the air is in the light quite as much as the light [is] in the air." ²⁵

But, of course, the permeation of Matter by Soul cannot truly be compared to the permeation of air by light: both of these latter are of a physical, or phenomenal, nature; whereas Soul, we may rightly say, is of another 'dimension'. It is not phenomenal, but noumenal.

The great Vedantic sage, Shankaracharya, taught, *jivo brahmaiva naparah*, "The soul is in reality none other than Brahman"; for, in essence, the soul is identical with the transcendent Source of all, and is supremely, absolutely, free. In its transcendent aspect, it is always free, immutable and unaffected by the bodily conditions or worldly circumstances of individuals. However, when the soul identifies with the conditional, it is bound; it is subject to being carried

along in the floodwaters of the archetypal forces of Nature. The habits of past karmic tendencies are very powerful in their influence; and they can lead us where we don't necessarily want to go, unless we are able to identify with our true nature as the Divine Self and turn those inherent tendencies to Divine purposes. Only when we know and identify with our Divine Self, do we realize and manifest our true freedom. This is the view of Vedanta, and the basis for its concept of "liberation"; and this is the view of Plotinus as well.

Soul is the essential radiance of God, the Divine Mind; and individualized souls partake of that same reality, though by their connection to body, they are confined to time and space. These souls, enamored of the material world, become disoriented, bound by their own attachment to matter; but by a deliberate reversal of its intention, an individualized soul is able to look within, examine itself, and 'see' its Origin, its higher Self, thereby regaining awareness of its true, eternal identity. Since both Soul and Matter are the emanated products of the Divine Mind, and both consist of the Divine essence, an individual soul inhabiting a body may look within and come to realize that both its conscious self and its material

casing consist of the one Divine Mind; that truly he is nothing else but that one eternal Reality. And he is capable of directly experiencing that Divine Identity within himself.

4.

The Vision of God

The many metaphysical theories that have surfaced from prolific minds over the centuries shows to us the incredible range of imagination to which man is heir and shows us as well the vastness of man's capacity to err. Yet we must acknowledge that this seemingly limitless capacity to imagine and to err is driven by the need to explain what is unexplained, to find answers for our most obstinately perplexing questions. The present century demands a metaphysical vision that is answerable to the latest empirical, psychological, and spiritual findings; one that takes into consideration all the accumulated scientific knowledge of our time, as well as the accumulated mystical gleanings of centuries past.

The increase in scientific knowledge—that is, in the empirical knowledge of our phenomenal world—has proceeded over the years and centuries, so that much of what was once a matter for speculation and myth

has given way to a vast body of reliable knowledge currently available to everyone. But the accumulation of such knowledge took a great deal of time, effort, and perseverance on the part of those who ferreted it out from its secret recesses. Think, for example, how long men struggled to know the conditions and order of movement of the stars and the planets of our solar system, and how many false theories preceded our eventual understanding. Today, the vision of man reaches to the furthest limits of the universe.

The current radical evolution of our empirical knowledge entails an equally radical evolution in our comprehension of the invisible elements of the universal order which exist beyond our senses. In this endeavor too, the struggle has been long and arduous, and much still remains to be uncovered, but some advances also have been made. Such problems cannot be solved, or even investigated, however, solely from the perspective of reason and observation; they require the gleanings from the personal intuition and visionary experience of the countless mystics who have 'seen' into the subtle realms of universal manifestation.

The only evidence for the existence of the Soul is subjective—the subjective personal experience known not only to Plotinus, but to thousands, perhaps millions, who have been referred to as “mystics” or “yogis,” but whom materialists refer to as deluded and “irrational” individuals, whose “mystical” experiences they regard as aberrational hallucinations caused by some neuronal malfunction in the brain.

But it is the consistent nature of this unitive visionary experience, reportedly occurring to numerous souls over a great expanse of time, that provides insight into the nature of our Source and the manifestation of our universe. Without the accumulation of many common experiences of a supersensual reality, we would have no real clue as to our true nature, but only the endless arguments between faith-based partisans and secular rationalists. Merely our powers of observation and imagination alone are simply not adequate to the task. It is visionary experience, obtained by grace through prayer, contemplation or meditation, that reveals to us the true nature of our own conscious self and the universe in which we live.

Science, or empirical knowledge, looks to comprehend the spatio-temporal universe; whereas mystical vision opens up an entirely new realm of experience grounded in the Eternal. The sense-experience of a world of multiple beings in a universe of temporal activity is wholly replaced in the mystical vision by an undivided, non-relational, and timeless realm of pure Identity with the Divine Mind.

Here, Plotinus describes from his own experience the unitive vision experienced by a soul turned inward to its own Source, already purified, and rapt in yearning for the union with God:

Once pure in the Spirit realm, [gazing intently inward toward the Divine Mind] the soul too possesses that same unchangeableness: for it possesses identity of essence. When it is in that region it must of necessity enter into oneness with the Divine Mind by the sheer fact of its self-orientation, for by that intention all interval disappears; the soul advances and is taken into unison, and in that association, becomes one with the Divine Mind—but not to its own

destruction: the two are one, and [yet] two. In such a state there is no question of stage and change. The soul, motionless, would be intent upon its intellectual act, and in possession, simultaneously, of its self-awareness; for it has become one simultaneous existence with the Supreme.²⁶

Here is no longer a duality but a two-in-one; for, so long as the presence holds, all distinction fades. It is as lover and beloved here [on earth], in a copy of that union, long to blend. The soul has now no further awareness of being in body and will give herself no foreign name, not man, not living being, not Being, not All. Any observation of such things falls away; the soul has neither time nor taste for them. This she sought and This she has found and on This she looks and not upon herself; and who she is that looks she has not leisure to know.

Once There she will barter for This nothing the universe holds; not though

one would make over the heavens entire to her. There is nothing higher than this, nothing of more good. Above This there is no passing; all the rest, however lofty, lies on the downward path. She is of perfect judgment and knows that This was her quest, that nothing is higher.²⁷

The soul wishes to remain forever in that unitive vision,

But it leaves that conjunction; it cannot suffer that unity; it falls in love with its own powers and possessions, and desires to stand apart; it leans outward, so to speak: then, it appears to acquire a memory of itself [as an individualized soul once again].²⁸

It is only God (the Divine Mind) who sees God—but He does so through the souls of men. Soul is able to search within itself and ascend in consciousness all the way to God. If it were not an expression of the Divine, it could not do that. When a soul rises to the vision of God, it is no longer soul, but is merged in and made one with God, so that it is not the soul that

sees, but God Himself who is seeing Himself. Looking within itself, the soul sees its own original Self—an infinite, eternal, and all-pervasive Self. No longer two, soul and God are one Spirit, seeing Itself. Nonetheless, the vision is retained by the soul, even after the soul is no longer united in vision with God.

But how, we must ask, does one attain such vision? And all who have experienced that inner revelation of the Divine Self declare that they have done so only through the Grace of God. One cannot therefore speak of the 'attainment' of that vision; it is given. It cannot be produced according to one's own will. Those who are truthful acknowledge this and give thanks to the One who so generously blessed them; and they shower Him with a constant love, knowing that this love too is His own. Here, Plotinus acknowledges this truth:

When there enters into it a glow from the Divine, the soul gathers strength, spreads true wings, and, however distracted by its proximate environment, speeds its buoyant way to something greater; ... its very nature bears it upwards, lifted by the Giver of that love. ... Surely, we need not

wonder that It possesses the power to draw the soul to Itself, calling it back from every wandering to rest before It. From It came everything; nothing is mightier. ²⁹

... In advancing stages of contemplation, rising from contemplation of Nature, to that in the soul, and thence again to that in the Divine Mind, the object contemplated becomes progressively a more and more intimate possession of the contemplating being, more and more one with them. ... In the divine Mind itself, there is complete identity of knower and known, no distinction existing between being and knowing, contemplation and its object, [but] constituting a living thing, a one Life, two inextricably one. ³⁰

In this state of absorbed contemplation, there is no longer any question of holding an object in view; the vision is such that seeing and seen are one; object and act of

vision have become identical.³¹

... There, our Self-seeing is a communion with the Self restored to purity. No doubt we should not speak of "seeing," but, instead of [speaking of] "seen" and "seer," speak boldly of a simple unity. For in this seeing we neither see, nor distinguish, nor are there, two. The man is changed, no longer himself nor belonging to himself; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into It, one with It; it is only in separation that duality exists. This is why the vision baffles telling; for how could a man bring back tidings of the Supreme as something separate from himself when he has seen It as one with himself?³²

5.

My Own Experience

I, too, am one of those who has been fortunate enough to experience the Divine reality; and so, I will interject here an account of my own experience of the

Divine reality in order to provide another first-person account of just what such an experience reveals:

At the age of twenty-seven, I began experiencing the presence of interior sensations and spiritual understandings which led me to actively seek the knowledge of God. I therefore retired to a small cabin in a secluded forest and gave all of my attention to the pursuit of that goal: God's gracious revelation. One evening, I was having my usual nocturnal conversation with my Divine Father; and after a while I found myself in an elevated and finely-focused state, experiencing an intense longing for God in the very deepest part of my own soul. I felt then that my only purpose in life was to ascend to union with the Divine, in order to be able to knowledgeably praise and glorify God for the benefit of all His children. And I was willing to die in the process, if necessary.³²

As I prayed for that union, my consciousness was suddenly expanded so that I became aware of myself as all-pervasive, beyond time, and indivisible. In my newly altered awareness, 'I' had become aware of my identity with the one cosmic energy and consciousness that constitutes this entire universe and all beings in it. There was no duality of Spirit and

Matter, of soul and body, however. It was clear that 'I' was one undivided Essence that was *both* consciousness *and* the energy comprising form. My 'I' was seen to be the 'I' of every conscious being as well as of every inanimate object within this universe. It is an 'I' beyond time and place that fills all spatio-temporal beings with life and awareness, even though I might mistakenly attribute that 'I' exclusively to this individual body-brain complex.

More than that, as the focus of my concentration continued, I could see at a more elevated, subtler level, the unmanifest Source, the transcendent Absolute, as the very font of all origination. I say that I *saw*, but it was not the seeing by a subject of an object, a second; rather, it was a recognition, from that eternal vantagepoint, of my own transcendent nature, my own true Self. What I saw, I saw through identity with it rather than as a seer separate from the seen.

In this visionary experience I saw no separate soul—neither my own nor any other; but experienced my identity as the universal and all-inclusive Consciousness-Energy that manifests all this universe of forms, including the form I am accustomed to call

"my own". There was clearly nothing else but the one all-pervading Divinity, with no sense of a separate personal soul-identity. I had not become immobile during this experience but was allowed to write by candlelight my impressions as they occurred. But in reflecting on this experience in the ensuing years, many questions remained. My reason and learning told me that souls exist; yet my visionary (spiritual) experience told me otherwise. For, in that unitive mystical experience, I had not 'seen' a soul, or even the suggestion of a soul. I had known only the indivisible unity of all existence.

Now, at last, thanks in part to the reflections of Plotinus, the truth has dawned on me: The soul is not experienced in the unitive vision because the soul is the *experiencer!* It is seeing what is above it—namely its prior: the creative aspect of God, the Divine Mind, which is its unqualified source, its own true Self, at a higher level of consciousness. The soul glimpses also that which is prior to the Divine Mind, namely, the Absolute, the One, *through* the Divine Mind. The individualized soul is that in us which is conscious of limited selfhood; and it is that which is silenced and made transparent, negated in the experience of

identity with its transcendent source, the Divine Mind.

My own experience of this unitary vision was identical in all respects with that of Plotinus, and I agreed with his conclusions; but I had been puzzled regarding *souls*. There was no *soul* in my (mystical) vision! There was no soul in that vision because the "soul", in its vision of its prior, is "taken into unison" with its prior, the Divine Mind, and is made transparent and unaware of itself as something apart. It is the soul that is *seeing*, experiencing its identity with its source, its subtler Self, as a wave's sense of individuality might disappear as it becomes aware that it is the ocean. Likewise, the soul merged in the Divine Mind doesn't see any *other* souls, because in the Divine Mind all Soul is one; it is only when it becomes embodied that Soul becomes individualized.

Whether one experiences a world of duality or a world of nonduality is determined by the 'level' or subtlety of one's consciousness. We live our entire lives in the world of duality, except for those brief timeless moments when we experience union, lifted to that state by the grace of God. So long as the soul is *not* caught up in union with the Divine Mind, the

duality of soul and God, and all other dualities, continues.

The soul is inspired by an attracting love for God; but when the soul is merged in God, there is no longer the duality of lover and Beloved, but only one blissful Self-awareness. When the soul is 'merged' in the Divine Mind, it sees from the vantagepoint of the Eternal, and no longer sees from the spatio-temporal vantagepoint. In that sense, the world disappears. But, in fact, the 'world' continues to exist; it is just that the soul sees it from the inside, as the one Consciousness-Energy. Without the perspective of the ego-self, all duality is annihilated, dissolved in the unitive Identity of the Divine Mind.

Duality—all duality—comes into existence with the descent of one's conscious awareness from the Divine Mind-identity to the individualized soul-identity; in other words, the inexplicable leap downward in consciousness from the Eternal to the temporal. Then, instead of the one all-inclusive Identity, there are two identities: an 'I' and a 'Thou'. From this initial duality, all other dualities are born: the dualities associated with time and space, such as "now" and "then", or "here" and "there" or "near" and

"far", "night" and "day"; the dualities associated with personal identity, such as "life" and "death", "pleasure" and "pain", "joy" and "sorrow", "sound" and "silence", "moving" and "still"; and the dualities associated with possessiveness, such as "mine" and "yours", "love" and "hate". All these are born from the establishment of a soul-identity, an 'I', separate from and other than the one all-inclusive Mind.³⁴ It is only from the Divine transcendent perspective, that the soul recognizes that all dualities arise from its own separateness:

Even now, I speak the word, "Thou", and create
duality;
I love and create hatred;
I am in peace, and am fashioning chaos;
Standing on the peak, I necessitate the
depths.³⁵

Merged in the one Divine Mind, even if only temporarily, all these dualities disappear. Time and space also disappear, and all is Eternity once again:

... now, weeping and laughing are gone;
Night is become day;
Music and silence are heard as one;

My ears are all the universe.

All motion has ceased; everything continues.
Life and death no longer stand apart.
No I, no Thou; no now, or then.
Unless I move, there is no stillness.³⁶

In its vision of and identity with the Divine Mind, the soul, now transparent, now ascended in consciousness, experiences its own eternal Self. The soul 'sees' now that: 'I' am all-pervading, 'I' am the one undivided Consciousness-Energy that constitutes all minds and bodies and all this universe, wherein all things move together of one accord and by a universal assent; and it exclaims:

I am the pulse of the turtle;
I am the clanging bells of joy.
I bring the dust of blindness;
I am the fire of song.
I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil;
In pools of clear water my image is found.³⁷

And this liberating knowledge, upon which is based the soul's conviction of its eternal and indivisible identity, remains with it always.

Once caught in that Light, once illumined by the Eternal, does a soul will its return, its restoration to embodied selfhood in the artificial multiplicity of *samsara*? No, not at all; and yet it re-emerges into that embodied life nonetheless—but with a new perspective: *Samsara* is now *Nirvana*. The mundane is now Divine. The mind and intellect are infused with a new awareness: all is bright with Divinity, within and without.

When I slipped from that pure land, returning involuntarily to an awareness of the spatio-temporal world, it was in no way a 'willing' toward separate existence! The mental effort required to maintain the intense singular concentration in the eternal realm was simply too much after some time, and I felt a failing of that one-pointedness, as I slipped unwillingly away from that vision. If there was a 'willing' toward a breaking of that unitive bond, it was not mine. It was more a failing of strength than a willing to depart. Thereafter, I collapsed, exhausted, and fell into a deep sleep.

We, embodied souls on this earth, are not *able* to remain long in that place of Spirit. Is it karma that

draws us back? Unfinished business? Whatever pulls us back to this world, we are given the opportunity to refashion our lives in the light of what has been revealed to us. There is now a transparency to things in this new life—as though one's body and all the objects were but holographic images with no substantial reality. All is permeated with a Divine sweetness, and our life is seen to be His.

Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish,
Nothing to pride oneself on;
All is accomplished in an instant.
All may now be told without effort.
Where is there a question? ³⁸

What is there left to do in such a life but praise Him? The thirteenth century Indian saint, Jnaneshvar, who knew the Divine truth intimately, acknowledged that, in this state:

Truly, there is neither bondage nor freedom;
There is nothing to be accomplished.
There is only the pleasure of expounding. ³⁹

* * *

PART THREE:
SOME OTHER PERSPECTIVES

1.
Vedanta

The mystical experience of one's eternal and all-pervasive identity undoubtedly occurs to people of both East and West; and, while the question of whether it was the East or the West, India or Greece, that served as the birthplace of a mystically-based metaphysics is an intriguing one, it is a question which will probably never be resolved. It is my belief that the similarities between the metaphysics of Eastern mystics and Western mystics are due to the commonalities of the mystical experience itself rather than any philosophical interchange between East and West; but there was no doubt some opportunity for such interchange to occur in the remote past, and this possibility of contact should be acknowledged.

There are records of commercial trade between India and Mesopotamia from around the 15th century B.C.E., and between India and Greece going back to the 10th century B.C.E. The teachings of the early Upanishads presumably reached Greece around the

6th century B.C.E., during the time when both countries were part of the Persian empire and enjoyed increased commerce with each other. There were no manuscript translations of Sanskrit works at that time that we know of;¹ and so any religious or philosophical ideas would have to have been shared verbally between traveling religious scholars, probably with the mediation of an interpreter. That necessity would certainly lessen the possibility of a detailed transmission of metaphysical ideas; nonetheless, the possibility exists of an Indian influence upon the earliest Greek philosophers such as Thales (624-545 B.C.E.), Pythagorus (572-512 B.C.E.), Xenophanes (570-470 B.C.E.), Parmenides (540-480 B.C.E.), etc., who in turn had great influence upon later Greek philosophers such as Socrates and Plato.²

There was much mutual interchange between East and West thereafter, and the philosophies of Plato (427-347 B.C.E.) and later Plotinus (205-270 C.E.) no doubt quickly traveled eastward and wielded their own influence upon the shores of India as well as around the world. Buddhist texts did not surface until around the fourth century C.E.—a century to a century and a half after the time of Plotinus—and so

had no influence during the classic Hellenist or Neoplatonist period.

We must remember, when discussing the early mystical philosophies, that most of the important scientific discoveries about our universe, our world, and our place in it, have occurred only in the last few recent centuries; and that mystics and philosophers of the time of the *Upanishads*, or of Plato and Plotinus, and even of Shankaracharya (b. ca. 686 C.E.), lived in a relatively Dark Age, when knowledge of the nature of the phenomenal world was extremely rudimentary. These philosophers viewed the visible universe as an eternal series of concentric shells in the manner described by Aristotle; the Sun revolved around a flat earth; the sublunar spaces were filled with demons and angels; the heavenly bodies revolved on the inner surface of an earth-surrounding globe; the physical body was composed of the five elements (including aether); life was generated by decay; and no one guessed that the universe was expanding, or imagined that energy and mass were interconvertible, or could even dream of biological evolution. But some things were the same as they are now: the differences between mind and matter were

just as apparent as they are today; and life and death still had the same dissimilar characteristics.

The existence of an individual life-force or Soul that animated material bodies was no doubt inferred by early *homo sapiens*, and quickly became one of the most evident of realities among the people of early civilizations. This belief in the existence of souls began thereafter to play a prominent role in the philosophies of advanced minds everywhere. And it seemed reasonable to some to assume that a previously existent soul could be reincarnated in a newly born body. This concept, of the transmigration or reincarnation of souls, appears early on in both the philosophies of the East and of the West, but it is not certain where it originated. Herodotus thought it may have originated in pre-dynastic Egypt. In any case, reincarnation forms an integral part of the early *Upanishads* (1000-800 B.C.E.), and the *Bhagavad Gita* (ca. 500 B.C.E.) of India, where it was and is regarded as a process of experience-gathering toward the purification and eventual liberation of the soul.

This idea appears also in Greece in the Orphic tradition (7th and 6th century B.C.E.), and was thereafter adopted by Pythagorus, and later Plato.

The notion of reincarnation, and the eventual liberation of the soul, was already common in Greece by the time of Plato, and in Plato's Dialogue *Phaedo*, Socrates was depicted affirmatively discussing this notion with his friends on the night of his execution. Centuries later, Plotinus took up the reincarnation idea as a central doctrine of his own Plato-inspired metaphysics. It was an idea that was widely accepted in the East, Near-East, and West alike during those early years. There is evidence that it was an accepted doctrine of esoteric Judaism as well, most particularly in the Essene sect, and that it was acknowledged as a reality by Jesus and members of the early Church, most notably by the Alexandrian theologian, Origen (182-251 C.E.); but the doctrine ceased to have a position in Christian theology when it was declared anathema to faithful Christians at the Fifth General Council convened by emperor Justinian in 553 C.E.

In the earlier *Upanishads*, connected by lineage to the more archaic *Vedas*, *Aranyakas*, and *Brahmanas*, the nature of the individual soul was seldom mentioned, and rarely well-defined. The Upanishads are among the earliest recorded utterances of men who had experienced the Eternal as their own essential identity, but they do not comprise a consistent

homogeneous system of thought; rather they are individual treatises by individual authors, often separated widely by time and place of origin, as well as by individual idiosyncrasies. In one of the later Upanishads, the *Maitri Upanishad*, the narrator, Prajapati, after a lengthy explanation of the Divine Self (*atman*), acknowledges briefly the existence of the individual soul (*jiva*):

Yes, there is indeed a soul, influenced by the elements, who is bound by the good or bad effects of actions, and who, born again from these good or bad effects, rises or falls in its wanderings under the sway of duality. This human soul is under the power of Nature (*Prakrti*) and its conditions, and thus it falls into confusion. Because of this confusion, the soul cannot become conscious of the God who dwells within, and whose power gives us the power to act. The soul is thus whirled along the rushing, muddy, stream of Nature, and becomes unsteady and uncertain. It is filled with confusion and full of desires, without concentration, and agitated with pride. Whenever the

soul has thoughts of "I" and "mine," it binds itself to a limited sense of selfhood, a limited identity, just as a bird is bound in the net of a snare.³

In this Upanishad, the "soul" or *jiva*, is described as "influenced by the [material] elements"; it is regarded as an illusory identity obscuring the soul's true identity, which is the Divine Self (*Atman*). There is little in this Upanishad, however, to metaphysically link the soul to Brahman or to provide a real sense of its nature. For that, we must turn to the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, where a more unified and carefully thought-out picture is presented:

I sing of Brahman: the subject, the object, the Lord of all! He's the immutable Foundation of all that exists; those souls who realize Him as their very own Self are freed forever from the need for rebirth.

The Lord is the Foundation of both aspects of reality: He is both the Imperishable and the perishable, the Cause and the effect. He takes the form

of the limited soul, appearing to be bound; but, in fact, He is forever free.

Brahman appears as Creator, and also as the limited soul; He is also the Power that creates the appearance of the world. Yet He remains unlimited and unaffected by these appearances. When one knows that Brahman, then that soul becomes free.⁴

... Within the Cycle [of existence], in which all live and seek rest, the swan-like soul wanders restlessly; It thinks it's separate and far from God, but, by His Grace, it awakes to its identity with Him.⁵

When that Lord, who pervades all the worlds everywhere, gave birth to the first motion, He manifested Himself as creation. It's He alone who is born in this world. He lives in all beings; it's only Him everywhere.

... Those who have known Him say that, while He manifests all worlds by His Power, He remains ever One and

unchanged. He lives as the one Self of everyone; He's the Creator and Protector to whom all beings return.⁶

Clearly, Svetasvatara's vision is identical in all respects to the revised metaphysics of Plotinus, upon which we have just elaborated. That same metaphysical vision of Plotinus, as currently revised, is also identical to that of the *Bhagavad Gita*, if we allow for the differences in language and terminology.

The author of the *Bhagavad Gita* alternated his terminology between that of Kapila (ca. 800 B.C.E.), and that of the Vedas. The Sankhya system of Kapila named the transcendent Spirit as *Purusha*, and named Its Creative Power to manifest the material universe as *Prakriti*; and this terminology is used throughout the *Gita*. But the *Gita's* author also uses the Vedic terminology, which most commonly regards what Plotinus calls "the One" as *Nirguna Brahman* (*Brahman* without [*nir*] qualities [*guna*]). What Plotinus refers to as "The Divine Mind" is called *Saguna Brahman* (*Brahman* with [*sa*] qualities [*gunas*]). *Nirguna Brahman* is referred to throughout the *Gita* simply as *Brahman*; *Saguna Brahman* is personalized as *Brahma* or *Ishvara* (Lord). And it is

Saguna Brahman, or *Brahma*, who wields the veiling power of *Maya*, or illusion. The relationship between "The One" and "The Divine Mind" as explained by Plotinus is identical with that of *Brahman* and *Brahma* in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Here, for comparison, is a listing of the terms used in the *Bhagavad Gita* and those used by Plotinus:

<u>Bhagavad Gita</u>	<u>Plotinus</u>
<i>Brahman, Purusha</i>	The One (<i>to Hen</i>)
<i>Brahma, Prakriti</i>	The Divine Mind (<i>Nous</i>)
<i>Atman</i>	Soul or Self (<i>psyche</i>)
<i>Jiva</i>	The individualized soul

The *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of God) was written ca. 500 B.C.E., as part of a larger work, the *Mahabharata*, (reputedly by the legendary sage, Vyasa), as a dialogue occurring between Krishna (an incarnation of God) and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. And it is Krishna who, speaking as the Divinity itself, teaches to Arjuna the perennial philosophy, explaining that in His Divine unmanifest state He manifests the entire universe, which he describes as his 'lower' nature;⁷ and He manifests this 'lower

nature', the material universe, in a cyclic fashion, periodically creating, then dissolving it:

At the end of a cycle, all beings ... enter into My *Prakriti* [Creative Power], and at the beginning of a cycle, I generate them all again. Controlling My own *Prakriti*, I send forth, again and again, all this multitude of beings, helpless under the sway of maya.⁸

But, as He tells Arjuna, He contains a 'higher nature' that is not subject to this cyclic manifestation:

But different from it, know, O mighty Arjuna, My higher nature—the Indwelling Spirit by which the universe is sustained.⁹ ...By Me, in my unmanifest form, are all things in this universe pervaded.¹⁰

Pervading the material universe, He (*Brahman*) is the invisible Spirit, or Soul, in all:

The Lord (Krishna) said: Brahman is the Imperishable, the Supreme. Dwelling in each

body, Brahman is called the individual soul.¹¹

This soul, says Krishna, "is indivisible, and yet It is, as it were divided among beings."¹²

It is never born, nor does It ever die, nor, having once been, does It again cease to be. Unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval, It is not slain when the body is slain. Only the bodies, of which this eternal, imperishable, incomprehensible Self [*Atman*] is the indweller, are said to have an end. That by which all this is pervaded know to be imperishable. None can cause the destruction of That which is immutable.¹³

He goes on to explain to Arjuna that this indestructible Soul or Self is not limited to one embodiment only:

Even as the embodied Self passes, in this body, through the stages of childhood, youth, and old age, so does it pass into another body. Even as a person casts off worn-out clothes and puts on others that

are new, so the embodied Self casts off worn-out bodies and enters into others that are new.¹⁴

So, as I'm sure the reader can easily see, there are many remarkable parallels between the (revised) metaphysical vision of Plotinus and that of the *Bhagavad Gita*. These parallels arise from the fact that both Vyasa and Plotinus had directly experienced these truths in their visionary revelations, as have innumerable other souls. We must not forget, however, that Plotinus must certainly have had some introduction to the Indian metaphysics through his guru, Ammonius, who was said to be conversant with both the Persian and Indian metaphysics.

Much later, the illustrious teacher (*acharya*), Shankara (eighth century C.E.), attempted a reformulation of *Advaita* (Nondual) Vedanta, and in the process introduced some ideas which are controversial to this day. In many ways, his metaphysical worldview is also remarkably similar to that of Plotinus: Like Plotinus, Shankaracharya regarded the Soul or Self as identical with the Divine. He asserts that, in man, the Self (*Atman*) is the witness to the various activities of the mind, residing

in stillness, unaltered and unaffected by either the form or content of one's mental activity; and that this Self is *identical* to Brahman, the One, the Absolute. Here, for reference, is a comparison of the terms used by each:

Shankaracharya

Plotinus

Parabrahman or Brahman
Brahma or Ishvara
Atman
Jivataman or simply jiva
Jagat

The One (*To hen*)
 The Divine Mind (*Nous*)
 Soul (*psyche*)
 Individualized soul
 The material world

But what do we mean when we say that the Self of man is identical to Brahman? If Brahman is present in every human being, by what means does He appear as their innermost Self? God is one; the beings are many: by what means does He spread Himself out in this way while remaining one? Plato and Plotinus postulated an all-pervading radiation of the Divine Consciousness throughout the material universe, which they called "Soul". It is by means of this pervading Divine Consciousness, says Plotinus, that God is present as the Divine Self of everyone. Shankaracharya offers no such explanation; in fact,

for him, there is no universe to be pervaded. There is only *Brahman/Atman*; and the universe is a projected illusion existing only in the consciousness of the *jiva* (which is really the *Atman*).

Nevertheless, he concedes that, from a relative point of view, *Brahman/Atman* is omnipresent as the absolute Consciousness that is the substratum of the universe and the inner Self of man, falsely appearing as the soul or *jiva*. He explains that it is due to *Brahma's* power of *Maya* that one *appears* to be an individualized soul; but this soul is actually *Atman*, the Divine Self, and can be realized as such. Here, using the same light-radiation metaphor as Plotinus, Shankara explains the identity of the individual soul and the Divine Self (*Atman/Brahman*):

The transmigrating soul is not different from the Lord. ...Just as the light of the Sun and the Sun itself are not absolutely different, so also the soul and the supreme Self are not different.

...Because all souls are essentially non-different, and their apparent difference is due to ignorance (*avidya*) only, the

individual soul, after having dispelled ignorance by true knowledge, passes into Unity with the supreme Self.¹⁵

The Self...can be directly realized as pure Consciousness and infinite Bliss. Its appearance as an individual soul is caused by the delusion of our understanding and has no reality. By its very nature, this appearance is unreal. When our delusion has been removed, it [the individualized soul] ceases to exist.¹⁶

However, it is when Shankara explains the illusory nature of the universe that interpretive difficulties arise. The *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* hold that Brahman possesses a Creative Power, called *Maya*, by which He creates or projects, an objective universe of visible objects. Passages from certain of the works attributed to Shankara, such as the following from his *Atma Bodha*, would lead one to believe that he held a similar position (though he refers to that Creative Power as *Shakti*):

Visible objects, like the body, mind, etc.,
are born of the primal Energy (*Shakti*)

and the ignorance (*avidya*) attending it and are evanescent like bubbles. One should realize the pure, eternal Self, which is other than these, and know, "I am Brahman (*aham brahmasmi*)."¹⁷

Shankara, whose understanding of the physical nature of the universe was as flawed as that of Plotinus, clearly believed that the world was never actually created; that it is merely a "projection" (*adhyasa*) upon Brahman produced by the individual soul or mind, due to an ignorance (*avidya*) Divinely inherent in it. From his considerable body of works, it is apparent that Shankara believed that we "project" or "superimpose" an imagined world upon Brahman, as one "projects" a mirage upon the desert, or an imaginary snake upon a rope. This is known as 'the doctrine of superimposition' (*vivartavada*). Here is Shankara's explanation of this idea:

The universe does not exist apart from the Self (*Atman*). Our perception of it as having an independent existence is false, like our perception of blueness in the sky. How can a superimposed attribute have any existence, apart from its substratum?

It is only our delusion which causes this misconception of the underlying reality.¹⁸
...The apparent world is caused by our imagination, in its ignorance. It is not real. It is like seeing the snake in the rope. It is like a passing dream”¹⁹

Thus, while in the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, and (our revised version of) Plotinus’s metaphysics, the world is represented as an illusory, but objective, phenomenon produced by God, Shankara’s ‘doctrine of superimposition’ asserts that the perceived universe is merely an imaginary projection by the individual mind or soul of a world of objects upon the substrate of *Brahman*—in other words, that it is an illusion that takes place solely in the mind, or individual *jiva*.

Shankara, following in the tradition of his *paramguru* (his guru’s guru), Gaudapada, taught that only Brahman exists, and that the universally perceived phenomena of ‘the world’ appear, not because they are actually ‘created’ by God, but rather because we humans, while actually seeing only *Brahman*, project, or “superimpose” names and forms upon that substratum by the power of our own imaginations.

He interprets God's power of *Maya* (illusion) to be, not God's power to 'create' an illusory objective universe, but a power placed by God within the human soul to project, or imagine, a world where there is truly only Brahman, much as one might imagine a snake where there is actually a rope, or a body of water where there is only a dry desert. But since Brahman is not an object of our perception upon which an illusory object might be superimposed, we must wonder how such analogies could apply.

The theory of 'superimposition' asserts that the subjective human ego, or *jiva*, endowed with a Mayic power, projects an entire universe of objects upon Brahman—but we must remember that in Shankara's time no one even imagined that man had *evolved* over time from more primitive species. Insofar as Shankara knew, man had existed forever; and had always been around to imagine a world. Like the author of Genesis, he was ignorant of the fact that prior to around two million years ago there were no humans. He did not know that the genus *Hominidae* (the great apes) only came into existence around 15 million years ago, and that bipedal man (*Homo erectus*) only evolved around 2 million years ago; that so-called

'wise' men (*Homo sapiens*) only came into being around 350,000 years ago; and that anatomically modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) came along only around 200,000 years ago.

So, if the world could only be superimposed ('imagined') by a human being, then not even an imaginary world existed prior to the evolution from the lower animal species to the human species. If this were true, the present evidence for the evolutionary history of the universe, from its beginning to the development of *homo sapiens*, including astronomical observations, geological strata, fossils, etc., tells of a world that never existed, since there was no one around at that time to imagine (or superimpose) it.

The obvious question that arises is: if the world, the universe, is much older than man, as it appears to be, how could the world possibly be the product of man's mind? Is it possible for an effect to precede its cause? Had Shankara known of the relatively recent origin of man, it would have been necessary to suggest that perhaps the animal and even bacterial life-forms, who seem also to perceive a world of objects, project the world by means of the same Mayic power of imagination, this same mental projection! But what of

the compelling evidence for the existence of the universe during preceding billions of years prior to the appearance of even the simplest forms of life? How could we possibly justify the belief that the universe only came into existence when there was a conscious living being to imagine or superimpose it upon Brahman? Because there are so many questions that arise when this theory is examined closely, the majority of cautious contemporary thinkers, influenced by current scientific observations, tend to accept that the universe of matter is an external, objective illusion, rather than an internal, subjective one.

Our current understanding of the nature of the material world leads us to conclude that the forms we perceive through our senses are ultimately mere agglomerations of the electromagnetic charges and emergent forces that constitute the fermions and bosons produced from the original electromagnetic radiation (the 'Great Radiance'), and that the perceivable forms produced by the congregation of these insubstantial wave-particles are virtually "illusory". Shankara, however, could not possibly have understood in his own time that the illusion of physical matter arises from the organization of

intangible submicroscopic wave-particles in such a way that they present the appearance of substance and extension.

Shankara knew nothing of such wave-particles. Though he had not imagined them, we have every reason to believe that they nonetheless existed, even then. He *did* know, from his unitive visionary experience, that the Soul (*Atman*) is identical with Brahman and that, in relation to eternal Being, the phenomenal world is illusory; but, without a knowledge of the true nature of matter, and perhaps influenced somewhat by the Buddhist metaphysics popular at the time, he was able to account for the unreality of the world only by assuming that it was an illusion produced by a Mayic ignorance (*avidya*) within the human mind, causing the mind to *imagine* a world exterior to it.

The revelatory unitive experience is the same for all who have known it, and yet it is interpreted variously. The unitive experience has the quality of being ultimately real, unmediated, indubitable. And the experience of returning from that unitive vision to the world of duality, to the phenomenal world of space and time, *does* seem like re-entering a mind-

projection, a hologram, or a dream scene. In fact, it *is* a mind-based projection. But it is not the projection of one's *own* mind; it is a projection of the one Divine Mind, who has formed this universe of His own Light.

For everyone who has experienced this revelation, the Divine Self is realized to be the source and essence of the universe; but in the one interpretation, the Self projects an Energy from Itself that forms the perceived universe; and in the other interpretation, the Self projects (or imagines) a non-existent universe *within* the perceiver. The one interpretation states that the universe exists in the Mind of God, even when there is no one else to be consciously aware of it; and the other interpretation holds that the universe exists in the mind of the individual soul, and that without an individual soul to be conscious of it, the universe does not exist. Which view do *you* regard as "true"?

Unfortunately, whether you may think that the phenomenal universe is an illusory reality produced objectively by the Divine Mind, or a subjective illusion produced by a Divine Mayic capacity within the human mind, the resolution of this dispute is not, and probably never will be, amenable to conclusive

and demonstrable proof. However, the *practical* conclusion remains the same in either case, as expressed by Shankara in the following premise:

*Brahma satyam
Jagat mithya
Jivo brahmaiva naparah*

(Brahman is the Reality;
The phenomenal universe is merely an
appearance, an illusion;
The soul is truly Brahman, without a
doubt.)

You will find in this statement no disparity with the vision of Plotinus. In fact, while it's a bit of a strain to shift between the two terminologies and to translate one to the other, anyone who takes the trouble to do so will discover that the philosophical visions of Plotinus and Shankaracharya are essentially the same. In all *practical* respects, Plotinus and Shankaracharya are seen to be in perfect agreement.

We must acknowledge that, although neither of them clearly comprehended the nature of the phenomenal world (nor did anyone else before the mid-twentieth

century), both Shankaracharya and Plotinus had intimately known the one eternal Reality behind all appearances. They were both illumined seers, and master teachers. There is no doubt that both men came to the direct knowledge of the Self as their true, eternal identity, and knew: 'There is no other true identity but the eternal One by whom and in whom all exists.' And the central and most important message of both Shankaracharya and Plotinus is the message of all authentic seers of the Truth: 'Realize the Reality for yourself! Renounce all transient and illusory appearances and focus upon the Eternal. Know your lasting and permanent Self, where all knowledge and all Bliss resides, and free yourself from the snare of ignorance and suffering.'

In more modern times, a number of yogis and Vedantists have attempted to clarify the traditional metaphysics of Vedanta as it is expressed in the *Upanishads* and in the *Bhagavad Gita*. One of the best-known modern proponents of this Vedantist vision is the highly regarded yogi and teacher, Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), who, in addition to his many other writings, wrote a brilliant commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita* that is among the

finest and most thorough expositions of the *Gita* ever written.²⁰

While the *Bhagavad Gita* upholds the difference between the substance of the material universe (*Prakrti, Maya*) and the all-pervading soul (*Purusha, Atman*), it does not explicitly describe how these two were originally manifested. Yogananda attempts to clarify the nature of this Divine manifestation in a scheme very similar to that of Plotinus: The Divine Source is represented as the supreme Consciousness (*Brahman*) that is absolutely unmoving, still. Yet It has an active faculty that serves as Creator (*Brahma*), which manifests both the material universe and the indwelling Soul by emanating a vibratory radiation of Consciousness. The subtlest frequency of that vibration comprises the Soul or astral realm, which includes all individualized souls; and the grosser frequency of that radiation comprises the phenomenal universe of Matter. Thus, these two frequency levels of the Divine radiation are contained in one spectrum of vibratory Consciousness, comprising one continuum with two distinct manifestory levels. Here is how Paramahansa Yogananda describes this division in the Divine emanation:

The Spirit differentiates Its manifestations in creation into two sets of distinctly different attributes: the invisible soul and its powers of life, mind, and wisdom; and the visible forms of vibratory body and matter. By the use of fine vibrations, the Spirit created the soul, intellect, mind, life; and, by grosser vibrations, body, kinetic energy, and atomic matter.²¹

In this scheme, Soul does not *permeate* the body and the material universe; but rather it co-exists with matter as a separate 'level' of Divine manifestation, just as, in the electromagnetic spectrum, x-rays coexist with radio-waves at separate levels of frequency. The subtle Divine emanation manifests as Soul, giving rise to the conscious mind, and at a yet grosser frequency that same emanation appears as matter. Each of these vibratory levels are manifest in the composite creature called man, and each individual being experiences these levels as distinct and separate. As mentioned, this view is in many ways quite similar to the metaphysical vision of Plotinus, wherein an outward radiation from a central

origin includes all levels of existence, from the subtle realm of Soul, to material phenomena; one single many-layered radiation that manifests simultaneous realms of varying subtlety.

According to this view, the soul's realization of its original Divine Self comes about through the deliberate reversal of this top-down emanation or grossification. By concentrated meditation—in other words, by the stilling and focusing of the vibrations of consciousness (*chitta vritti nirodha*)—the individualized soul is enabled to reverse this process and thus perceive its subtler reality, its Divine origin, its true Self.

As logical and coherent as such a metaphysical scheme appears, in order to accept it, we must ascertain whether the electromagnetic radiation of which the material universe consists is capable, at a yet higher frequency, of producing conscious individually self-governing souls. It seems evident to me that these "finer vibrations" would have to be of a radically *different* kind than those by which the phenomenon of light is produced. Whatever it is that is more finely vibrating would necessarily have to partake of the Divine Consciousness and be capable

of animating material forms with life, of instituting awareness, providing sentience, intelligence, memory, and all the qualities possessed by human souls. Clearly, these “finer vibrations” would have to differ from electromagnetic radiation not only in degree, but in kind.

In this scheme, it is possible to assume that the gross, bodily manifestation of individual living beings deteriorates over time due to the physical law of entropy, and eventually disintegrates; while the subtler level of manifestation, the living soul, continues to exist. There would, therefore, be no need for the soul to *withdraw* from the body; the body, being the outermost vibratory shell, simply drops away when it is no longer capable of sustaining life, and the soul continues its subtle life in the astral world until such time as another suitable body is provided, or until that soul is merged in Brahman. However, this scheme does not readily explain the soul’s separation from the body during contemplative or near-death experiences.

There is no doubt in my mind that a God who can manifest a phenomenal universe out of Light, can also produce a universal noumenal essence from

Himself to live within that phenomenal universe as its soul; but must not that soul be fashioned, not only of finer stuff, but of different stuff? And yet, since it is undoubtedly evident that the Divine Mind (*Brahma*) possesses abilities which are far beyond our ability to imagine or conceive, perhaps, as Yogananda suggests, the supreme Consciousness *is* capable of emanating these two strains of existence—Spirit and Matter, body and soul—as distinct elements of one vibratory activity despite our inability to comprehend the manner of their existence and interrelationship. I, for one, am not able to accept Yogananda's metaphysics, though, ultimately, whichever word-picture of this duality-in-Unity we adopt, we are faced with an impenetrable mystery.

2. Buddhism

The man, Siddhartha Gotama, who is said to have been born in northeastern India in 563 B.C.E., sought enlightenment as a young man, and upon attaining it, became known as 'the Buddha', the awakened one. His experience of the Eternal, an experience he called *nirvana*, suggesting the extinguishing of the ego-sense, was undoubtedly genuine. It was identical

with the experience of all who have obtained the vision of the transcendent Reality both before and after him. However, the metaphysics he contrived in order to explain his experience in conceptual terms is uniquely his own and bears little similarity to either the Platonist metaphysics or the metaphysics of Advaita (Nondual) Vedanta.

The Buddha began his spiritual quest in his late twenties, was enlightened in his mid-thirties or early forties, and lived on into his eighties, and so for many years freely gave his teachings to those student-disciples who gathered around him. We may be fairly certain, therefore, that the teachings that have come down to us were for the most part what he taught, even though nearly a century had passed before his teachings were collected, and several centuries passed after his death before those collected teachings were written, published, and became known as the tenets of 'Buddhism'.

No doubt, the three most identifiable doctrines of Buddhism pertaining to our comparison are these: the doctrine of the *skandhas* (or "aggregates"); the doctrine of *pratitya samutpada* (dependent origin-

ation); and the doctrine of *anatman* (the non-existence of a self, or soul).

Since there is no Godhead or Its Creative Power in the Buddhist system, there is no cosmological genesis such as is posited in a Theistic system. The Buddha's teachings center, not on a cosmological origin, but rather on the origination of human existence. This is where the *skandhas* come in. These are the aggregations of tendencies that the Buddha says bring about a human birth.

According to the Buddha, a human is composed of five bundles or aggregates (*skandhas*): (1) the aggregate of *matter*, which includes the body made of four elements (solid, fluid, heat, and motion), from which are derived five basic sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and skin); (2) the aggregate of *feelings*: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, which arise from the contact between a sense organ and a sense object, and which also give rise to a sixth sense organ: the mind, which perceives mental objects; (3) the aggregate of *perceptions*, which arise from the interrelationship between the six sense organs and their objects; (4) the aggregate of *mental formations*, which includes all the possible activities of the mind;

and (5) the aggregate of *consciousness*, the various kinds of which arise as awareness of the various objects of perception by the senses and the mind. Notice that Consciousness, in the Buddha's system, does not exist independently, but arises only as an awareness dependent upon the contact between a sense organ and its object.

According to the Buddha, it is these five aggregates, or bundles, which, coming together, constitute the spontaneous arising of the ego-sense, the sense of 'I'. There is no suggestion in the Buddhist metaphysics of a central originating Power, Consciousness, or eternal Ground to serve as the source of these various 'bundles'; nor is there anywhere in this scheme any mention of either a natural or supernatural origination of the universe. This, some will say, is due to the Buddha's famous unwillingness to formulate a complete metaphysical system. Alas, a metaphysical system developed nonetheless. Perhaps we must hold lesser luminaries responsible for the results; but the doctrines of Buddhism are steadfastly attributed to the Buddha himself, and so we must charge him with inventing the features of the system attributed to him.

Here, I think it is necessary to insert a cautionary note: Anyone who has read widely, who is familiar with the writings of men living in past centuries as well as contemporaries, knows that accurate knowledge regarding the workings of both physical and psychological nature has increased rather than declined over the centuries, and many an assumption from centuries ago is now regarded as obsolete and inapplicable to our present understanding of things. Indeed, lists of constituent ingredients, such as the one the Buddha enumerates above, were common among Indian philosophers of the period, and are now viewed as archaic.

How unfortunate that intelligent men who ponder the things of the Spirit tend to place such unquestioning faith in the authoritarian utterings of those seers who lived in very ancient times, or in a permanent legacy of literature containing the purported utterances of such men! In every lasting religious tradition, there is a faithful reliance on the absolute verity of writings that originated in the minds of men whose experience and learning was excellent in the time that they wrote several millennia ago, but who can no longer be regarded as well-informed by our present standards.

Spiritual understanding is frequently exempted from this kind of critical thinking because, it is argued, spiritual realities, being eternal, are not affected by changing views concerning the psychological or physical world. Yet we must recognize that so very often the written texts handed down as religious documents contain not only spiritual directions, but also many references to matters that may well be subject to empirical scrutiny—matters which have been shown in modern times to have been sorely misapprehended, or simply erroneously stated.

It would seem to be appropriate therefore for sincere researchers in each of the religious traditions to carefully re-examine even their most revered ancient books, with the understanding and realization that these holy books were written in a time when our world, let alone the distant galaxies, had not been adequately explored, when the notions firmly held regarding creation, cosmology, human history, and the laws of nature were yet simplistic, primitive, and often false. I am not suggesting, as extreme elements among the secular materialists of today do, that we should throw out the good and true along with the bad and false in the various religious texts; I am only

suggesting that we think of re-evaluating spiritual teachings in a way that better satisfies our modern intellectual integrity, and better represents our present understandings. Much of our religious past is profoundly valuable; and sadly, much of it is valuable only as an historical record chronicling the many speculative and imaginative accounts left by men of past ages.

Real mystical experience can profoundly challenge one's earlier perspective, and in the search for a perspective that makes rational sense of our experience, we may be introduced to various spiritual traditions whose roots date from an obscure past and whose tenets, which may be absurd on their face, are well fortified by the ardor and certainty of accumulated testimonials. The personal appeal of one tradition over another no doubt involves an element of one's previous karma, even though we may prefer to think that our choices are purely rational. And, while we are not merely the products of our previous tendencies and actions, we are nonetheless deeply influenced by these ingrained habits. This is why it is important to carefully analyze and compare competing doctrines that purport to explain spiritual (mystical) experience so as to reach

conclusions that fit in all respects with what is actually experienced in the unitive vision.

Let us now move on to a doctrine in the Buddhist lexicon that may seem to be in conflict with the previously described doctrine of the *skandhas*: that of *pratitya samutpada*, the doctrine of 'dependent origination'. It posits a 12-linked chain of causes likewise meant to explain the generation of a cycle of human birth. The originating cause of existence, says the Buddha, is (1) *avidya*, or 'ignorance; which gives rise to (2) 'volitional action'; which in turn gives rise to (3) 'conditioned consciousness'; which in turn gives rise to (4) 'name-and-form'; which in turn gives rise to (5) 'the six bases (i.e., the five senses plus mind)'; which in turn gives rise to (6) 'sense-impressions'; which in turn gives rise to (7) 'feelings'; which in turn gives rise to (8) 'desire' or 'craving'; which in turn gives rise to (9) 'attachment'; which in turn gives rise to (10) 'becoming' (the birth or rebirth process); which in turn gives rise to (11) 'birth' or 'rebirth'; which gives rise (eventually) to (12) 'old age and death'.

This elaborate chain of causes is intended to describe how we arise as existents from the (unnamed, but

implied) undifferentiated One; and this brings us to the third and most important doctrine of the Buddha: the doctrine of *anatma*, or, literally, 'no-self'. As we can see from the above listing of the elements of human existence, there is no permanent identity anywhere to be found; all indeed is *dukkha*, 'suffering'; *anitya*, 'impermanence'; and *anatman*, 'not self'.

This doctrine, of *anatma*, that no individual soul exists, brings up numerous questions, such as the obvious questions regarding rebirth and karma. While the Buddha believed in rebirth, he did not believe in reincarnation because, in his view, there is no soul to reincarnate. What, then, we must ask, is reborn? And the Buddha replies, 'the *skandhas*, which are the aggregates of tendencies and the results of karma.' But no specific *persona* or soul is reborn, so there is no continuation, no progressive evolution of a particular being (though it is said that the Buddha remembered *his own* past incarnations). When ignorance is destroyed (by enlightenment), there is no longer a causal 'seed' prompting further rebirth, and so liberation results. Since there is no soul or permanent identity, what is liberated upon enlightenment is apparently the *skandhas*. To some,

this may seem an anticlimactic and unfortunate denouement.

The very designation, *anatman*, is unfortunate as well, since *atman* is not the traditional term for the ego-sense, but is the Sanskrit word used to signify the Eternal Self—the very antithesis of the ego-sense. Had the term *ajiva* been used instead, much misunderstanding could long ago have been avoided; but as it is, the word *anatman* (*anatta* in the Pali scriptures), which is intended to negate the ego-sense, has the unfortunate connotation of negating the very Reality that supplants the ego-sense in the experience of enlightenment. That there is no permanent personal identity associated with the human body/mind complex is a long-held conviction of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy of the Upanishads, and a truth that is self-revealed in the mystical experience referred to in Vedantic literature as *samadhi*, and in Buddhist literature as *nirvana*.

But does that experience reveal only that there is no personal identity? No. In the Vedantic tradition, as in the Platonist tradition, it is well established that the sense of self arises from an eternal Ground, or substratum of Consciousness; also, the (mystical)

experience itself reveals the Eternal Reality that alone is seen to be the *true* identity of all, and the source of the Consciousness one had been experiencing all along. It is not a personal identity, but an eternal Identity, which the Upanishads call the *Atman*, 'the Self'. It is nothing else but the One, *Brahman*. Though some later Buddhist writers called that One the *Dharmakaya*, here, in a passage from an ancient text purporting to be his own words, the Buddha speaks of that eternal Reality as "the Unborn":

Monks, there is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Unmade and Unconditioned. Were there not the Unborn, Unoriginated, Unmade and Unconditioned, there would be no escape from the born, originated, made and conditioned. Since there is the Unborn, Unoriginated, Unmade and Unconditioned, there is escape from the born, originated, made and conditioned.²²

This acknowledgement by the Buddha of an eternal Reality beyond the 'dependently originated' *skandhas*, accessible to creatures born into this world, would seem to belie much of what we have absorbed about Buddhism up to this point, and to

align his teachings with a 'theological' perspective. And so, there remains much ambiguity to overcome. What is clear is that the Buddha, having experienced the One, rightfully taught his disciples the means of approaching that experience through introspection and meditation on their own true nature. There, as he rightfully indicated, they would find the truth for themselves. But, when it came to formulating a comprehensive and consistent metaphysics, he fell a bit short, and left behind a confusing legacy of contradictions and misconceptions. One feels it might have been fortunate if he had kept to his stated intention to say nothing about such matters.

Let us now examine and compare the metaphysics of Plotinus: The permeation of the material universe by Soul constitutes the foundation of Plotinus' metaphysical vision. Soul, emanated from the Divine Mind, has no physical parameters; It does not consist of mass or energy; It does not extend as a radiation into space. It is entirely beyond comparison with physical spatio-temporal phenomena. But the fact is that our language is framed in terms of phenomenal temporality, and we have only the tools of our phenomenally based language to use when

attempting to convey the operation of the Divine Mind by means of conceptual language.

Can we even form an image in our minds of the emanated extension of the Divine Mind that is referred to as "Soul"? Yet without such an extension of Spirit, how and in what way would we be connected to, and therefore be of the same essence as, the Divine? We are souls, of a Divine nature; or we are some other thing, with no connection or access to a Divine and eternal nature. It is not enough to simply say, 'There is no soul, yet we nonetheless partake of eternal Consciousness.' If we experience in our own being that eternal Consciousness, by what means do we do so? And by what pathway are we connected to it? Surely, we cannot reasonably state that the originating Cause of existence is 'ignorance'.

We reach the heart of this dispute when we see that Plotinus and the Buddha use the one word, "soul," to mean two different things: the Buddha means by it an illusory personal identity applied to a particular body-mind complex; Plotinus means by it an emanation from the Divine Mind, who is the creative aspect of the One. In negating the existence of the ego-soul,

the Buddha is correct; however, if Plotinus were to negate the soul, he would place himself among the apostates, the infidels.

Plotinus acknowledges, as do the Upanishads, that the soul is capable of remaining blind to its Divine nature, its innate capacity, attributing an illusory 'I' to its transient embodiment, and thereby living a superficial life concerned only with sensual and emotional pleasures, promoting its own aggrandizement and individual welfare. But eventually it must revise its outlook; for, understand, the soul is nothing else but the Divine—as a ray of sunlight is nothing but sun. Its only real identity is Divine Consciousness. Its association with body establishes an ego-sense, the illusion of an 'I', a *personal* identity, associated with one particular physical entity in a spatio-temporal universe. But there was never an actual personal identity; it was always the Divine Consciousness. The sense of a personal individual identity was simply an illusion, to be sure. But that does not mean that its true identity is not Soul.

Soul, remember, is the one Divine Consciousness; it is not something other than the one Divine

Consciousness. When the individualized soul is illumined by the vision of its true nature, its eternal, illimitable Self is revealed, and the illusion of a separate personal identity vanishes as all erroneous imaginations do. It is still Soul—it is still a ray of Divine Consciousness. One must not become beguiled by mere word-confusion. If we could form meaningful language by using just one word, we could say: “God God God God.” But no one would know what we were trying to convey. In order to speak of the different ways that God manifests, we give different names to His differing aspects, and we speak of God as soul, God as matter, God as energy, God as consciousness; and so, we have all these seemingly disparate words. But “soul” is nothing but God; body is nothing but God, the many worlds strung throughout the night sky are nothing but God. How might one speak more clearly?

For those who acknowledge the one Divine existence as the Ground of all reality including themselves, the question of a separate personal self does not arise. If such a question were to arise, they would answer: ‘The One who *is* lives me. And He alone is, manifesting as soul and all else as well.’ For such as these, it is clear that only pitiably empty dreams

remain when the blissful Giver of life and joy, the center and life-breath of one's very being, is discounted and rejected.

You may tell me, "there is no soul." And I will reply, "With what will you replace it?" If you don't like my word, please use your own word to describe what your eternal essence is revealed to be. But you cannot negate That which is intended by the word, *Soul*; for It is the eternal fabric of your very being, of your thinking and speaking and seeing and acting; It is indeed the famous "Unborn" of the Buddha. It is the only reality that exists in and as whatever phenomena or noumena you may suggest for consideration.

If you are truly confirmed in the belief or knowledge that there is one and only One who is the origin, activator, manifestation and experiencer of all that exists, and in the faith or knowledge that nothing outside of or other than that One exists in all the three worlds, be at peace; we are in perfect agreement. And if you are consistent in this belief or knowledge, you must acknowledge that you, being one of those things that exists, are undoubtedly included in the one Reality, are made of the one

Reality, and are connected by indissoluble bonds to It and to all else that has existence, and are safely and inescapably contained in, embraced and empowered by, and ultimately one with, the omnipresent Reality—which you are free and most welcome to call by any name you like.

3. Christianity

Judaism, while proudly monotheistic, never advanced to a mystically based metaphysics; specifically, the Judaic scriptures never attained a nondual perspective. The patriarchal figures, Abraham and Moses, were said to have spoken with God, but neither is said to have experienced *oneness with God*; that is, they never experienced the Divine identity as their own. And since orthodox Judaism refuses to abrogate the authority of the patriarchs, a strict doctrinal separation between God and His creation is strictly maintained, and the possibility of the “union” of man and God is disavowed; though, in recent times, scattered mystics of the esoteric Hasidic and Kabbalist schools within the Judaic tradition have

taught the possibility of 'the mystical union' with God.

When Christianity came into existence, Judaism was rightly viewed as its foundational background, since Jesus, the founder and object of Christian worship, was born and raised in the Jewish religious tradition. We have every reason to assume, therefore, that Jesus adopted and assented to the Biblical account of Creation in the book of Genesis. However, when Jesus experienced God directly, leading him to proclaim his essential unity with God, he presented a threat to the Judaic doctrine of the separation of man from God, and thereby aroused the ire of the Jewish orthodoxy. Therefore, it wasn't long before these religious legalists hounded and arrested Jesus and put him to death in a public manner usually reserved for enemies of the state. Jesus had been merely an obscure Jewish mystic, but the story of his brief life and tragic death spread far and wide, and eventually inspired and raised the spiritual aspirations of generations of people all over the world.

All great religious teachers have taught according to their own intimate experience of God, their "mystical vision"—whether it is called "*samadhi*," "*nirvana*,"

"fana," or "union with God." Since there is but one ultimate Reality, which all share, each one who has experienced the Truth has experienced that same ultimate Reality. Naturally, therefore, their teachings about it, and about how one can experience It for oneself, are bound to be identical. ²³

The languages and cultures of the various teachers who have lived throughout history are, no doubt, different from one another. Their personalities and lifestyles are different. But their vision is one, and the path they teach to it is one. In the mystical experience, which transcends all religious traditions and cultures and languages, the Christian, the Buddhist, the Muslim, and the Vedantist alike come to the same realization: Each realizes the oneness of their own soul and God, the Soul of the universe. It is this very experience, which prompted Jesus, the originator of Christianity, to explain at various times to his disciples that he had known the great Unity in which he and the Father of the universe are one:

"If you knew who I am," he said, you would also know the Father. Knowing me, you know Him; seeing me, you see Him. Do you not understand that I am in

the Father and the Father is in me? It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.²⁴

This is the truth that Vedanta speaks of as "Nondualism." The term, "Unity," is, of course, the same in meaning; but it seems that the declaration, "not-two" is more powerfully emphatic than a mere assertion of oneness. Indeed, the word, "Unity" is often used by religionists who apply it to God, but who have not even considered the thought that they themselves are logically included in an *absolute* Unity. Nondualism, the philosophy of absolute Unity, is the central teaching, not only of Vedanta, but of all genuine seers of Truth. This position is embodied in the Vedantic assertion, *tat twam asi*, "That thou art."

Once we begin to look at the teachings of Jesus in the light of his "mystical" experience of Unity, we begin to have a much clearer perspective on all the aspects of the life and teaching of the man. His teachings, like those of the various Vedantic sages who've taught throughout the ages, is that the soul of man is none

other than the one Divinity, none other than God; and that this Divine Identity can be experienced and known through the revelation that occurs inwardly, by the grace of God, to those who prepare and purify their minds and hearts to receive it: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." The words of Jesus are so well known to us from our childhood that, perhaps, they have lost their meaning through our over familiarity with them. He attempted to explain to us, with the words, "I and the Father are one," that the "I," our own inner awareness of self, is none other than the one Self, the one Awareness, the Lord and Father of us all.

Why, then, are we so unable to see it? Why should it be so hard for us to attain to that purity of heart, which Jesus declared so essential to His vision? Probably because we have not really tried—not the way Jesus did, going off into the wilderness, jeopardizing everything else in his life for this one aim, focusing completely and entirely on attaining the vision of God. Not the way the Buddha did. Not the way all those who have experienced God have done. Perhaps we're not ready for such a concentrated effort just yet. Perhaps we have other desires yet to dispense with before we will be free

enough to seek so high a goal. For us, perhaps, there is yet much to be done to soften the heart, so that we are pure enough to hear the call of Divine Grace. It is to those of us, for whom much yet needs to be accomplished toward the attainment of a "pure heart," that Jesus spoke.

All of what Jesus taught to his disciples was by way of explaining to them that his real nature, and that of all men, is Divine; and that the reality of this could be realized directly. Let us look to his own words to corroborate this: In the Gospel book of John, he laments to God, "O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee. But I have known Thee." ²⁵ And, as he sat among the orthodox religionists in the Jewish temple, he said, "You say that He is your God, yet you have not known Him. But I have known Him." ²⁶ Jesus had "known" God directly during a time of deep prayer, following his initiation by his "guru," probably during his time in the wilderness; and that experience had separated him and effectively isolated him from his brothers, because he alone among his contemporaries seemed to possess this rare knowledge of the truth of all existence.

This is the difficult plight of all those who have been

graced with “the vision of God.” It is the greatest of gifts, it is the greatest of all possible visions; and yet, because the knowledge so received is completely contrary to what all men believe regarding God and the soul, it is a terribly alienating knowledge, which brings upon its possessor the scorn and derision of all mankind. History is replete with examples of others who, having attained this saving knowledge, found the world unwilling to accept it, and ready to defend its ignorance aggressively. This circumstance is little changed today.

Because the “vision” of God is so difficult to convey to those who had not experienced it, Jesus spoke often by way of analogy or metaphor in order to make his meaning clear. He spoke of the experience of “seeing” God as entering into a realm beyond this world, a realm where there is only God. In his own Aramaic language, he called this realm *malkutha*. In the Greek translation, it is *basileia*. In English, it is usually rendered as “the kingdom of God.”

His disciples asked him, “When will the kingdom come?” Jesus said, “It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying ‘Here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’

Rather, the kingdom of the Father is [already] spread out upon the earth, and [yet] men do not see it. ²⁷

... Indeed, what you look forward to has already come, but you do not recognize it." ²⁸

The Pharisees asked him, "When will the kingdom of God come?" He said, "You cannot tell by signs [i.e., by observations] when the kingdom of God will come. There will be no saying, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is [experienced] within you." ²⁹

Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, "See, the kingdom is in the sky," then the birds of the sky will have preceded you. If they say to you, "It is in the sea," then the fish will precede you. Rather the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you [as well]. When you come to know your Self, then you [i.e., your true nature] will be known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you will not know your

Self, you live in poverty [i.e., you live in the illusion that you are a pitiful creature far from God].”³⁰

Another of Jesus’ metaphors utilized the terms, “Light” and “darkness” to represent the Divinity and the inherent delusion of man, respectively:

Jesus said, “The world’s images are manifest to man, but the Light in them remains concealed; within the image is the Light of the Father. He becomes manifest as the images, but, as the Light, He is concealed.”³¹

He said to them, “There is a Light within a man of Light, and It lights up the whole world. If it does not shine [within that man], he is in darkness.”³²

These are terms, which have been used since time immemorial to represent the Divine Consciousness in man and the hazy ignorance, which obscures It. In the very first paragraph of the Gospel of John, we find an excellent explanation of these two principles, and their Greek synonyms, *Theos* and *Logos*:

In the beginning was the Logos [God's Creative Power], and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. He [or It] was with God in the beginning. All things were made by Him; without Him nothing was made. Within Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of man. And the Light shone in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended It not.³³

A word of explanation is necessary: These two terms, "Light and "darkness," are also indicative of the cosmic aspects of Reality; in other words, they are not only the Divine Consciousness in man and the darkness of unknowing, but they are, at a higher level, the very Godhead and Its Power of manifestation. They are those same two principles we have so often run into, called "Brahman and Maya," "Purusha and Prakrti," "Shiva and Shakti." It is the Godhead in us, which provides the Light in us; it is the Creative Power, or manifestory principle, which, in the process of creating an individual soul-mind-body, provides us with all the obscuration necessary to keep us in the dark as to our infinite and eternal Identity.

Jesus said, "If they ask you, 'Where did you come from?' say to them, 'We came from the Light, the place where the Light came into being of Its own accord and established Itself and became manifest through our image.'

"If they ask you, 'Are you It?' say, 'We are Its children, and we are the elect of the living Father.' If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your Father in you?' say to them, 'It is movement and repose.'" ³⁴

Jesus said, "I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there." ³⁵

Here, Jesus identifies with the Eternal Light; but he seems never to have intended to imply that he was uniquely and exclusively identical with It; it should be clear that his intention was always to convey the truth that all men are essentially the transcendent

Consciousness, manifest in form:

Ye *are* the Light of the world. Let your Light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. ³⁶

Frequently he declared to his followers that they too would come to the same realization that he had experienced:

"I tell you this," he said to them; "there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the kingdom of God already come in full power."³⁷

"The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence. And the one who lives from the living ONE will not see death. Have I not said: 'whoever finds his Self is superior to the world?'" ³⁸

"Take heed of the living ONE while you are alive, lest you die and seek to see Him

and be unable to do so.”³⁹

“That which you have will save you if you bring It forth from yourselves. That which you do not have within you will destroy you.”⁴⁰

“That which you have” is, of course, the Truth, the Light, the Divinity who manifests as you. “That which you do not have” refers to the false identity of separate individuality, which is simply a lie. It is the wrong understanding of who you are that limits you, and which prevents you from experiencing the Eternal.

The teaching, common to all true “mystics” who have realized the Highest, is “You *are* the Light of the world! You *are* That! Identify with the Light, the Truth, for That is who you really are!” And yet Jesus did not wish that this should remain a mere matter of faith with his disciples; he wished them to realize this truth for themselves. And he taught them the method by which he had come to know God. Like all great seers, he knew both the means and the end, he knew both the One and the many. Thus, we hear in the message of Jesus an apparent ambiguity, which is

necessitated by the paradoxical nature of the Reality.

In the One, the two—soul and God—play their love-game of devotion. At one moment, the soul speaks of God, its “Father”; at another moment, it is identified with God, and speaks of “I.” Likewise, in the words of Jesus to his disciples, we see this same complementarity: At one moment, he speaks of dualistic devotion in the form of prayer (“Our Father, who art in heaven”); and at another moment he asserts his oneness, his identity, with God (“Lift the stone and I am there ...”). But he cautioned his disciples against offending others with this attitude (“If they ask you, ‘Are you It?’ say, ‘We are Its children ...’”).

At times, identifying with the One, he asserts that he has the power to grant the experience of Unity (“I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind”).⁴¹ And at other times, identifying with the human soul, he gives all credit to God, the Father (“Why do you call me good? There is no one good but the ONE, that is God.”).⁴²

There is an interesting story that appears in both Matthew and Luke which illustrates the knowledge, from the standpoint of the individual soul, that the realization of God comes, not by any deed of one's own, but solely by the grace of God: Jesus had just commented upon how difficult it would be for a young man, otherwise spiritually inclined, who was attached to his worldly wealth and occupations, to realize God ("It would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle"); and his disciples, who were gathered around, were somewhat disturbed by this, and asked, "Then, who *can* attain salvation?" And Jesus answered, "For man it is impossible; but for God it is possible."

And Peter, understanding that Jesus is denying that any man, by his own efforts, can bring about that experience, but only God, by His grace, gives this enlightenment, objected: "But we here have left our belongings to become your followers!" And Jesus, wishing to assure them that any effort toward God-realization will bear its fruits in this life and in lives to come, said to them: "I tell you this; there is no one who has given up home, or wife, brothers, parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not be repaid many times over in this time, and

in the time to come [will] know eternal Life.”⁴³ He could guarantee to no one that knowledge of God; that was in the hands of God. But Jesus knew that whatever efforts one makes toward God must bear their fruits in this life, and in the lives to come.

And so, throughout the teachings of Jesus, one finds these two, apparently contradictory, attitudes intermingled: the attitude of the knower, or *jnani*: (“I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest”); and the attitude of the devoted soul, or *bhakta*: (“Father, father, why hast Thou forsaken me?”). They are the two voices of the illumined man, for he is both, the transcendent Unity and the imaged soul; he has “seen” this unity in the “mystical experience.”

Jesus had experienced the ultimate Truth; he had clearly seen and known It beyond any doubt; and he knew that the consciousness that lived as him was the one Consciousness of all. He knew that he was the living Awareness from which this entire universe is born. This was the certain, indubitable, truth; and yet Jesus found but few who could even comprehend it. For the most part, those to whom he spoke were well-meaning religionists who were incapable of accepting the profound meaning of his words. The

religious orthodoxy of his time, like all such orthodoxies, fostered a self-serving lip-service to spiritual ideals, and observed all sorts of symbolic rituals, but was entirely ignorant of the fact that the ultimate reality could be directly known by a pure and devout soul, and that this was the real purpose of all religious practice.

Jesus realized, of course, that despite the overwhelming influence of the orthodox religionists of his own time, still, in his own Judaic tradition, there had been other seers of God, who had known and taught this truth. "I come," said Jesus, "not to destroy the law [of the Prophets], but to fulfill it." ⁴⁴ He knew also that any person who announced the fact that he had known God as his own eternal Self would be persecuted and belittled, and regarded as an infidel and a liar. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus is reported to have said, "He who knows the Father (the transcendent Absolute) and the Mother (the creative Principle) will be called a son-of-a-bitch!" ⁴⁵ It seems he was making a pun on the fact that one who does *not* know his father and mother is usually referred to in this fashion; but, in his case, he had known the Father of the universe, and knew the Power (of

Mother Nature) behind the entire creation, and yet he was still called by this derisive name.

This is the common experience of all the great seers, from Lao Tze to Socrates and Heraclitus, from Plotinus and al-Hallaj to Meister Eckhart and St. John of the Cross. All were cruelly tortured and persecuted for their goodness and wisdom. Jesus too found the world of men wanting in understanding; he said:

I took my place in the midst of the world,
and I went among the people. I found all
of them intoxicated [with pride and
ignorance]; I found none of them thirsty
[for Truth]. And my soul became
sorrowful for the sons of men, because
they are blind in their hearts and do not
have vision. Empty they came into the
world, and empty they wish to leave the
world. But, for the moment, they are
intoxicated; when they shake off their
wine, then they will repent. ⁴⁶

Jesus had taught the mystical path to his disciples; but few of his followers, either during his lifetime or after, could follow him into those rare heights. After

he was persecuted and executed for expounding his unitive vision, his followers began to gather together for inspiration, and the small gatherings soon developed into a sizeable church organization. And, when the few became many, diverse interests inevitably came into play: some were attracted to contemplation; some to charitable or teaching activities; and some preferred to deify their master, Jesus, as an object of ritual worship.

Jesus had never formulated a detailed metaphysics to guide his followers. Nevertheless, a metaphysics developed around him, fueled not only by his Judaic background, but by the persuasive Greek influence of the times. In particular, the Greek philosophical concept of the *Logos* played an important part in the metaphysics of the early Christian theologians.

The common Greek word, *logos*, was originally understood in several different ways; one of which was as "intention, hypothesis, or thought". Heraclitus, in the 4th century B.C.E., the first to use the word in a metaphysical sense, intended by it the Divine Intelligence by which all the world is pervaded. Much later, a contemporary of Jesus, Philo Judaeus, an influential Alexandrian Jew with strong

ties to the Greek, and specifically the Platonic, philosophical tradition, used the word to denote the Thought in the Mind of God, wherefrom the Idea of the world took form. Here is how he expressed it:

God who, having determined to found a mighty state, first of all conceived its form in his mind, according to which form he made a world perceptible only by the intellect, and then completed one visible to the external senses, using the first one as a model. ...It is manifest also, that the archetypal seal, which we call that world which is perceptible only to the intellect, must itself be the archetypal model, the idea of ideas, the *Logos* of God. ⁴⁷

...The incorporeal world then was already completed, having its seat in the Divine *Logos*; and the world, perceptible by the external senses, was made on the model of it. ⁴⁸

For Philo, the *Logos* was not only the Idea in the mind of God but was that very Ideational Power of

God that Plotinus would later call *Nous*, or "The Divine Mind". Philo, acknowledging that the *Logos* was the Creative Power of the One, referred to it as "the first-born of God." It was conceived in God's mind before all things and is that which manifests as all things.⁴⁹

One of the four Gospel authors, living in the 1st or 2nd century C.E., and known to us only as 'John', was apparently familiar with the writings of Philo, and taking his theological cue from him, began his Gospel with these words:

In the beginning was the Logos, the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. ...All things were made by the Logos; without him, nothing was made. It was by him that all things came into existence.⁵⁰

This was, of course, quite in keeping with the Philonian concept; but then John added these words:

And the Logos became flesh and lived among us...as the only begotten son of his father.⁵¹

Some of the most influential Christian theologians and apologists, such as Justin Martyr (100-165 C.E.), Irenaeus (130-200 C.E.), Tertullian (150-225 C.E.), and others, jumped on this bandwagon, campaigning strongly for the recognition of Jesus as synonymous with the *Logos*, or Creative Power, of God; though there were others, called *alogi*, who were against this idea. And so, there was much argument and discussion among these early Christians. It was a time when theological and metaphysical ideas were very much 'in the air'; and it is clear that many of the learned Christian theologians and Apologists of the time were influenced not only by the Judaic tradition, but by the Platonist vision, as well as by the writings of Philo Judaeus, and possibly the Gnostics, Hermetics and Stoics as well. Borrowing the terminology of Philo, as echoed by the Gospel writer, John, they regarded the *Logos* much the way Plotinus regarded *Nous*, the Divine Mind: as the active Creative Power of the transcendent Godhead, or "the One". For the Christians, the Godhead was referred to as "the Spirit" or "the Father", and His creative power was referred to as "the Logos" or "the Son".

According to Tertullian (150-225):

The Spirit is the substance of the Logos,
and the Logos is the activity of the Spirit;
the two are a unity (*unum*).⁵²

The Christian Apologist, Athenagoras (133-190) wrote:

If you ask what is meant by the Son, I will state briefly that he is the first product of the Father, not as having been brought into existence (for from the beginning, God, who is the eternal Mind has the Logos in Himself, being from eternity instinct with Logos); but inasmuch as the Logos came forth to be the Idea and energizing power of all material things.⁵³

Later, Athenasius, Patriarch of Alexandria (293-372), using the very analogy of the Sun's radiation offered by Plotinus, says:

Was God, who IS, ever without the Logos? Was He, who is light, ever without radiance? ...God is, eternally; then, since the Father always is, His

radiance also exists eternally; and that is
His Logos.⁵⁴
The Logos of God *is* creator and maker;
he *is* the Father's will.⁵⁵

From these many theological interchanges a consensus arose; and the historical Jesus became permanently associated with the *Logos* and was thereafter regarded by Christians as an incarnation of God; or, in popular circles, 'the Son of God'. Then, to the duality of the Father and Son was added the "Spirit" or "Holy Ghost"—thus constituting a holy Trinity, comparable to Plotinus' trinity of The One, the Divine Mind, and Soul. This doctrine of the 'Holy Trinity' became firmly established as a metaphysical tenet of the Church with the formulation of the Nicene Creed following the first ecumenical council assembled by emperor Constantine in 325 C.E., and the Athenasian Creed, penned around the same time—though in later years Christendom would become bitterly divided in its acceptance of this tenet.

4. Some Other Visionaries

There have been, over the centuries, many well-known and unknown souls who have experienced union with God; and it may be useful to look to some of the best-known seers who have described this experience, in order to piece together a consolidated description of what has been seen:

From **the Upanishads** [10th to 4th century B.C.E.]:

He cannot be seen by the eye, and words cannot reveal Him. He cannot be realized by the senses, or by austerity or the performance of rituals. By the grace of wisdom and purity of mind, He can be seen in the silence of contemplation.⁵⁶

When a wise man has withdrawn his mind from all things without, and when his spirit has peacefully left all inner sensations, let him rest in peace, free from the movement of will and desire. ... For it has been said: There is something beyond our mind, which abides in silence

within our mind. It is the supreme mystery beyond thought. Let one's mind and subtle spirit rest upon that and nothing else.

... When the mind is silent, beyond weakness and distraction, then it can enter into a world, which is far beyond the mind: the supreme Destination. ... Then one knows the joy of Eternity. ...

Words cannot describe the joy of the soul whose impurities are washed away in the depths of contemplation, who is one with the Atman, his own Self. Only those who experience this joy know what it is. ... As water becomes one with water, fire with fire, and air with air, so the mind becomes one with the infinite Mind and thus attains Freedom.⁵⁷

When in inner union he is beyond the world of the body, then the third world, the world of the Spirit, is found, where man possesses all— for he is one with the ONE.⁵⁸

From **the Bhagavad Gita** [5th century B.C.E.]:

When the mind of the yogi is in peace, focused on the Self within, and beyond all restless desires, then he experiences Unity. His mind becomes still, like the flame of a lamp sheltered from the winds. When the mind rests in the prayerful stillness of yoga, by the grace of the One, he knows the One, and attains fulfillment. Then he knows the joy of Eternity; he sees beyond the intellect and the senses. He becomes the Unmoving, the Eternal.⁵⁹

... In this experience of Unity, the yogi is liberated, delivered from all suffering forever. ... The yogi whose heart is still, whose passions are dissolved, and who is pure of sin, experiences this supreme bliss and knows his oneness with Brahman.⁶⁰

Maximus of Tyre [2nd century C.E.]:

The eye cannot see God, words cannot name Him, flesh and blood cannot touch Him, the ear cannot hear Him; but within the soul That which is most fair, most pure, most intelligible, most ethereal, most honorable, can contemplate Him because it is like Him, can hear Him because of their kinship.

... The soul holds herself erect and strong, she gazes at the pure light [of the Godhead]; she wavers not, nor turns her glance to earth, but closes her ears and directs her eyes and all other senses within. She forgets the troubles and sorrows of earth, its joys and honors, its glory and its shame; and submits to the guidance of pure reason and strong love. For reason points out the road that must be followed, and love drives the soul forward, making the rough places smooth by its charm and constancy. And as we approach heaven and leave earth behind, the goal becomes clear and luminous—

that is a foretaste of God's very self. On the road we learn His nature better; but when we reach the end, we see Him.⁶¹

This vision is not exclusive to any religious tradition or to any time or place. Over the centuries, this same direct realization of Divine identity has occurred to individuals of every religious tradition. Here, for example, is the Muslim mystic-philosopher, **Ibn Arabi** (1165-1240):

When the mystery of the oneness of the soul and the Divine is revealed to you, you will understand that you are no other than God. ... Then you will see all your actions to be His actions and all your attributes to be His attributes and your essence to be His essence.... Thus, instead of [your own] essence, there is the essence of God and in place of [your own] attributes, there are the attributes of God. He who knows himself sees his whole existence to be the Divine existence but does not experience that any change has taken place in his own nature or qualities. For when you know yourself, your sense

of a limited identity vanishes, and you know that you and God are one and the same.⁶²

... There is no existence save His existence. ... This means that the existence of the beggar is His existence, and the existence of the sick is His existence. Now, when this is admitted, it is acknowledged that all existence is His existence; and that the existence of all created things, both accidents and substances, is His existence; and when the secret of one particle of the atoms is clear, the secret of all created things, both outward and inward, is clear; and you do not see in this world or the next, anything except God.⁶³

And here is the 14th century Christian prior and Vicar-General, **Meister Eckhart** (1260-1328):

As the soul becomes more pure and bare and poor, and possesses less of created things, and is emptied of all things that

are not God, it receives God more purely, and is more completely in Him; and it truly becomes one with God, and it looks into God and God into it, face to face as it were; two images transformed into one.⁶⁴

...Some people think that they will see God as if He were standing there and they here. It is not so. God and I, we are one.⁶⁵ ...[During the unitive vision,] I am converted into Him in such a way that He makes me one Being with Himself—not a *similar* being. By the living God, it is true that there is no distinction⁶⁶ ...The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one and the same—one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving.⁶⁷

And the 16th century Christian monk, **St. John of the Cross** (1542-1591):

What God communicates to the soul in this intimate union is totally beyond words. One can say nothing about it just as one can say nothing about God

Himself that resembles Him. For in the transformation of the soul in God, it is God who communicates Himself with admirable glory. In this transformation, the two become one, as we would say of the window united with the ray of sunlight, or of the coal with the fire, or of the starlight with the light of the Sun.⁶⁸

... The soul thereby becomes divine, becomes God, through participation, insofar as is possible in this life.

... The union wrought between the two natures, and the communication of the divine to the human in this state is such that even though neither changes their being, both appear to be God.⁶⁹

The soul awakens to know itself as the Divine Mind, but the One, Its prior, is experienced only from a distance, as it were. The One is the transcendent Source of all, and beyond all predication or qualification; It is indescribable, as It is prior to all discernible qualities. The soul is keenly aware of the blissful imperturbability, unlimited power, omni-

science, and eternal existence of its ultimate Source; but It is not distinctly 'seen', nor does the soul 'merge' with It. Nonetheless, the soul in union with the Divine Mind keenly recognizes that One as the beginningless Source of its own identity and of all that follows upon It—as the Sun hidden in the cover of the clouds is recognized to be the source of the omnipresent light.

That One was prior to the soul, and even before the first movement of Creation:

Rig Veda [15th century B.C.E.]:

Then, neither the non-Real (*asat*) nor the Real (*sat*) existed. There was no sky then, nor the heavens beyond it. What was contained by what, and where, and who sheltered it? What unfathomed depths, what cosmic ocean, existed then?

Then, neither death nor deathlessness existed; between day and night there was as yet no distinction. That ONE (*tad ekam*), by Its own power (*svadha*) breathlessly breathed.⁷⁰

Lao Tze [6th century B.C.E.]:

Before heaven and earth existed, there was something unformed, silent, alone, unchanging, constant and eternal; It could be called 'the Source of the Universe.' I do not know Its name and simply call It "Tao."⁷¹

The later Taoist sage, **Chuang Tze** (3rd century B.C.E.):

In the beginning, even nothing did not exist. There was only the Tao. Then something unnamed which did not yet have form came into existence from the Tao. This is Teh [the Creative Power], from which all the world came into being. ... It is in this way that Teh created all forms.⁷²

The Tao is the source of the activity of universal manifestation, but It is not this activity. It is the Author of causes and effects, but It is not the causes and effects. It is the Author of universal

manifestation and dissolution, but It is not the manifestation or dissolution. Everything proceeds from It and is governed by It; It is in all things, but is not identical with things, for It is neither divided nor limited.⁷³

Tao is invisible, hard to hold, and difficult to describe. However, I will outline It for you: The visible world is born of the Invisible; the world of forms is born of the Formless. The Creative Power [Teh] is born from Tao, and all life forms are born of this Creative Power, whereby all creation evolves into various forms.

... Life springs into existence without a visible source and is reabsorbed into that Infinite. The world exists in and on the infinite Void; how it comes into being, is sustained and once again is dissolved, cannot be seen. It is fathomless, like the Sea. Wondrously, the cycle of world-manifestation begins again after every completion. The Tao sustains all creation, but It is never exhausted.

... That which gives life to all creation, yet which is, Itself, never drawn upon—that is the Tao.⁷⁴

And here, **Meister Eckhart** distinguishes between the One and the Divine Mind, using the terms “Godhead” and “God”:

God and the Godhead are as different from each other as heaven and earth... Creatures speak of God—but why do they not mention the Godhead? Because there is only unity in the Godhead and there is nothing to talk about. God acts. The Godhead does not.

...The difference between God and the Godhead is the difference between action and non-action....The Godhead is poor, naked and empty as though it were not; it has not, wills not, wants not, works not, gets not. It is God who has the treasure and the bride in Him; the Godhead is as void as though it were not.⁷⁵

Eckhart's "God" is the Creative (manifestory) Power of the One, which has been referred to as *Prakrti*, *Maya*, *Nous*, *Shakti*, *Logos*, and many other names; we are calling It 'the Divine Mind'. The Divine Mind is not a thing apart from or distinct from the One; It is the causal aspect or agency of the One. It is the 'Creator' aspect of Divinity, from which Soul is radiated as an extension of Itself. It is the Divine Mind with which the soul is reunited, and by It, through It, knows the One as its eternal Self.

But how can it be that this immoveable, unchangeable, contentless One produces from Itself a Power so great containing all this universe? Is it, as the *Rig Veda* suggests, the arising of 'Desire' within the One that gives rise to that Power; or is it, as Plotinus suggests, a 'circumradiation' of the One; or is it simply a wish to be many, instead of alone, as suggested by the author of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* or the Gnostic, Valentinus? Here are those original suggestions:

Rig Veda:

In the beginning, darkness lay wrapped in
darkness; all was one undifferentiated

(*apraketa*) sea (*salila*). Then, within that one undifferentiated Existence, [Something] arose by the heat of concentrated energy (*tapas*). What arose in That in the beginning was Desire (*kama*), [Which is] the primal seed of mind (*manas*)...⁷⁶

Plotinus:

Time was not yet; ... it lay ... merged in the eternally Existent and motionless with It. But an active principle there ... stirred from its rest; ... for the One contained an unquiet faculty, ... and it could not bear to retain within itself all the dense fullness of its possession. [Like] a seed at rest, the nature-principle within, unfolding outwards, makes its way towards what appears a multiple life. It was Unity self-contained, but now, in going forth from Itself, It fritters Its unity away; It advances to a lesser greatness.⁷⁷

Given this immobility in the Supreme, It can neither have yielded assent nor

uttered decree nor stirred in any way towards the existence of a secondary. What happened, then? What are we to conceive as rising in the innards of that immobility? It must be a circumradiation—produced from the Supreme but from the Supreme unaltering—and may be compared to the brilliant light encircling the sun and ceaselessly generated from that unchanging substance. ...There [in the One] is the Unity which is the potentiality of all existence. ...The perfection entails the offspring; [for] a power so vast could not remain unfruitful.⁷⁸

Taittiriya Upanishad:

He [the One] desired: 'May I be many, may I procreate. He performed *tapas* (created heat); and, having performed *tapas*, He created all this—whatever there is. Having created all this, He entered into it. Having entered into it, He became both the manifest and the

unmanifest, both the defined and the undefined, both the supported and the unsupported, both the intelligent and the non-intelligent, both the real and the unreal.⁷⁹

The Gnostic, **Valentinus** [2nd century C.E.]:

The Father existed alone, unbegotten, without place, without time, without counselor, and without any conceivable qualities ..., solitary and reposing alone in Himself. But as He possessed a generative Power, it pleased Him to generate and produce the most beautiful and perfect that He had in Himself, for He did not love solitude. He was all love, but love is not love if there is no object of love. So, the Father, alone as He was, projected and generated [the world].⁸⁰

Each of these speculations provides a plausible scenario; but do we really think that we can determine, by any amount of speculation, just how and why the one Divine Father, the absolute Consciousness, managed to possess a creative Power

by which the Spiritual and material universe is produced? Really! If, as the Gnostic, Valentinus, and others have suggested, He abandoned His Oneness and entered into all this apparent multiplicity and tumult out of a desire to escape Aloneness by becoming many, it may be that He is happily enjoying being all these worlds and creatures; or it may be that, underneath it all, He is still quite aware that it's all only Himself, and still feels Alone. What do you think?

In many religious traditions, the One is regarded as the masculine component, and Its Creative Power (the Divine Mind) is regarded as the feminine aspect. This genderization of God and His Power is certainly not to be taken literally but is merely a metaphorical device to emphasize the apparent duality of these two aspects within a subsuming Unity. It is a metaphor that is most evident in the Hindu and Buddhist Tantric traditions, as well as in the ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite religious traditions; but it exists also in many other unrelated traditions, such as in the Taoist tradition, where *Tao* is the One, the Father; and *Teh*, Its feminine aspect, is Its Creative Power:

Lao Tze:

... The Tao that can be spoken of is not the absolute Tao. That Nameless [Tao] is the Father of heaven and earth; That which is named [Teh] is the Mother of all things.⁸¹

These two are the same; they are given different names in order to distinguish between them. Together, they constitute the Supreme Mystery.⁸²

The Tao is an empty cup, yet It is inexhaustible; It is the fathomless Fountainhead of all things.⁸³ That which gave birth to the universe may be regarded as the Mother of the universe [Teh].⁸⁴ The Womb of creation is called the Mysterious Female; it is the root of heaven and earth.⁸⁵

The myriad objects of the world take form and rise to activity, but I have seen THAT to which they return, like the

luxuriant growth of plants that return to the soil from which they spring.⁸⁶

That ONE called Tao is subtle, beyond vision, yet latent in It are all forms. It is subtle, beyond vision, yet latent in It are all objects. It is dark and obscure, yet latent in It is the creative Power of life [Teh].⁸⁷

From the ancient days till now Its manifestation has never ceased; it is because of this [Teh] that we perceive the Father of all. It is the manifestation of forms that reveals to us the Father [Tao].⁸⁸ The Tao is never the doer, yet through It everything is done.⁸⁹ The Tao fathers, and Teh brings everything forth as the world of form, time, and space.⁹⁰

And here is another surprisingly perceptive treatment of the One and Its Creative Power represented as masculine and feminine, by the 1st century Gnostic, **Simon Magus**, who refers to the One as "the Divine

Mind", and Its Energy-producing Power as 'the Thought':

The Great Exposition

There are two aspects of the One. The first of these is the Higher, the Divine Mind of the universe, which governs all things, and is masculine. The other is the lower, the Thought (*epinoia*) which produces all things, and is feminine. As a pair united, they comprise all that exists. The Divine Mind is the Father who sustains all things and nourishes all that begins and ends. He is the One who eternally stands, without beginning or end. He exists entirely alone; for, while the Thought arising from Unity, and coming forth from the Divine Mind, creates [the appearance of] duality, the Father remains a Unity. The Thought is in Himself, and so He is alone. Made manifest to Himself from Himself, He appears to be two. He becomes "Father" by virtue of being called so by His own Thought.

Since He, Himself, brought forward

Himself, by means of Himself, manifesting to Himself His own Thought, it is not correct to attribute creation to the Thought alone. For She (the Thought) conceals the Father within Herself; the Divine Mind and the Thought are intertwined. Thus, though [they appear] to be a pair, one opposite the other, the Divine Mind is in no way different from the Thought, inasmuch as they are one.

Though there appears to be a Higher, the Mind, and a lower, the Thought, truly, It is a Unity, just as what is manifested from these two [the world] is a unity, while appearing to be a duality. The Divine Mind and the Thought are discernible, one from the other, but they are one, though they appear to be two. [Thus,] ... there is one Divine Reality, [conceptually] divided as Higher and lower; generating Itself, nourishing Itself, seeking Itself, finding Itself, being mother of Itself, father of Itself, sister of Itself, spouse of Itself, daughter of Itself, son of Itself. It is both Mother and Father, a Unity, being the Root of the entire

circle of existence. ⁹¹

In the 'mystical experience' the introspective soul, united with the Divine Mind, is aware of its greater Self, its absolute Ground, which it labels 'the One', 'the Godhead'. That One is the subsuming Reality, in which the Creative Power (the Divine Mind) inheres. They were never two. It is only language that makes them appear so. And the mystic has only language by which to express what he has seen. When they are subsequently labeled as *masculine* and *feminine*, as *Father* and *Mother*, the appearance of duality, of separateness, is further accentuated. But there is only the One.

The One is the only one. He is without a second. He has no 'inside' or 'outside'; so, while we may say that all is contained within Him, for the noumenal, there is really no spatial relationship such as "within". The creative faculty of the One is called the Divine Mind. But we cannot say that it is "within" Him either. Terms of spatial relationship, such as "within" or "outside of", are applicable to phenomena, but not to noumena. Nevertheless, the Divine Mind cannot be separated from the One. Can you separate the creative power of your own mind from your

consciousness? I don't think so. Your mind's creative power is integral to your consciousness. Likewise, the attempt to separate the creative Power (the Divine Mind, God) from the transcendent Absolute (the One, the Godhead) is futile. His power of creating is inherent and integral to Him. They are not two. Recall the Biblical dictum: "I am the one Lord. There is no other beside Me." ⁹²

According to the philosophers of the Platonist tradition, the Divine emanation of Soul enters into and inhabits this material universe formed by the Divinely manifested Energy, becoming its indwelling evolutionary force, its living vitality, and its conscious intelligence. By inhabiting the distinctly manifested forms, Soul becomes associated with those individually distinct forms, and thus takes on the individual characteristics of each one, appearing as separate and multiple souls, while yet retaining its inseparability and singularity. Soul, by virtue of its inhabiting of body, takes on an individuality, thus becoming distinct souls; and yet, because it is an emanate of the Divine Mind, it retains its Divine Unity as Soul, united in essence with the Divine Mind.

Philo Judaeus:

God is high above place and time ... He is contained by nothing but transcends all. *But though transcending what He has made, nonetheless, He filled the universe with Himself.* [My italics] ⁹³ That aspect of Him which transcends His powers cannot be conceived of at all in terms of place, but only as pure Being; but that power of His by which He made and ordered all things ... pervades the whole and passes ⁹⁴ through all the parts of the universe.

Heraclitus [5th century B.C.E.]:

Of all the wise philosophers whose discourses I have heard, I have not found any who have realized the one Intelligence, which is distinct from all things and yet pervades all things.⁹⁵ That Intelligence is One; to know It is to know the Purpose, which guides all things and is in all things.⁹⁶ Nature has no inherent power of intelligence; Intelligence is the

Divine.⁹⁷ Without It [Intelligence], the fairest universe is but a randomly scattered dust-heap.⁹⁸

Soul, permeating and inhabiting the spiritually formed substance of Matter, lends its Intelligence and Vitality to the material forms, thus bringing life and an evolutionary force to the material universe. As Heraclitus rightly states, the universe of Matter, without the Intelligence of Soul, would be nothing but 'a randomly scattered dust-heap'.

Clearly, the Divine Energy-producing Power, also referred to as *Prakrti*, *Maya*, *Logos*, etc., must be differentiated from the Soul that is essentially identical with the Consciousness of the Divine Mind. Soul, being identical with the Divine, is eternal; the world-producing Energy too is eternal, though the worldly forms it takes are temporal, and transient. That Energy is produced by the Creative Power (The Divine Mind) periodically, in a cyclic manner, similar to the production of a recurrent respiration. This has been repeatedly 'seen', experienced, in the unitive vision, and described by numerous seers. Here is how

this cyclic “creation” and “destruction” is described some others who have seen it:

Svetasvatara Upanishad [4th to 1st century B.C.E.]:

He [the Lord] spreads his net [of appearance] and then withdraws it again into His *Prakriti* [His creative Power].⁹⁹

And here, from the ***Maitri Upanishad*** [5th century B.C.E.]:

The supreme Spirit is immeasurable, inapprehensible, beyond conception, never-born, beyond reasoning, beyond thought. He is vaster than the infinity of space. At the end of the worlds, all things sleep; and He alone is awake in eternity. Then from his infinite space new worlds arise and awake, a universe which is a vastness of thought. In the consciousness of Brahman, the universe exists, and into Him it returns.¹⁰⁰

In the 5th century B.C.E., the author of the ***Bhagavad Gita*** has Krishna explaining to Arjuna the process of manifestation and dissolution in the following passages:

They who know that the vast 'day' of Brahma (the personified creative Power), ever lasts a thousand ages; and that his 'night' lasts also a thousand ages—they know in truth day and night.

When that day comes, all the visible creation arises from the Eternal; and all creation disappears into the Eternal when the night of darkness comes. Thus, the infinity of beings which live again and again all powerlessly disappear when the night of darkness comes; and they all return again at the rising of the day. But beyond this creation, visible and invisible, there is a higher, Eternal; and when all things pass away, this remains for ever and ever. ¹⁰¹

Krishna, who is intended as a symbol of the Eternal, continues, referring to His Creative Power by the Sankhya term, *Prakrti*:

At the end of the night of time all things return to my [Creative Power, called] *Prakrti*; and when the new day of time begins, I bring them into light. Thus, through my *Prakrti* I bring forth all creation, and these worlds revolve in

the revolutions of time. But I am not bound by this vast work of creation. I exist alone, watching the drama of this play. I watch and in its work of creation *Prakrti* brings forth all that moves and moves not: and thus, the worlds go on revolving.¹⁰²

What do the mystics of other traditions have to say? **Lao Tze**, of the Taoist tradition of China, who lived in the 6th century B.C.E., also spoke of the universal creation-dissolution cycle:

The myriad objects of the world take form and rise to activity, but I have seen THAT to which they return, like the luxuriant growth of plants that return to the soil from which they spring.¹⁰³

And **Chuang Tze**, who lived in the 3rd century B.C.E., wrote:

The visible world is born of the Invisible;
the world of forms is born of the
Formless. The creative Energy [Teh] is
born from the Eternal [Tao], and all life
forms are born of this Creative Energy;
thus, all creation evolves into various
forms.

...Life springs into existence without a visible source and is reabsorbed into that Infinite. The world exists in and on the infinite Void; how it comes into being, is sustained and once again is dissolved, cannot be seen.

It is fathomless, like the sea.
Wondrously, the cycle of world-manifestation begins again after every completion. The Eternal [Tao] sustains all creation, but It is never exhausted. ... That which gives life to all creation, yet which is, Itself, never drawn upon – that is the Eternal [Tao].¹⁰⁴

Heraclitus adds his voice to the consensus:

What is within us remains the same eternally; It is the same in life and death, waking and sleeping, youth and old age; for, It has become this world, and the world must return to It.¹⁰⁵

This ordered universe...always was, is, and shall be, [like] an ever-living Flame that is first kindled and then quenched in turn.¹⁰⁶

(This last, by the way, led unilluminated commentators to say that Heraclitus believed the universe was made of fire.)

By all accounts, the creative expansion and “eternal return” of the universe to a state of potentiality in the Divine Mind was also recognized by Pythagoras (570-490 B.C.E.), Empedocles (495-435 B.C.E.), and the early Stoics, and was an established major tenet of Stoic metaphysics by the time of Plotinus. Yet both Plato and Plotinus assumed that the material universe was eternal and unchanging. Plotinus emphatically stated this opinion in his *Enneads*. How could he have begun to imagine the countless wonders that would eventually be discovered in the heavens with the aid of the telescope, including the revelation that the universe is expanding, and that it had its beginning around fourteen billion years ago?

No doubt, we in this current time are also woefully deficient in both spiritual and material knowledge, the future addition of which will one day more perfectly complete our understanding of ourselves, our world, and our place in it.

5. Materialism

The modern metaphysical vision which is herein presented, asserts that there is a transcendent, eternal and blissful Spirit, who radiates His/Its own conscious Intelligence as Soul; that It also manifests, in a cyclic manner, an immense periodic burst of Light, that transforms itself into time, space and form (mass); that the Divine radiance of Soul takes up habitation and inheres in those forms manifested from the Divinely produced Light; and that these subsequently living forms, consisting of body and soul, though initially unaware of their identity with their originating Source, evolve and grow in knowledge, understanding and spiritual vision for the purpose of discovering and enjoying the transcendence and bliss of their eternal Spirit, their own Divine Self.

Contrast this view with that of the materialists, which is so prevalent today, and according to which: 'The *universe* originated in an unknown manner—though we feel certain it did not have a supernatural Source. *Life* then originated in an unknown manner on at least one planet—but we are certain its origin was not

supernatural. From life, *consciousness* originated in an unknown manner—we are certain, however, that there is no supernatural Being at work here; and that all this happened randomly and without any aim or purpose.'

Even in the time of Plotinus, the philosophy of materialism competed with the spiritual philosophy of Platonism. Here is Plotinus' third-century description of that materialist 'school' of thought:

To a certain school, ...existence is limited to bodies: there is one only Matter, the stuff underlying the primal constituents of the universe. Existence is nothing but this Matter; everything is some modification of this, the elements of the universe [being] simply this Matter in a certain condition.¹⁰⁷

This is still the credo of materialism today. Despite the amazing progress of science through its many discoveries, the Material viewpoint of science has scarcely progressed since the time of Plotinus. Materialism is not a 'religion', of course; but it is, for many, a firmly held article of faith. And implicit in

that faith in the materialist view is the denial of the existence of Spirit or Soul. It is, in other words, an atheist faith. Materialism precludes not only the existence of God from consideration, but also such noumenal categories as *mind*, *consciousness* and *soul*—all existents that Plotinus, as a representative of *gnosis*, was most concerned to elucidate. Rather, they prefer to place a great emphasis on the discipline of *science*, which does not entertain consideration for such subjects.

The distinction between Matter and Spirit, or body and soul, necessitates this division between the two areas of knowledge: matter being the province of *science*, and Spirit being the province of *gnosis* (or spiritual realization). It is asserted that the two cannot be subject to the same means of study, since the one is concerned with an undemonstrable subjective reality, and the other concerned with perceivable objects; and so, they must of necessity have their own distinctive areas of study, methodology, and nomenclature.

Science is defined as “the study of the physical and natural world of phenomena.” And no one will deny that scientific methods are essential determinants of

what is true and false in 'the natural world of phenomena'. But when it is asserted that no other field of experience exists; that there is no reality other than "the physical and natural world of phenomena," and therefore no other valid field of study, this is not science, but *scientism*.

When *science* becomes the singular focus, as it has in our contemporary culture, it is very easy for science to drift toward *scientism*. Science deals only with the phenomenal reality, and it's only a small step from there to the assumption that this is the *only* reality. Though the reality of subjective consciousness is always present, it gets ignored as one focuses on the objective phenomena. And, naturally, when there is a consistent focus on the behavior of "the physical and natural world of phenomena", that focus becomes not only predominant, but exclusive; and the existence of anything outside that focus gets first ignored, then denied.

Scientism is virtually identical to *materialism*, in that the advocates of both believe that matter is the sole existent in this universe, and therefore that only what is empirically demonstrable—that is, apparent to the senses—is a valid object of study. The *real fallacy of*

scientism is the belief that scientific method determines the *truth*. Scientific method can only be used to decide what is *science*—what is scientifically demonstrable; not what is true. Plotinus' theory of Soul cannot be considered *science* because it cannot be demonstrated in accordance with scientific criteria. Yet it may well describe reality as it truly *is*. Or not. We can easily decide what is *science* and what is *gnosis* or metaphysics; these are formally well-defined. But the determination of what is 'true' is not within our collective capability; it must remain forever a matter of one's own *individual experience* and faith.¹⁰⁸

There is, however, a widespread belief in our contemporary world that *science* is synonymous with *true* knowledge; that what is not *science* is not true. This is *scientism*. It is this very doctrine that is the most predominant faith of our current time, one that wields a ubiquitous stranglehold on our culture, our education system, and the spiritual aspirations of our future generations.

Scientists jealously guard their strictly defined discipline from the introduction of non-scientific constructs. Naturally, any theory which suggests the

existence and efficacy of an invisible supernatural power, a Divine spacetime-transcending Source and governing principle present and active in this material universe, is out of the question. Such a notion does not fit scientific criteria and therefore must be rejected outright; and it must be adamantly repudiated by the defenders of scientific protocol. If you doubt that this occurs, please consider this revealing example of such a repudiation by the late renowned genetic biologist, Richard Lewontin:

We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite* of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite* of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of

investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine foot in the door.¹⁰⁹

We may judge this repudiation of the Divine in two different ways: (1) As a defense of scientific integrity: in which case it is a perfectly valid and legitimate defense; or (2) As a defense of truth: in which case it is a biased and prejudiced opinion, based primarily on the fear that the idea of a Divine supernatural force may get Its foot in the door of science. For, in the quest for *scientific* knowledge, there are certain limiting rules, one of which is that supernatural entities or beings whose existence cannot be empirically demonstrated may not be introduced as causes. In the quest for truth, however; in other words, for the knowledge that corresponds with reality, with the way things really *are*, there are no such limiting rules. Clearly, the line between the two has become very confused, and it is often difficult to determine whether someone is defending *science* and the scientific method, or defending their own vision of reality, their own vision of the truth.

Science has staked out its claim to that portion of knowledge concerned with the phenomenal world, with matter, with the body; *religion* has similarly staked out a claim for concerns having to do with God, the spirit, the soul. They have divided reality among themselves and fashioned a split patterned on the Cartesian division between Spirit and matter, soul and body. But the wise operate within an integrated reality, with a unified knowledge, that embraces every facet of existence: body and soul; Matter and Spirit. The wise see with an all-encompassing and undivided vision, which cannot be categorized as either *science* or *religion*, but contains and embraces both Matter and Spirit, both body and soul, both science and religion.

The unfettered minds of the great place no restrictions on their intellectual explorations. They follow truth wherever it may lead. Those who profess to follow truth, but qualify their willingness to follow it by saying, 'so long as it doesn't lead in *that* direction', are hypocrites at best. Yet this is precisely the attitude of much of the materialist community who limit their endeavors to the discovery of 'natural'—that is to say, 'material'—causes,

stipulating that a 'supernatural' Power or Intelligence may not be attributed as a causal agent under any circumstances. But they must be reminded that those who exclude the untrodden roads may never reach the destination, may never find their way to certain truth. To exclude in principle the invisible realm is to imprison oneself in the false and narrow confines of what appears to the senses. And, as Plotinus has said: "Those who make sense the test of reality, annul the supremely real."¹¹⁰

Plotinus had risen above the reality apparent to the senses and had *experienced* the supremely real. And so, he gave but meager attention to those who had neither soared in Spirit, nor aspired to, nor even thought deeply about their own nature:

All human beings from birth onward live to the realm of sense more than to the spiritual. Forced of necessity to attend first to the material, some of them elect to abide by that order and, throughout their lives, make its concerns their first and their last; the sweet and the bitter of sense are their good and evil. They feel they have done all if they live along

pursuing the one and barring the doors to the other. And those of them that pretend to reasoning have adopted this as their philosophy. They are like the heavier birds which have incorporated much from the earth and are so weighted down that they cannot fly high despite the wings Nature has given them.¹¹¹

* * *

PART FOUR: **CONCLUSIONS**

Any conclusions that we may draw regarding the Divine reality must necessarily be nothing more than mere theories made of word-symbols, bearing only a vague resemblance to the reality Itself. With that in mind, let me share with you my conclusions, my theories. Having looked at the question of the Body-Soul duality from the perspective of several religious and philosophical traditions going back millennia, now, let's attempt to look at this question from another, entirely new, perspective:

1. The Universe

We have seen that the Judaic tradition, and by extension the Christian tradition, asserts that the Spirit, or Soul, was infused in man by the enlivening breath of God. Early philosophers, including Plato and Plotinus, held that the One "emanated" or "radiated" the Divine Mind, which in turn "emanated" an all-pervading Soul. They described the Divine Soul as permeating the material universe as light permeates the atmosphere. To this day, these age-old

concepts constitute the framework of our theology and the imagery of our religious imagination. Our minds continue even now to operate in these established patterns, utilizing these ancient conceptualizations, to which we have become habituated for so long.

But I would submit, there is another, perhaps more accurate, way of viewing the permeation of matter by God's Spirit, not as an "infusion" of Spirit, but rather as a 'containment' by Spirit: Consider how our own individual consciousness permeates our thoughts and dream-images. Our thoughts and mental images are permeated by our consciousness because these thoughts and dreams are contained *within* our minds. May we not conclude that, likewise, God, the Divine Mind, permeates the universe because the universe is contained *within* God? After all, where else would a Divine Mind's creations exist but *within* Himself?¹

Every mystical theology holds that the individual self is in fact identical to the universal Self; that the Spirit within is synonymous with the transcendent Spirit and can be realized as such. We must ask ourselves how that is possible unless we—and in fact, the whole universe—is within God? But habit inclines us rather

to think that 'God is within us', as though He were a trillion separate homunculi hiding in each individual heart. No, He pervades all because all is *within* Him. This universe, and all within it, is a figment of *His* imagination. He is the only one who is. All these forms and all these "I's" exist within that one infinite Mind.

If the Divine Spirit, or Soul, was *breathed* into the material universe as Plotinus asserts, permeating, pervading, and guiding every wave-particle, what kind of entity would that be? We cannot even conceive of anything—other than consciousness—that might have the properties that would allow it to enter into, permeate, vivify and awaken to consciousness a material body. But, if the entire universe consisted of the Thought-images of a Divine Mind, then that universe must exist only within that Divine Mind and be intrinsically permeated by that conscious Divine Mind—just as our own thought-forms are permeated by our own conscious minds in which those thought-forms are created and exist.

'But how,' we might wonder, 'could so substantial and physical a universe be a mere imagination, a Mind-born projection of Thought?' An answer might be

found in the recent results of science's investigation into the nature of matter. The science of physics, for all its denial of the supernatural reality, has done more in the last one hundred years to dispel the notion of the substantiality of the material world than all the theologians throughout history. During that time, the discoveries of physicists have reminded us of the declarations of the Upanishads that the appearance of matter, i.e., the phenomenal universe, is an illusion, a product of Maya, the Creative Power of the One (*Brahman*).

Contemporary science has shown that the universe does indeed consist of an Energy that has transformed into material wave-particles; but these material particles are really nothing more than submicroscopic electromagnetic impulses, mere 'points of Energy', interacting in such a way that the appearance of substance is produced—forming, in other words, an illusory world.

How do these "points" of Energy, these so-called 'wave-particles' that began as "photons" of light, manage to produce the illusion of form and substance? They spontaneously transform into particles such as electrons, and quarks—which

combine to form protons and neutrons—which combine to form atoms; and the atoms combine to form molecules, which combine in vast numbers to form perceptible gases, liquids, and solids in a variety of sizes and configurations. The elementary ‘particles’ themselves are unimaginably tiny: according to the physicists of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, “protons are 100,000 times smaller than the simplest atom, hydrogen; and quarks are 10,000 times smaller than protons. For comparison, if a hydrogen atom were six miles across, a quark would still measure less than four-thousandths of an inch.”²

Clearly, the atoms of which these perceivable solids consist are mostly empty space in their interior. In fact, physicists tell us that all of what we call *Matter* is 99.99999999999999 percent empty space; the other infinitesimal part seems to be nothing more than energy wavelets and intangible forces. Subatomic wave-particles consist of intangible electro-magnetically charged impulses held in proximate “orbits” about one another by invisible forces, so as to form the appearance of much grander substantial entities. And these appearances are multiplied in infinite profusion and variety as if by some magician’s hand, to appear before our eyes as a multitudinous

world of objects. And so, this material world, this phenomenal reality of ours, is a marvelous magic show of truly immense proportions!

This Light, these particles and forces—what an amazing universe they make! How real it all seems! A burst of Light, and all congeals into a universe of form and color, intelligence and emotion, *sturm und drang*. Time drags the whole process out, making it all seem quite natural, making it seem, from the perspectives of our individual lives, a long and gradual evolution. But, if we were to see each of the fourteen billion years of evolutionary history reduced to a mere second each, it would become clear that it is a Mind-born creation, an instantaneous imagination from beginning to end. From God's eternal perspective, all is accomplished in an instant.

The Light-energy by which God forms the universe is simply the substance of His Thought—or what is analogous to Thought in a Divine Mind. Simply because we have identified a whole array of different 'wave-particles' that make up the material world does not mean that these constituent entities are really separate substantial 'things' in themselves. We have simply given names to the impulses and forces

inherent in God's Light-illusion, as one might examine and give names to the cohesive thought-constituents within a dream. This world-appearance does indeed seem substantial; but it is God's illusion—as the circle produced by a whirling flame is an illusion. And in the aggregate of trillions of these illusory wave-particles, a larger, more complex, visual illusion is produced—which, by reflecting millions of photons onto our retinas, produces an electrical impulse in our brains, which in turn produces an image to our conscious minds; while the gentle forces produced by the motion of electrons presents a tactile sensation in another section of our brains, and is interpreted in our minds as the sensation of touch, confirming our impression of substantial form. But it is only a marvelous masquerade of light—God's light; and it is all His grand illusion.

There is one Consciousness. It is the Consciousness of the One Being. And all the manifested universe exists within that one Consciousness. The various objects of this manifested universe move and operate, not by individual forces or laws of physics, but in and by that One. Immersed in that one Consciousness, united with it, one sees that: "all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the

universe to every falling grain." Who, then, is doing what? In Him we live and move. In Him one Will operates throughout. And we, mere dust motes dancing in His sunbeam, are swallowed and encompassed in His light. Look within and see the Truth.

2. The One

We may conceive of the Divine Mind, producer of the universe of light; but we cannot imagine It without stipulating that it draws Its own conscious power from the One, the unlimited Consciousness in which It exists. For the Divine Mind is not an entity separate from the One; it is the functioning power of the One, operating within the One, and lending being, consciousness and bliss to all that arises from it. However, of the One—also designated as the Void, Brahman, the Tao, the Godhead—we cannot speak. It is beyond even our ability to imagine.

We certainly may not ascribe to the One any descriptive characteristics, since the One transcends whatever characteristics we may attribute to It; and yet the Vedantic characterization of the One

(*Brahman*) as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, or “Existence-Consciousness-Bliss”, seems unavoidable and undeniable. That infinite sky must certainly be regarded as the ultimate Source of all existence, all consciousness, and all bliss. Those who have seen It speak of It as ‘the Father’.

That source of consciousness is, in fact, beyond time and space, and all manifestation; It is the eternal Identity of all that exists. It transcends the universe, while constituting its essence—as a dreaming mind transcends its dream-images, while constituting their essence. Consciousness is not the property of matter, or of any individual being. It is not produced by any material process; but rather is a Divine stream of Intelligence filling the entire universe. It is the fundamental nature of Being, the foundation of the phenomenal universe, and the light of awareness filling it.

We are able to know it by following our own individual consciousness back to its Source, where we are able to discover our original Self. That Self is God. He is the one Source of the material universe and He is the life and awareness pervading it. But, of course, we must see Him for ourselves. Our soul/mind must

be illumined by the eternal Light itself and drawn into Its hidden depths. To obtain that grace, all men focus their minds on Him through prayer and contemplative longing, and He shines His Light on whom He will.

3. The Soul

What we regard as our "soul" derives its existence, its consciousness, and its inherent bliss from the Divine Mind in whom it exists. When the soul comes to realize its Divine identity, it knows with absolute certainty that its existence is rooted in the Creative Power of the One; it knows that its consciousness is grounded in the Consciousness of the One; it experiences bliss only insofar as it is drawn into likeness with the One, and it is imbued with bliss as a result of that proximity of consciousness.

Each individual soul is confined to a body that defines the extent of its individual being in the spatio-temporal universe. We regard what is not within that limitation as "outside" of us. But God has no body or any limit to His extent. There is no "outside" of Him; even if He were to create an

outside, it would be within Him. God is an infinite, eternal Mind. He transcends space and time. Space and time are His creations, and they exist within Him. *Whatever* He creates is within Him. We, and the entire universe, exist within Him. Our own minds are limited; each one has its own perspective and considers itself to be the "subject"; and what is external to it is regarded as the "object". But in God, subject and object are one. He is unlimited and undivided. His Consciousness pervades everything and everyone.

We must understand that the separation of body and soul, of Matter and Spirit, exists only in the temporal world of appearance. In the Eternal (the Divine Mind), this duality, this separation, does not exist. In the Divine Mind, they are indistinguishable. Like water and ice in a glass, they are separable in appearance though they are one in essence.

Those who have 'seen' into their own eternal reality have realized that both the subtle Soul, containing life and consciousness, and the Energy constituting gross Matter, are together contained within the Divine Mind. This is why the mystic, experiencing his identification with the Divine Mind, experiences

himself, not simply as Soul, but as an illimitable awareness that is *both* universal Soul *and* universal Matter. Matter and Soul are both contained within the Divine Mind. The unmanifest Light and the manifested Light together form all that is. Ultimately, they are one, as they both derive from the same One.

We are made of the Consciousness and Energy of God. His Consciousness manifests as Soul, and His Energy is sent forth to establish the material universe at the 'Big Bang', 'Big Burst', 'Great Radiance', or whatever you wish to call it. And the ultimately true Origin, Source, and *initiator* of that field of Consciousness and Energy, is the One. All that exists is His. It is His projection, His exuberant radiance. Nothing else exists but that One. Our sense of 'I' too is Him. 'I' am the one and only 'I' that is. My consciousness is His Consciousness. My body, as well as the whole universe, is His manifest form. I and the Father are one.

A personage in a dream is not only permeated with the consciousness of the dreamer; it is *made of* the consciousness of the dreamer. That dream-person is essentially *identical* with the consciousness of the

dreamer. In just the same way, we are not only permeated by God's Consciousness; we are *made of* His essence; we are projections of His light. And our consciousness is essentially identical with the Consciousness of God.

Our bodies are His light-forms, and we are animated and made conscious by the all-pervading presence of His living Consciousness. When we look within ourselves, we may discover, by His Grace, that we are Him. For, just as a dream-person looking within to enquire who he is would discover that he is in fact the dreamer, so are we, enquiring within, capable of discovering that we are the limitless Mind in whom all things and all beings exist.

If you ask a beam of sunlight, "Who are you?" it will answer, "I am the Sun." If you ask a wave on the sea, "Who are you?" it will answer, "I am the ocean." If you ask a soul, "Who are you?" it must answer, "I am the One in all. I am He who alone exists now and forever. I am the light of the one Sun; I am a wave on the one Sea; I am a living breath of the one Life. I am in all that is seen or unseen. I am the One in all."

Jesus said, "I am the Light that is over all things. I am all: From me all has come forth, and to me all returns. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."³

Unfortunately, many believe that this is a truth that applies only to one unique historical figure who lived in the first century; but it is a *universal truth*, a truth for all, and a truth to be realized: *I am not merely this body, not just this spark of consciousness, nor merely the entire manifested universe; I am the Source of the universe, and the universe itself. I am both the subject and the object. There is nothing else here but I AM.* Listen to what the great Shankaracharya said:

The fool thinks, 'I am the body'. The intelligent man thinks, 'I am an individual soul united with the body'. But the wise man, in the greatness of his knowledge and spiritual discrimination, sees the Self as [the only] reality, and thinks, 'I am Brahman'.⁴

I am that Brahman, one without a second, the ground of all existences. I make all things manifest. I give form to all things. I am within all things, yet nothing can taint me. I am eternal, pure, unchangeable, absolute.

I am that Brahman, one without a second. Maya, the many-seeming, is merged in me. I am beyond the grasp of thought, the essence of all things. I am the truth. I am knowledge. I am infinite. I am absolute bliss.

I am beyond action; [I am] the reality which cannot change. I have neither part nor form. I am absolute. I am eternal. Nothing sustains me, I stand alone. I am one without a second.

I am the soul of the universe. I am all things, and above all things. I am one without a second. I am pure consciousness, single and universal. I am joy. I am life everlasting.⁵

You and I—we are alive in God. Become awake and sense Him—within you, around you, constituting your body and your awareness, the earth, the

heavens. This ocean of existence is His. Nothing exists outside of God. To know God is to know one's Self. It is to know the originating Mind of the Father, the One. It is to know the Source of all existence, the Source of all consciousness, and the Source of all bliss. What will you do with this knowledge? Praise Him in your thoughts, and in your words and in your actions. Find your delight in Him—seeing only Him, loving only Him, praising only Him. But we cannot even use the word "Him". We cannot speak of God in the third person, for who would be the third? Even the two, "I" and "Thou", is an illusion, a false duality that will be dissolved when the one indivisible Identity is revealed.

God, being so close, is easily accessible to us;
He is always within the reach of our call,
Always ready to provide succor in our need,
And the light of wisdom in our times of darkness.
Our own soul is the conduit of this accessibility,
This communication, this succor, and this wisdom.

In our own soul, when the chattering of the mind
is silenced,
And all our attention is focused on His
presence,

There He is found in the very qualities of the
soul;
For we are rays from His brilliance,
Diminished only by our unwillingness
To manifest His light.

He is the air in our nostrils and the earth under our
feet.

He is the light of our eyes and the music in our
breast.

He is the bright awareness that lives as you,
And He is the storied tale your living tells.
You dance in His firelight; you float on His sea.
You breathe by His breathing; you move by His joy.

No matter how far you may gaze into the rolling
Galaxies cascading above;
No matter what dark or clownish scenes you dream,
Or terrestrial landscapes you cross;
In the depths of the ocean, or on the chilly
Snow-peaked mountains;
And even in the abyss of death and darkness,
You are ever within His close embrace.

You cannot leave Him, nor scamper from His sight.
For you are in Him as a fish is in the ocean

Or a bird is in the sky.
His love surrounds and holds you,
And He sees all through your eyes.

These are my conclusions, based on my own experience; but you must come to your own conclusions, from your own experience. The truth is confirmable only by direct experience—not by a majority consensus, not by rational deliberation, not by reliance on scriptures, not by scientific proofs. The truth of your eternal Source and Identity is known for certain only when His grace reveals it to you. Therefore, gather all the strength of your mind and heart and focus it on Him without interruption for as long and as often as possible. Others have succeeded in this endeavor; and so, can you.

4.

Postscript

On the evening of November 18, 1966, I prayed to God: "Let me be one with Thee; not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory for the benefit of all Thy children." Immediately, this soul became irradiated with His Light, making it one with Him; and these words came

forth from that unutterable Height as a gracious gift
that, I believe, was meant to be shared with everyone:

“O my God, even this body is Thine own!
Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
Even I who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy
waters —
Even I am Thine own.

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?
Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the
earth?
Or does a pebble cease to be stone?
How can I escape Thee?
Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

Even now, I speak the word, “Thou”, and create
duality;
I love, and create hatred;
I am in peace, and am fashioning chaos;
Standing on the peak, I necessitate the depths.

But now, weeping and laughing are gone;
Night is become day;
Music and silence are heard as one;
My ears are all the universe.

All motion has ceased; everything continues.
Life and death no longer stand apart.
No I, no Thou; no now, or then.
Unless I move, there is no stillness.

Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish,
Nothing to pride oneself on;
All is accomplished in an instant.
All may now be told without effort.
Where is there a question?
Where is the temple?
Which the Imperishable, which the abode?

I am the pulse of the turtle;
I am the clanging bells of joy.
I bring the dust of blindness;
I am the fire of song.
I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil;
In pools of clear water my image is found.

I am the dust on the feet of the wretched,
The toothless beggars of every land.
I have given sweets that decay to those that crave
them;
I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
My hands are open; nothing is concealed.

All things move together of one accord;
Assent is given throughout the universe to every
falling grain.
The Sun stirs the waters of my heart,
And the vapor of my love flies to the four corners
of the world;
The moon stills me, and the cold darkness is my bed.

I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged and
set in order once again.
A million worlds begin and end in every breath,
And in this breathing, all things are sustained."

These words were written during the time I was
drawn into union with the Mind of the Creator and
reflect my progression from a dualistic perspective to
an utterly unitive one. These words of mine are,
therefore, His words. For these many years
afterward, I have enjoyed an enhanced sense of the
Divinity within me and surrounding me; but I have
not ascended to that unitive state again since that
time.

Often, I have attempted to express the knowledge I
had received, and found, as many others have found,
that to describe the knowledge acquired is not so easy

as it might at first appear. It seems that — no matter what approach one takes — the experience not only refuses to fit into words but refuses even to be accurately formulated in the mind. What was clear in that rare awareness is less clear in retrospect. Nevertheless, over these many years, I have undertaken to share the certain knowledge given to me since the day I made that bargain with God. He fulfilled His part of the bargain, and I have endeavored since that time to carry out my promise. I have written many books telling of His presence as the eternal Self of all, and of His greatness and goodness, in the hopes that others might be benefited thereby. Whether or not I have succeeded, I leave to His judgment.

I believe that, with this last book, I've reached the culmination of my attempts over the years to express this knowledge; I am advancing in age, and besides, there is little more to add. And while it has become evident to me that, in this current Dark Age, there is little interest in what I have to tell, I feel a duty to publish this book in the faith that God will preserve it and bring it to the aid and comfort of the handful of evolved seekers who are to come in a brighter age.

* * *

About The Author

Swami Abhayananda was born Stanley Ross Trout in Indianapolis, Indiana on August 14, 1938. After service in the Navy, he settled in northern California, where he pursued his studies in philosophy and literature. In June of 1966, he became acquainted with the philosophy of mysticism, and experienced a strong desire to realize God. Abandoning all other pursuits, he retired to a solitary life in a secluded cabin in the mountain forests near Santa Cruz, California; and, on November 18, of that same year, he became enlightened by the Grace of God.

He spent four more years in his isolated cabin, and subsequently met Swami Muktananda who visited Santa Cruz in 1970. Shortly thereafter, he joined Muktananda in India as his disciple, and later lived and worked in Muktananda's Oakland, California ashram. In May of 1978, he returned to India and was initiated by his master into the ancient Order of *sannyas*, and given the monastic name, *Swami Abhayananda* (ub-hi'-uh-non-duh), "the bliss of fearlessness."

As a Swami, he taught in various cities in the U.S.; but in 1981, unwilling to condone what he saw as abuses of power, Abhayananda left Muktananda's organization, and went into retreat once again. It was during this time that many of his books were written, and Atma Books was founded to publish them. At present, Swami Abhayananda is residing on the Treasure Coast of Florida, where he continues to work, teach, write, and publish his works on the knowledge of the Self.

* * *

REFERENCES AND NOTES:**Part One:**

1. Arthur Zajonc, *Catching The Light*, N.Y., Bantam Books, 1993; p. 256.
2. *Ibid.*, p. ix.
3. from JPL/NASA (<news:web>), reported in *Physorg Newsletter* at www.physorg.com/news175961092 appearing on 10/28/09.
4. Physicists describe "the Big Bang" as a sudden immense burst of Light, in which an inconceivably dense and intensely energetic swarm of photons danced in close proximity and incessant flux, colliding with each other, thereby producing particle-antiparticle pairs, which then annihilated back into high energy electromagnetic radiation, and back to particle-antiparticle pairs again, in rapid succession.

It is asserted by these physicists that the initial gamma ray production of particle-antiparticle pairs occurred in the first few seconds at temperatures in excess of 10^{12} K (a trillion degrees Kelvin): this is

regarded as the 'heavy-particle era', during which particles such as protons and antiprotons were created. Shortly thereafter, the universe entered the 'light particle era'; as the temperature of the early universe decreased along with the energy of the photons, the rapidly spreading photons were no longer capable of converting to heavy particles like protons and neutrons but were capable of producing only lighter particles such as electron-positron pairs.

All of this took place within the first few moments after the initiation of "the Big Bang" or "Great Radiance". After that, the temperature (the energy of the photons) became too low to continue to produce particle-antiparticle pairs. And after about one million years, as the temperature reduced to about 3000 degrees Kelvin, the period of 'recombination' commenced, as the remaining nuclei (protons and neutrons) began to capture electrons to form neutral atoms, such as those of hydrogen, deuterium, and helium. (See Michael Zeilik, *Astronomy: The Evolving Universe*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, ninth edition; pp.470-475.)

5. The concept in physics that every particle has an antiparticle with an opposite charge is called "particle

symmetry"; and there are also several theories to account for the breaking of this symmetry in the early universe, though there is as yet no consensus on this among scientists.

6. *Bhagavad Gita*, XI.12; Paramahansa Yogananda, *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*, Los Angeles, Self-Realization Fellowship, 1995; vol. II, p. 818.

7. This quark-gluon plasma (QGP), theorized to have been produced in the first few microseconds of the 'Big Bang', was recently reproduced at the Brookhaven National Laboratory by colliding gold ions at nearly the speed of light in their Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider, a 2.4 mile-circumference "atom smasher", thereby creating a "liquid matter" (QGP) at a temperature of "about 4 trillion degrees Celsius"—about 250,000 times hotter than the center of the Sun. (from Brookhaven National Laboratory, reported by Physorg Newsletter, February 15, 2010; www.physorg.com).

8. Genesis II:7-8, from the New English Bible, Oxford University Press, 1970.

9. Philo Judaeus, *On The Creation, XLVI, The works of Philo*, translated by C.D. Yonge, New Updated Edition, New York, Hendrickson Publishing, 1993, 2000; pp. 134-135. In this same Essay, Philo also states that "before the world, time had no existence, but was created either simultaneously with it, or after it," predating Saint Augustine's similar declaration by four centuries. (See *Ibid.*, *On The Creation, VII (26)*, p. 5.)
10. One of the Biblical books included in the 'Wisdom literature' is "The Wisdom of Solomon", which scholars suggest was written as late as the 1st century C.E. by an unknown Alexandrian Jew. The Alexandrian mystic-philosopher, Philo Judaeus (20 B.C.E.-40 C.E.), who was highly learned in the Greek Platonist philosophical tradition, is a prime candidate for its authorship.
11. René Descartes: "On the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, insofar as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand, I have a distinct idea of body, insofar as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. Accordingly, it is

certain that I am really distinct from my body and can exist without it." (Descartes, *Meditations*, VI.)

12. John R. Searle, *Mind: A Brief Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2004; p. 132.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

16. Colin McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame*, quoted in Richard Restak; *Mysteries of The Mind*, Washington D.C., National Geographic, 2000; p. 85.

17. Jeffrey Satinover, *The Quantum Brain*, N.Y., John Wiley & Sons, 2001; p. 220.

18. Eric R. Kandel, *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*, N.Y., W.W. Norton & Co., 2006; pp. 9-11.

19. Kandel, *Ibid.*; p. 377.

20. Kandel, *Ibid.*; p. 382.

21. Kandel, *Ibid.*; p. 381.

PART TWO:

1. Plato, from *Phaedo*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, in Scott Buchanan (ed.) *The Portable Plato*, N.Y., Penguin Books, 1977; pp. 204-205.

2. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.1.10: *The Three Initial Hypostases*.

3. *Enneads*, IV.3.17: *Problems of the Soul*.

4. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 44:5:15-16; MacKenna, Stephen (trans.), *Plotinus: The Enneads*, London, Faber & Faber, 1956; ; pp. 162-163.

5. *Ibid.*, 49:5:13; p. 162

6. *Ibid.*, 26:3:4; p. 101

7. *Ibid.*, 47:1; p. 76

8. *Ibid.*, 30:3:10; p. 116

9. *Ibid.*, I.8.2: *The Nature and Source of Evil.*
10. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.1.2-3; *The Three Initial Hypostases.*
11. Plotinus, *Enneads*, II.4.16.
12. *Ibid.*, IV.3.9.
13. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.2.1: *The Origin And Order of Beings.*
14. *Ibid.*, IV.3.3-4: *Problems of The Soul (I).*
15. *Enneads*, 22:6:4; *Ibid.*, p. 184.
16. *Enneads*, 22:6:4; *Ibid.*, p. 184.
17. Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV.1.1: *On The Essence Of The Soul (I)*
18. *Ibid.*, IV.2.1: *On The Essence Of The Soul (II)*

19. *Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians, 6:7.*
The full passage reads: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."
20. *Enneads, IV.3.24: Problems Of The Soul (I)*
21. *Ibid., III.2.1-13: Providence: First Treatise.*
22. *Ibid., III.3.4: On Providence (2), Enneads, IV.4.2-3: Problems of the Soul.*
23. *Ibid., III.1.8: Fate.*
24. *Ibid., II.3.9: Are The Stars Causes?*
25. Plotinus, *Enneads, III.22.3.*
26. *Ibid., IV.4.2-3: Problems of the Soul (1)*

27. *Ibid.*, IV.7.34-35: *The Multiplicity of the Ideal Forms.*
28. *Ibid.*, IV.4.2-3: *Problems of the Soul (1)*
29. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 38:6:22-23; MacKenna, Stephen (trans.), *Plotinus: The Enneads*, London, Faber & Faber, 1956; p. 199.
30. *Ibid.*, 30:3:8; pp. 113-114.
31. *Ibid.*, 38:6:35; p. 204.
32. *Ibid.*, 9:6:10; p. 221.
33. A more detailed description of my own mystical experience may be found in my book, *The Supreme Self*, originally published by Atma Books in 1984, and reprinted by O Books, in 2005.
34. The experience of "union", or "mergence" of the soul and the Divine Mind, does not cause the universe to actually disappear. For those not experiencing this "soul-annihilation", the world continues on as before. In fact, the world continues

to exist even for the person experiencing the Divine Mind; it's just that he/she is no longer consciously aware of it. For that person, "all motion has ceased; [but] everything continues." Nonetheless, there are some who insist that the physical universe actually comes into existence with the ego-sense and disappears entirely when the ego-sense disappears; but that is not correct. Otherwise, we would have to declare the demise of the universe each time we entered into deep sleep. Coincident with the disappearance of the ego-sense, the individual soul's *awareness* of the phenomenal universe does indeed cease and is replaced with a direct awareness of its eternal Being, beyond time, space, and all duality. But the God-manifested universe does not depend for its actual existence upon the rising or setting of the individual's ego-sense, as some may suggest.

35. from Swami Abhayananda, "The Song of The Self", in *The Supreme Self*, Winchester UK, O Books, 2005; pp. 26-27. The text of this "Song" also appears in full in the Postscript to this book.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

37. from Swami Abhayananda, "The Song of The Self", in *The Supreme Self*, Winchester UK, O Books, 2005; p. 31-32. This "Song of The Self", quoted throughout this book, was written *during* my unitive experience in 1966, and therefore has the unique status of a direct transmission of the words and vision of the eternal Self.

38. Swami Abhayananda, "Song of The Self", from *The Supreme Self*, Winchester UK, O Books, 2005; pp. 30-31.

39. Jnaneshvar, *Amritanubhav*, V., 66; Swami Abhayananda, *Jnaneshvar: The Life And Works of the Celebrated Thirteenth Century Indian Mystic-Poet*, Olympia, Wash., 1989; p. 152.

PART THREE:

1. The Upanishads were translated from Sanskrit to Persian in 1657 by Dara Shikoh; translated into Latin by Duperron in 1801; translated into German by Schopenhauer in 1818; and translated into English by Max Muller in 1879-1884.

2. For a scholarly, informative, and well-documented treatment of the historical themes in this article, see Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, N.Y., Allworth Press, 2002.
3. *Maitri Upanishad*, 3.2. For a thorough and lucid explanation of the Nondual philosophy of Vedanta, see Swami Nikhilananda, *The Principal Upanishads: "General Introduction" and "Description of Brahman in The Upanishads"*, pp. 13-64; London, George Allen & Unwin, 1963; reprinted by Dover Publications, Inc., Mineola, New York, 2003.
4. *Svetasvatara Upan.*, I:7-10; II:15.
5. *Ibid.*, I:1-3, 6.
6. *Ibid.*, II:16; III:2.
7. *Bhagavad Gita*, VII.5; Swami Nikhilananda (trans.), *The Bhagavad Gita*, New York, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1944, 1987; p. 83.
8. *Bhagavad Gita*, IX.7, 8; *Ibid.*, p.103.

9. *Bhagavad Gita*, VII.5; *Ibid.*, p. 83.
10. *Bhagavad Gita*, IX. 4; *Ibid.*, p. 102.
11. *Bhagavad Gita*, VIII.3; *Ibid.*, p. 92.
12. *Bhagavad Gita*, XIII. 16; *Ibid.*, p.151.
13. *Bhagavad Gita*, II. 20, 17; *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 19.
14. *Bhagavad Gita*, II. 13, 22; *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 20.
15. Shankaracharya, *Commentaries on The Vedanta Sutras*; Thibaut, G. (trans.), *The Vedanta Sutras of Badarayana*, N.Y., Dover Publications, 1962; Vol. I, p. 51; Vol. II, pp.173-74.
16. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood; Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 64.
17. Shankara, *Atma Bodha*, 31.
18. *Vivekachudamani*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 73. In order to illustrate the process of 'superimposition', Shankara utilizes several examples: A person might see a piece of rope lying on the ground and think that it is a snake. In such a case, that person is said to 'superimpose' a snake on the rope. Or, one might be walking by a field at night, and imagine that a wooden post is a man standing in the field; in such a case, one is said to have 'superimposed' a man on the post. Another example Shankara offers is that of a person seeing a piece of an oyster shell—what is known as 'mother of pearl'; but he imagines that it is a piece of silver. He is said to have 'superimposed' the silver on the mother of pearl. All of these examples are intended to be analogous to the superimposition by the *jiva* of a world of objects upon what is really Brahman. And, while it's easy to see how one could mistake one form for another, such as mistaking a post for a man, or a rope for a snake, or a piece of shell for silver; Brahman is formless. How, then, could one mistake Brahman for a universe of forms? The analogies do not stand up to scrutiny.

Shankara does distinguish between a personal illusion (*pratibhasika*) and a universal, or collective, illusion (*vyavaharika*); but, according to Shankara, in both cases, it is the individual *jiva* who is responsible for the creation and maintenance of his own illusory perceptions.

20. Paramahansa Yogananda, *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*, vol. I & II; Los Angeles, Self Realization Fellowship, 1995.

21. Paramahansa Yogananda, *God Talks With Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. II, verse 23; Los Angeles, Self Realization Fellowship, 1995; vol. I, p. 221.

22. The Buddha, *Udana, Patalgam* 8.3., from G.M. Strong, *The Udana: The Solemn Utterances of The Buddha*, trans. by Dawsonne Melancthon Strong, 1902; p. 115. Reprinted 2010 by Forgotten Books.

23. For information about the lives and teachings of the best-known mystics throughout history, see Swami Abhayananda, *History of Mysticism*, London,

Watkins Publishing, 2002; or obtain a revised edition of this title in ebook form on the Kindle reader.

24. *John, Gospel Of*, 13:40
25. *Ibid.*, 17:25.
26. *Ibid.*, 8:54.
27. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 114; Robinson (trans. by Thomas O. Lambdin), 1977, p. 138.
28. *Ibid.*, 51, p. 132.
29. *Luke, Gospel Of*, 17:20.
30. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 3; Robinson, 1977, p. 126.
31. *Ibid.*, 83, p. 135.
32. *Ibid.*, 24, p. 129.
33. *John, Gospel Of*, 1:1.
34. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 50, p. 132.

35. *Ibid.*, 77, p. 135.
36. *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 5:14-16.
37. *Mark, Gospel Of*, 9:1.
38. *Thomas Gospel Of*, 111; Robinson, 1977, p. 138.
39. *Ibid.*, 59, p. 132.
40. *Ibid.*, 70, p. 134.
41. *Ibid.*, 17, p. 128.
42. *Luke, Gospel Of*, 18:18.
43. *Ibid.*, 18:18-30; *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 19:16.
44. *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 5:17.
45. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 105, p. 137.
46. *Ibid.*, 28, p. 130.
47. Philo Judaeus, *On The Creation*, IV.18-25.

48. Philo Judaeus, *Ibid.*, X.36.
49. Philo Judaeus, *Allegorical Interpretation*, 2.86; *On The Confusion of Tongues*, 63; *On The Confusion of Tongues*, 136-137.
50. *New Testament, Gospel of John*, 1.1.
51. *Ibid.*, 1.2.
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63. *Ibid.*; p. 83.
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65. *Ibid.*, Sermon 6; p. 188.

66. Meister Eckhart, Sermon 18, Blackney, Raymond B., *Meister Eckhart, A Modern Translation*, N.Y., Harper Torchbooks, 1941; p. 181.
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69. *Ibid.*, 22:3-4; p. 497
70. *Rig Veda*, x.129.1
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80. Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Heresium*, VI.29.5ff. Roberts, Rev. A. & Donaldson, J. (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1892; Vol. VI.
81. Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 1
82. *Ibid.*, 1
83. *Ibid.*, 4
84. *Ibid.*, 52
85. *Ibid.*, 6

86. *Ibid.*, 16

87. *Ibid.*, 21

88. *Ibid.*, 21

89. *Ibid.*, 37

90. *Ibid.*, 51

91. Simon Magus, *Apophysis Megale* ("The Great Exposition"), quoted by Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio Omnium Heresium*, VI.8; adapted from Roberts, Rev. A. & Donaldson, J. (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1892; Vol. VI, pp. 208-210.

92. Old Testament, *Isaiah:45:4-*; a declaration predated by the Egyptian "Papyrus of Ani", dating from the 30th century B.C.E. (Budge, Wallis, *Egyptian Religion*, N.Y., University Books, 1959; pp. 37-40), wherein is found the following text:

"God is one and alone, and none other exists with Him; God is the One, the one who has made all things. ...He has endured for countless ages, and He

shall endure to all eternity. God is a spirit, ... the Divine Spirit. He is a mystery to His creatures, and no man knows how to know Him. ... He has made the universe, and He has created all that is in it; He has stretched out the heavens and founded the earth. What His heart conceived came to pass straightway, ... and it shall endure forever.

God, Himself, is existence. He lives in all things, and lives over all things. ... He multiplies Himself millions of times, and He possesses multitudes of forms and multitudes of members. God is life, and it is only through Him that man lives. ... God is merciful unto those who reverence Him, and He hears those who call upon Him. He protects the weak against the strong, and He hears the cry of him that is bound in fetters. ...God knows those who know Him; He rewards those who serve Him, and He protects those who follow Him."

93. Philo, *De posteritate Caini*, 14-16; Winston.

94. Philo, *De confusione linguarum*, 136-137; Winston, 1981; p. 90.

95. Heraclitus, based on Freeman, K., *Ancilla To*

The Pre-Socratic Philosophers, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983; pp. 24-34. Fragment nbr. 108.

96. *Ibid.*, 113

97. *Ibid.*, 41

98. *Ibid.*, 78

99. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, V.3.

100. *Maitri Upanishad*, 6.17.

101. *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapters VIII.17-20.

102. *Ibid.*, Chapter IX, 7-10.

103. Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 16.

104. Chuang Tze, Chapter 22.

105. Heraclitus, fragment 88; based on Freeman, K., *Ancilla To The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983.

106. Heraclitus, fragment 30; *Ibid.*

107. Plotinus, *Enneads*, II.4.1: "On The Two Orders of Matter".

108. The word, "true", must be understood in two distinct ways: (1) What is *absolutely* true is what *is*, i.e., the way things *are*, irrespective of human apperception or knowledge; and (2) what is *relatively* true, insofar as it can be humanly apperceived or known, which is always relative to the knower. It is in this latter sense that what is "true" must always remain an individual and subjective judgment. Similarly, what is *absolutely* "true" must remain unknowable.

109. Richard Lewontin, "Billions and Billions of Demons," *The New York Review of Books*, January 9, 1997; p. 31.

110. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.5.11

111. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.9.1: "The Intellectual Principle".

PART FOUR:

1. This is asserted by Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita: 9:4*: "By Me, in my unmanifested form, are all

things in this universe pervaded. All beings exist in Me; I do not exist in them.”

2. “Large Hadron Collider could reveal our origins”, April 19, 2010 by Roger S. Boyd, copyright 2010 McClatchy-Tribune Information Services; appeared April 19, 2010 in PhysOrg Newsletter, www.physorg.com/news190869267.html.

3. Saying of Jesus, in *The Gospel of Thomas*, 77.

4. Shankaracharya, *The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 58.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

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