

# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ



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## PREFACE

I graduated M.D. in the Faculty of Medicine in Hanoi in 1952. Since 1956, I am initiated to philosophy by a profound religious experience, one that placed me in the presence of the Holy and left a distinct imprint on my life.

One afternoon, I suddenly began to understand the two first verses of The Doctrine of the Mean: "What God has conferred is called the Nature, the realization of this nature is called Religion, the illustration of this Religion is called Instruction. This Religion may not be severed from us even for an instant. If it could be severed, it would not be a Religion." I interpreted this as follows: Our Nature is divine, Religion is to follow this Nature, what people are now teaching were called Instruction and not Religion. Religion can never be severed from man even for an instant, because it is natural.

At that time, I have a clear distinction that Man is tripartite: Spirit or God, Soul and Body and that Religion is in our self. We have not to seek it outside. I pledge to study all the religions in the world to see if they or their Scriptures are teaching that Man is tripartite, and that true Religion was already in our self. I found out rapidly that many religions in the world teach that Man is only composed of Soul and Body, and that Religion was a system of teachings taught by some religious leaders. I rejected this assumption as untrue, because for me, true Religion is to be found in our self. I have a very strong feeling that God is not far from us, but is already in the innermost of our self, and immanent in us.

Before this experience of the sacred, I know almost nothing about philosophy, I read philosophical books very little. After this experience, I began to read very avidly, and stayed awake until 3 A.M. to meditate and to write. I have written many books in form of poems. From 1956 to 1975, I have written about 30 books, all in Vietnamese. Many of them are still in the status of manuscripts. Meanwhile, I have delivered many speeches in Saigon. My life is completely changed: I realize that the Doctrine of the Mean taught us how to find the Eternal Center or God in our self. I have spent many years, to study the meaning of the Circle and the Center.

In 1962, I found out that The Center in man is the Third Ventricle of our brain.

In 1976, I discovered the Monistic Theory meaning that everything in the universe emanates from the One, and must return finally to the One. The Emanation is the Extrovertive way, or the Monistic Theory. The Return to the One is the Introvertive way, or Mysticism. In 1966, I was invited to teach Oriental philosophy in the Faculty of Letters in Saigon. In 1970, I was invited to teach Oriental Philosophy in Minh Duc University in Saigon. I taught until 1975, when Communism came in the South. It provided for me an occasion to make known to people my ideas. I thought that I had an intuition of being, an experiential glimpse of what it is to be. And all my researches proved to me that I was in a right way. So, since I began studying comparative religions from the year 1956, I am convinced that we can have only one truth in this world. Truth cannot take adjectives. There cannot be a Lutheran truth, a Mormon truth or a Catholic truth. So I pledge to find out this truth.

After a rather long period of incubation, until 1976 - I was then in Vietnam - I could elaborate a philosophical theory, embracing all the highest trends of thoughts of East and West; past and present. I baptized it as:

- Monistic Theory, using the Oriental parlance,
- Emanation Theory, according to the Western terminology;
- Emanation and Division Theory, in conformity to the style of the Yi Jing (Dịch Kinh).

The Monistic Theory was the common heritage of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and of the Yi Jing (Dịch Kinh). Our Vietnamese ancestors were well aware of that, since their basic ideas were:

The Three Religions (Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism) are from the same Source.

All Religions derive from one Principle.

All converging roads lead to the same destination.

The Monistic Theory, under the guise of the Emanation Theory, was, and still is, the main creed of various Western Occult Societies in the past, and of many sects and cults in the present, such as Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, Kabbalah, Alchemy, Tarot, Astrology, Freemasonry, Rosicrucians, Theosophy, Transcendentalism, The Divine Science, The National Spiritualist Association of Churches, The Arcane School, the New Thought, the Liberal Protestantism, the Islamic Sufism etc.

I began to study all the religions of the East, and next, the religions of the Near-East, Islam and Zoroastrism. Afterward, I studied Judaism, Catholicism, and all the Protestant denominations. At last, I studied all the main secret societies of the Middle-Ages, such as Freemasonry, Rosicrucians, Theosophy etc.

I found out, rapidly, that there are two main streams of ideas in Religions: the Monotheistic philosophy, and the Monistic theory. The Monotheistic philosophy comprises Judaism, Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and maintains that everything in this world is created by God.

The Monistic theory maintains that everything in this world proceeds from the One, and returns to the One. The Monistic theory embraces the Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), Sufism (Islamic mysticism), Catholic Mysticism, all the oriental religions: Brahmanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and all the main secret societies of the West (Freemasonry, Rosicrucians, Alchemy, Theosophy etc.)

It appears clearly that the monotheistic philosophy differs from others of the same group: While Judaism and Islam are strictly monotheist, Catholicism is a triune monotheism. Judaism and Islam do not accept that Jesus Christ is God. Islam declares emphatically: That God is eternal, He begets not and is not begotten. (Quran, Surate CXII).

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity, and the subtle disputes of monophysites and monothelites are absolutely incomprehensible to Islam and to Judaism. If it is so, these religions cannot be the holder of the truth. The monistic theory is rather uniform in its assertion. It claims that everything proceeds from the One and will return to the One. It declares that the true way to be united with God is in our self. The introversion way is declared to be the only way to be united with God.

There are two ways in this world: The extroversion, and the introversion. The former can be called the creative way: The One proceeds to the Many, the descent of God to men. The latter can be called the re-creative way: The Many will be reduced to the One, the ascension of man to God.

I accept the Monistic theory because it is very simple. For it, the world has only two aspects: The

Eternal and the Transitory. The Eternal is the Noumenon, the Transitory is the Phenomenon. The Eternal is the "Quintessence", the Transitory is the "Veil". The Eternal is the Marrow; the Transitory is the Husk. One is Necessity; the other is Contingency. One is the Absolute; the other is the Relative. The two are bounded solidly to each other. One has only to develop these two ideas, to know the mystery of the "unicity of the Real". Eckhart said that "if thou wouldst reach the kernel, thou must break the shell." For me, the truth must be simple, must be accepted by everyone, must be the same always. "Quod est ubique, quod est semper, quod est ab omnibus." There cannot be East and West. The truth then must spring forth since time immemorial from our heart. History is not meaningless. It is but an evolution, a rope, leading to the revelation of pure absolute spirit, or the "true man," at the end of the time. All of the great philosophers such as Hegel, Nietzsche, Teilhard de Chardin, and Marx strove for an ultimate transformation, and for a reversal of the historically conditioned state.

The Monistic theory is, in fact, an United Field Theory that can explain everything. Lincoln Barnett in his book entitled *The Universe* and Dr. Einstein has written about the United Field Theory as follows:

"The United Field Theory touches the "grand aim of all sciences" which as Einstein once defined it, is "to cover the greatest number of empirical fact by logical deduction from the smallest possible number of hypothesis or axioms". The urge to consolidate premises, to unify concepts, to penetrate the variety and particularity of the manifest world to the undifferentiated unity that lies beyond, is not only the heaven of sciences, it is the loftiest passion of the human intellect. The philosopher and mystic as well as the scientist, have always sought through their various disciplines of introspection to arrive at the knowledge of the ultimate, immutable essence that undergirds the mutable illusory world. More than twenty three hundred years ago, Plato declared: "The true lover of knowledge is always striving after being... He will not rest at those multitudinous phenomena whose existence is appearance only. (Loco citato, p. 122)

We can say that everything in this world proceeds from the One to the Many, from the Homogeneous to the Heterogeneous; then the reverse will take place: The Many will be gradually returned to the One. For instance, if we look at our self, we will see that we are composed of trillions of cells now, but at one time we were just a single cell. Yet, as a single cell, we were informally complete and unique, with sufficient content to fill one thousand volumes of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*s. In other words, before we were an adult, we were an adolescent, and before that a child, and before that a infant. Before we were an infant, i.e., before we were born, we were a fetus, and, before that, one embryo. Before we were an embryo, around the time of our own implantation, we were a blastocyst, and, before that, a morula, and before that a zygote of fertilized ovum. Therefore, while life is continuous, our life began when the nucleus of our father's sperm fused with the nucleus of our mother's ovum, or at fertilization.

After that, we will see that decay comes progressively. Illness, old age, and death will take place. And we regress to the One.

The same is true for stars, plants, and animals.

The Monistic Theory helps us discover The Sophia Perennis or Religio Perennis which is the timeless metaphysical truth underlying the diverse religions. It helps us to get rid of everything man-made, of everything superstitious in religion, and discover what is divine, what is permanent, what is natural, carved in our own heart.

From the religious standpoint, the Monistic Theory provides us with a sublime insight: The Deity is not far from man, but is within man. Man, as partaker of the divine essence, or divine nature, is endowed with infinite but still latent potentialities. He must then resort to his own efforts, profit by the help of the universe,

and the collaboration of his congeners, and of other beings, to develop, at the utmost extent, all his capabilities. By proper introspection, concentration and meditation, man can re-discover his divine nature and regain his divine status. Man and other beings in the world partake of the same divine essence. If so, man must love all other beings and cooperate with them. At the end of the spiritual evolution, with a transformed consciousness, elevated to cosmic proportion, man will merge again in the Cosmic Consciousness. This final at-one-ment is called: Moksa, Liberation, Nirvana, or Yoga by Hindus and Buddhists, or Union with God by various saints and seers. In sum, the Monistic Theory, is effectively the common heritage of all saints and seers of the world, East and West, past and present. The core of the theory is one; its expression can be influenced by historical or geographical or cultural contexts. But its main features are always recognizable.

This astounding human consensus - that saints and seers of all ages, and of all nations bequeathed to us, must be considered as the perennial truth. It must serve as a key to open doors leading us to natural and spiritual kingdoms, and as a beacon for our Self-Realization. In this case, we find that Religion will become the new frontier of the social sciences. We have learned a great deal about its breadth, but not about its depth. Religion must make believers the happiest, the most charitable, tolerant, ethical and socially concerned.

I wrote the English version of this book in October, 1990, after I became handicapped. I had a stroke in September, 1989, that left my right hand paralyzed. I must use my computer with my left hand. I write this book by the encouragement of my lovely wife, Yen Thi Le. I am happy that I can accomplish this task. I must thank her very much in so doing.

As for the proof-reading, I must thank my best friend and neighbor, Mr. Max Hess, who has spent much time helping me. I hope that this book will help people find out the perennial truth, and enable them to live happily in this life.

[Tho Van Nguyen](#)

March, 1992

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## Chapter 1

### The Monistic Theory

The Oriental Monistic Theory, with its counterpart, the Western Emanation Theory, can be considered as a perennial philosophy. It is truly the connecting link between religions and philosophies of East and West, serving as foundation to Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism as well as to many Western occult societies and esoteric schools such as Kabbalah, Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, Alchemy and Theosophy. It can be found complete or incomplete in the writings of past and present mystics of all religions. Narrated in diverse mythologies, it was conveyed in symbols and monuments of past civilizations, suggested in numerology, veiled under allegories and metaphors of diverse literatures.

Though discovered independently, by different peoples living in different geographical, historical, cultural and linguistic contexts, it presents itself majestically identical and unchanged through time and space, as the main tradition of humanity, and as the universal, perennial and unadulterated truth, void of biases and distortions.

An earnest study of this theory will enlighten us about theogony, cosmogony, man's nature and destiny, and the meaning of the universe and human life.

The main features of the Monistic Theory can be presented as follows:

This world is not created "ex nihilo", but emanates from one Principle, from one Essence. In other words, this world proceeds from One Principle, by emanation and by division. This Principle has two aspects:

1. The non-manifest aspect: (The "before the world appearance aspect"), or "Xian tian" (Tiên Thiên), according to Oriental philosophers).

The Principle was then indifferentiated, homogenous, ineffable, infinite. It was then designated under various names: Wu-Ji (Vô Cực), Sunyata, Bhutatathata, the Universal Substance, Parabraham, En-Sof (AinSoph), Nothing, the Void, the Primordial Chaos - not in the sense of disorder, but in the sense of the Cosmic Energy not yet manifested in the myriad of beings.

2. The manifest aspect: (The "after the world appearance aspect") or "Hou tian" (Hậu Thiên), according to Oriental philosophers.)

From this Principle, made manifest, proceeded everything by successive emanations, and division.

After this 'so-called' creation, the Principle, the One, was veiled by the multiplicity of phenomena; but It was and is always pervasive, omnipresent.

It is then designated under various names: It was called Substance, or Natura Naturans by Spinoza, 'Élan Vital' by Bergson, Logos by Heraclitus, Nous by Plotinus, Apeiron by Anaximander, Tai-Ji (Thái Cực) by the Yi-Ching (Địch Kinh), Tagatha or Butatathata (Zhen Ru, Chân Như) by Buddhists, The Tao by

Taoists, the Over Soul, the Cosmic Mind, the World Stuff, the Neutral Stuff, the Self, the Ultimate Reality, the True Self, the Supra-Essence, the All- Pervasive, the Mysterium tremendum and fascinans, the Summum Bonum, the Coincidentia Oppositorum, the Godhead by Western philosophers and mystics, God, Brahman, Atman, Osiris, Ammon-Ra, Ahura-Mazda, Jehovah, Zeus, Jupiter, Allah, etc. As Pitirim A. Sorokin pointed out, these names and the visible symbols of the mainly invisible Ultimate Reality or of the Supreme Value are but a mere "finger pointing at it", in no way identical with it. Nor can any of these names or symbols claim monopolistic privilege of being the true name or symbol of the true Reality-Value. They are not God's own names but our human terms superimposed upon the Ultimate Reality, each term coined in accordance with the linguistic, social, cultural and personal properties of a respective social group or person. [1]

## Two aspects of the world

The monistic theory sustains that the world is a whole which has two aspects:

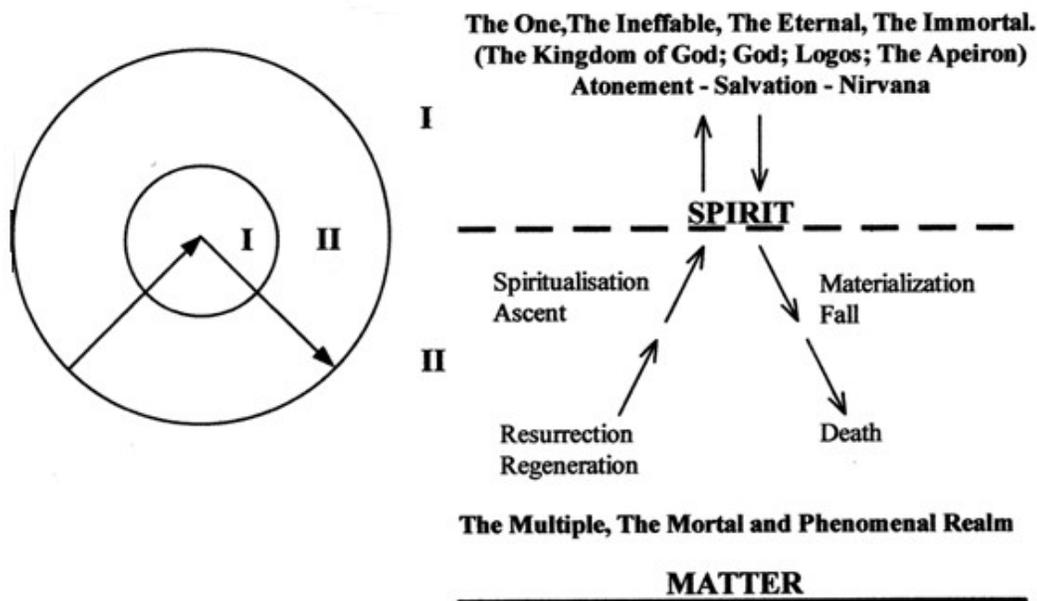
The Eternal aspect (Sub specie aeternitatis). This aspect shows the One, the Essence, the Unchangingness, the Eternal, the Immortal.

The Temporal aspect (Sub specie temporis). This aspect shows the Multiple, the Differentiated, the Phenomenal, the Ever-changing, the Temporal, the Transient and the Mortal.

As the One is above all the opposites, all the polar diversities, it is the Absolute, the Imperishable, the Immortal, the Eternal.

As for the myriad external forms of this One, they are only transitory modes of this Principle, subject to the rhythmical law of appearance and disappearance, of birth and death. Oriental philosophers assert that everything that has names, forms, colors is transitory and perishable.

The following diagram best illustrates these two aspects, or realms, or kingdoms:



### The Temporal Realm and The Eternal Realm

The Inner Circle or Circle #1 stands for The One, the Ineffable, the Eternal, the Immortal (The Kingdom of God; God; Logos; the Apeiron, the Essence of the World, etc.)

The Outer or the Circle #2 represents the Multiple, the Mortal and the Phenomenal Realm.

If one can reach the Circle #1, one is then saved, or attain one's Atonement (At-one-ment), or Nirvana.

The Circle #2 is limited on one side by the Spirit, and on the other side by the Matter. There is a double movement in this circle. If we go out, it is called Extroversion, or Fall, or materialization; the result of it is Death. If we go in, it is called Conversion, Introversion, Ascent, Spiritualisation, Regeneration or Resurrection. The result of it is Life, or Immortal life.

The first kingdom, being the kernel of everything, is unchangeable, but moves and steers everything in the phenomenal realm.

The second kingdom is the kingdom of the phenomenal world, conditioned by space and time, characterized by incessant changes, by a perpetual flux and reflux, by Evolution (egress from the Principle) and by Involution (Regress to the Principle). The Evolution or the Extroversion process departs from Spirit to Matter, while the Involution or Introversion process begins from Matter to end in Spirit and in the Principle. In other words, we can trace the movement of Spirit, from Being to Matter and from Matter to Being. The former is called Incarnation, Fall, Humanization, Materialization, while the latter can be termed as ascent, spiritualisation, divinization. In between the two opposite movements are located death and resurrection or regeneration.

To use the words of the Revelation, we can say that this world changes from Alpha to Omega by cyclical transformations. Thus all the phenomenal changes are intended to realize Perfection. This inevitable movement of the world toward Perfection is termed by some philosophers, such as Samuel Alexander, as the process-God or Deity. Actually, God does not possess the quality of Deity but is the universe as tending to that quality. Only in this sense of attaining towards Deity can there be an infinite actual God. Mystics and seers of all religions conceive nature under a double aspect: God, Substance, Natura naturans - Nature begetting -, Essence, Noumenon, on one hand, and Natura naturata - Nature begotten - the materials and contents of nature, phenomena, incidents, myriad external forms, on the other hand.

The division of the universe into essence and incidents, essence and phenomena helps us to confirm that the active and vital process, that the Essence is God, while the passive product of this process, the whole external world, is only transient manifestations of God.

Substance and modes; the eternal order and the temporal order; active nature and passive nature; God and the world; all these are coincident and synonymous dichotomies. The Noumenon is one, while the phenomena are multiple.

### Immanence of God

This dichotomy of God as Essence and the world as manifestations help us conceive God rather as Being, but not as a Being; impersonal rather than personal; immanent rather than transcendent. It is worthy to note that, according to the main tradition of Christian thought, God is also immanent. Augustine held that the light of God's presence in the human mind enables it to recognize eternal truth. Aquinas, while rejecting the Augustine theory of illumination, affirmed God's omnipresence unambiguously, "God is in all things, not, indeed, as part of their essence, or as a quality, but in a manner that an efficient cause is present to that on which it acts. Hence, God is in all things, and intimately" (Summa Theologiae I.a, 8,1). Similarly, the mystics affirm that the transcendent God is present (even when unrecognized) at the "ground" or "apex" of the soul [2].

Saint John of the Cross sustains that God is present in substance in all soul, be they the greatest

sinners [3].

Spinoza identified God's substance either partly or wholly with the world. A modern theologian, Paul Tillich, while speaking of God "existentially" as the transcendent Object of our "Ultimate Concern", also held that we could not know God without "participating" in him [4].

Seers and mystics of all time, realizing that God is pervasive, and omnipresent, stress upon universal love, universal respect, universal cooperation. Their vision of God's immanence in man and things is now shared and corroborated by the Liberal Protestant's viewpoint. The later proclaim that there is no radical discontinuity, but rather basic continuity or even unity of God with the world; the nature and daily life, as such, are full of miracles; that man is dignified, good, sacred, and infinitely valuable. John Dillinger and Claude Welch wrote in Protestant Christianity: "One major tenet of the liberal view of God, perhaps the most important, has already been suggested: the immanence of God. The Romantics stress on the inner divine spirit; Schleiermacher's conception of the identity of the working of God with the laws of nature; Hegel's philosophy of history and nature as the manifestation of the life of the universal Spirit; the theory of evolution - all these served to focus attention on the presence and working of God within the world rather than upon it. This was not a novel idea; early Christian thought had strongly emphasized the universal presence of the divine Word in the world process, and the doctrine of God's omnipresence had been consistently affirmed by Christian interpreters. But the older conception had almost uniformly taken for granted a radical distinction between the infinite, perfect and immutable God and the finite and corruptible world. This distinction was now being severely modified. The new interpretations began not with radical discontinuity, but with the assumption of a basic continuity, or even unity, of God with the world. Liberalism was more conscious of the nearness and "availability" of God than of the transcendence and holiness of God. This did not mean that God and the world are identical, but it did mean that God is somehow, in varying degree, present everywhere in creation, as well as active upon it. "The meaning of the doctrine of immanence can be seen most clearly in the understanding of the way in which God works in the world. God is not one who existing wholly apart from the world, acts only occasionally or interrupts the natural order in effecting his will. His providence is the guidance of the whole process by his presence within all the processes of nature. "If God appears periodically, he disappears periodically. If he comes upon the scene at special crises, he is absent from the scene in the intervals. Whether is all-God or occasional God the nobler theory? Positively, the idea of an immanent God, which is the God of evolution, is infinitely grander than the occasional worker who is the God of an old theology". The notion of a God who must break into the world process in order to act is not only discredited by science, but it is a less worthy conception than one which sees the whole natural order as the working of God. [5]

It is worthy to note that since the adoption of evolutionary categories in religious thinking, there was an increased emphasis on the "immanence" of God, that is, on the working of God within natural processes rather than by miraculous interruptions of the natural order. As one writer put it in a very influential book, LUX MUNDI, published in England, in 1889:

"The one absolutely impossible conception of God in the present day is that which represents him as an occasional visitor. Science had pushed the Deists' God farther and farther away, and at the moment when it seemed as if he would be thrust out altogether, Darwinism appeared and, under the guise of a foe, did the work of a friend. It has conferred upon philosophy and religion an inestimable benefit by showing us that we must choose between two alternatives: Either God is everywhere present in nature, or he is nowhere. He cannot be here and not there. It seems as if in the providence of God, the mission of modern

science was to bring home to our un-metaphysical ways of thinking the great truth of the divine immanence in creation, which is no less essential to the Christian idea of God than to a philosophical view of nature. "[6]

For Plotinus, and his disciples as well as for the adepts of the Kabbalah, God is the immanent cause and the essential origin of all that constitute beings and things. All are in Him, all emanate from him and return to Him. He is everywhere and nowhere. He is everywhere, because all beings are in Him and by Him. He is nowhere, because He is not contained in any particular being, not in the sum of beings. He exists in fact above being that implies only one of his manifestations. He is above intelligence which though emanating from Him, cannot catch Him. Though people call Him the One or the First, it would be more adequate to give him no name, because there is none that can express his essence. He is the Ineffable and the Unknown. [7]

### Impersonality of God

We see that mystics and philosophers never identify God with the world, but clearly specify that God is the essence of the world, while the later is His manifestations. The monists and emanationists sustain that God being infinite, cannot be limited to a Person; being all-pervasive, cannot be enthroned in some Paradise; being perfect, cannot be separated from all other things. If we can find something different from God, He will be then imperfect, because He will lack "this something" different from Him.

In fact, for many monists, the sole reality is the impersonal Absolute. Personal concepts of the Absolute belong to the sphere of illusion (Maya). They are forms under which the One appears to tutored minds. A personal God is but an aspect, an appearance of the Absolute. Cicero told us that "the gods are not everlasting but are born and perish at long intervals of time, and that they are worlds, countless in numbers". [8]

### Divine Nature of Man

The emanation theory sustains that as God is the inner being of everything, He must be the Kernel of everything, and especially of every human being.

Every human being has then a divine nature, and is "consubstantial" with God, even though he ignores it. The main function of every religion is to show man his ultimate and sublime identity.

### Corollaries of the theory of God's immanence

Monists and emanationists draw from the theory of God's immanence many corollaries.

1). As we see, monists can call the Principle God, but they stress upon an impersonal God rather than an anthropomorphic God.

While common people and religionists conceive God as a suffering, a changing, a jealous and vengeful Deity who has face and arms, back and feet, who repents from his acts, gets easily into tantrums, but can be appeased by the smoke of holocausts (Gen. 8, 20-21. Job 40,9. Ps. 17,36. Ps. 88, 14. Ex. 3,6. 33,13. 33,23. Luke 1,75), who can bargain with Abraham (Gen. 18, 22-33), wrestle with Jacob (Gen. 33, 25-33), talk face to face with Jacob and Moses (Gen. 33, 25-33. Ex. 33, 11), emanationists conceived God as omnipotent, omnipresent, ineffable.

While religionists try to limit God to an individualistic or personal deity, a supra-King upstairs, majestic in his throne, surrounded by a host of angels and saints, emanationists always point out that God must be all and in-all, all pervasive and immanent. They consider as contradictory when one speaks of an unlimited

and infinite God and at the same time limits him spatially and conceptually.

2). The theory of immanence entails that all beings participate to the divine nature. If God is the ground of all that there are, then it ill behooves man to speak slightly of the world of created things. In the emanationists context, God did not create the world out of nothing, but from himself. If God created the world out of his substance, it would not be hard to infer that nature is sacred, being the outer garment of the Over-Soul. Things in the universe, being part of the Whole, operate then in a pre-established harmonious fashion to the welfare and to the conservation of the Whole. There is harmony not only between musical notes, but also between environment and living things, between men and men, and between celestial spheres. This harmony, according to contexts, is termed as accord, cooperation, synergy or symbiosis. . .

3). Similarly, God is also immanent in every man. All emanationists and monists, from East to West, from ancient to modern time, are united in the central belief that the inner, or real self of man, is divine. Each has his spark of divinity. thus they dissented from the common Christian view that man is a creature of God, created in his image, but not sharing his divine nature. It is then logical to say that man is in fact consubstantial with God, is an incarnated Logos, even though he ignores it. Paul call this thesis The Mystery of the Gospel that he aimed to convey to the world. This great mystery can be defined in three words: Christ in You (Ro. 8, 7-11), Christ to be understood as the eternal and all pervasive Logos, but not as the historical Jesus, even though he was one of its spectacular incarnations.

Exactly, because of this Christ's seed, Paul could sustain that we can be developed up to the perfection to reach effectively the stature of Christ, "in this way, we are all to come to unity in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God until we become the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself" (Ep. 4, 13).

4). Based on the belief of the divine nature of man, monists and emanationists profess the unity of all human beings, universal brotherhood and universal respect and love. Being divine by nature, man is sacred and dignified. His depravity is apparent and due only to personal ignorance and to misleading influences of societies. In every man, there are two personalities: Personality No 1, or Natural man, or Essential Man, or Ideal man; Personality No 2, or Cultural Man, molded by creeds and institutions of his social environment, or Existential Man, or Actual Man. Personality No 2, by trials and errors, is always tending to Personality No 1. As Personality No 1, Man is born free; as Personality No 2, Man is everywhere in chains!

The Gospels stress that the Kingdom of God is at hand: If understood as spiritual realization, or as God's realization, the Kingdom of God should be found within us. If understood as happy and peaceful coexistence, it should be found in universal love and universal cooperation, in scientific and wise management and exploitation of the physical and natural environment and resources. . .

The doctrines of the Fall and of an inherited guilt for original sin, were rejected in favor of an appreciation of the natural goodness of man. It is worthy to note that even after the eating of the famous 'apple' by Adams and Eve, man did not fall, but rather did ascent to a divine status as solemnly stated by God himself in Genesis: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil. . ." (Gen. 3, 22).

As Dante rather casually reminds his readers in the Purgatorio, that man is God's man; -homo Dei- may be literally read in his face: it was generally agreed that the eyes make two Os, the eyebrows combined with the nose spell out the M, and since H is an aspirate, this gives us man-HOMO. Then the

ear can be seen as a D, the nostrils and the mouth spell out respectively, an E and an I: DEI. [9]

5). Religion, must also be re-defined: Instead of being a servile adulation, and cult, a bargain for a heavenly passport, it is rather the immediate apprehension of the Infinite in the finite, of the unity in the diversity:

"The contemplation of the pious is the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things, in and through the Infinite, and of all temporal things in and through the Eternal. Religion is to seek this and find it in all that lives and moves, in all growth and change, in all doing and suffering. It is to have life and to know life in immediate feeling, only as such an existence in the Infinite and Eternal. Where this is found, religion is satisfied, where it hides itself, there is for her unrest and anguish, extremity and death. Wherefore it is a life in the infinite nature of the Whole, in the One and in the All, in God, having and possessing all things in God, and God in all. In itself it is an affection, a revelation of the Infinite in the finite, God being seen in it and it in God. " [10]

We can also define religion as a means of ultimate transformation. "Religion is a set of symbols, words, acts, and social groupings which has this thrust toward ultimate, unconditioned transformation of self and/or the world. It does not aim for mere reforms, though these may be part of the path, but for a total, exhaustive change which leaves not the slightest margin for more. Religion is the means of movement between the two poles, the conditioned and profane, and the ultimate or sacred, or unconditioned. It is the individual's attempt to create in and around himself the sacred. " [11]

We can add here M. F. Ashley Montagu's definition of religion. He wrote, "I like to think of religion as man's attempt to penetrate the mystery of life and man's own relatedness to all things, to the world stuff which unites all things in the community and commonality of being. The religious attitude is that in which the person, with reverence, respect and humility, accepting the fundamental unity of all things, asks question of the world in which he lives which are calculated to show how they came to exhibit their infinitely interesting present differences. . . it is the recognition of his own ignorance, and the combination of what used to be called "being in tune with the infinite". [12]

According to emanationists or monists, true religion should be aimed to the divinization of man. The final human status referred to in all mystical or alchemical literature is the glorious metamorphosis of man into God, may it be called Atonement (At-one-ment = to be one with God), union with God, Nirvana, Moksa, Liberation, Return to the Origin). This refrain is repeated by Jesus in his famous prayer to God, prior to his arrest: "That they all may be One as thou Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also be One in us. . . (John 17, 21).

Chinese people honored their great mystics and saints by calling them Zi (TỬ) ; the man who has realized (Liao, LIÊU) the One (Yi, NHẤT). The letter Zi (TỬ) is composed of two letters: Liao, LIÊU= having realized, and Yi, NHẤT = The One). Among these few Elected, some are very popular: Lao-Zi (Lǎo Tử), Confucius (Kong-Zi, Khổng Tử), Zhuang-Zi (Trang Tử).

So man can become God, so man can sit on the throne of God. This seemingly blasphemous assertion is, by far, not a satanic cry of rebellion against God, but is the solemn declaration of God, in Genesis, and of Christ in Revelation about human right: ". . . and the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Gen. 3, 22). "To him, that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne even as I also overcome and am set down with my Father in his throne. (Revelation 3, 21)

Similarly, the world, according to Paul, is so created that it tends also to make out of us, Sons of God. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God. . . ." (Ro 8, 18-19).

6). The doctrine of immanence involved the breaching of the traditional distinction between natural and supernatural. And this meant a profound change in the attitude toward miracles. Since the divine is present in all nature, there are no miracles in the sense of divine intrusions into natural order. In another sense, everything can be said to be a miracle. . . [\[13\]](#).

The silent movements of myriad stars, the blossoming of flowers, the migrations of birds, the birth of a baby, the composition of the air, are greater miracles than a summoning to a paralytic to walk. Knowledge is power. Man, now endowed with scientific and technical power, is performing daily miracles: Telephone, television, aircraft, submarines, organ transplants are out of reach of the understanding and imagination of our ancestors. Miraculous healing can be performed by proper concentration and canalization of magnetic and electromagnetic forces in men - individuals or groups - or in some sites of nature.

7). The theory of immanence equates God's will with the eternal laws that govern all movements and all changes in all planes of the world. To abide by natural laws is then to abide by God's will. While natural laws are eternal and immutable, conventional and human laws are characterized as being created by men, institutions, councils or churches, as dependent on space and time; having a beginning and an end, limited to some geographic area or to some cultural groups. Eternal laws or natural laws emancipate men; human laws enslave man.

8). The problem of evil is solved by emanationists in a way very different from the common view. First, they acknowledge that good and evil come from the same source: The Principle. This view is shared by the Old Testament: "Good or evil, life or death, poverty and wealth, all comes from the Lord" (Ec. 11, 14).

Secondly, things and events, per se, are neutral. They are considered as good or bad by affected agents. The action of an object may vary to the point of contradiction with the varieties of the object on which it acts. "Sea water is the purest and most disgusting; it is drinkable and wholesome for fish, undrinkable and noxious for men." [\[14\]](#)

Besides, many so-called evils are due only to our ignorance, our maladjustment to situations, our lack of cooperation, our malice or egoism. Therefore, these evils can be overcome by science, technology, cooperation. This ancient view of the Yi Jing (Dìch Kinh) is now shared by scientists. The anthropologist M. F. Asley Montagu asserts: "The ground for my belief in the reality and the unity of the cosmos are scientific and they are simple. As a scientist who has been especially interested in the origin and development of human nature I have been concerned with the study of living things from the simplest to the most complex. The conclusion to which I have been led as a consequence is that the cosmos which, in microcosm one sees in the living organism, is a harmonic one, and all the evidence, so far as I am able to read such of it as is available, indicates that the macrocosmos is a harmonic one too. This belief is not an act of faith, but a reasoned conclusion from the evidence. I see that even the particles that constitute the nucleus of the atom function in harmonic relation to each other. I see that single celled organisms are mutually attracted to each other. I see that the cells which comprise the multicellular organism are in continuous cooperation with each other. And I see that all living things are preserved by cooperation and destroyed by disoperation. Through the whole realm of animated nature life exhibits increasingly more complex and higher levels of integration at the cooperative level, culminating in man - unquestionably, in some of his

present cultural forms, the most destructive creature of the face of the earth, the creature that possesses the highest capacities for cooperation! Original sin, the innate depravity of humanity and brattishness of human nature, and all similar doctrines are nothing but unhappy guesses calculated to explain the disordered of evil conduct of some human beings.

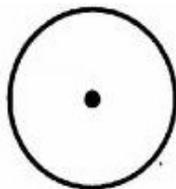
I now understand as a scientist, and can explain to others, the causes of human disoperative behavior - and it has nothing to do with "original sin" or innate depravity. On the other hand, it has everything to do with the fact that human beings are not innately disoperative but that they are caused - some of them - to behave disoperatively by other human beings. . . . Meanwhile, I make the point that man does not stand alone against the cosmos, but rather that the cosmos is an environmental necessity of man without which he could not for a moment exist, and that he is, in fact, a product of the cosmos. [\[15\]](#)

Before using the tenets of various creeds and philosophical schools of East and West to uphold the Monistic Theory, let us have again a global view of the Theory with some more salient characteristics.

First of all, prior to the existence of the world, the Essence is the Absolute One. It was then called the Void, the Ein-Sof, Sunyata, Bhutatatatha, Wu Ji (Vô Cực), or symbolized by the 1, or by the metaphysical Zero: 0.

At the beginning of the world, the Absolute one begets the "Polarized One", containing in itself all the potential opposites: Yin and Yang, Spirit and Matter. It was then called Tai Ji (Thái Cực), Logos, Kether etc. and symbolized by various devices such as:

- 1) A Circle with a Point in the Center. The Point stands for the Logos; The Circle stands for the World.



- 2) The Tai Ji symbol: Encompassing Yin and Yang.



**The Tai Ji Symbol**

- 3) A Rebis figure (Re = Res = Thing. Bis = Dual)



**The Re-Bis**

4) An Androgyne figure (Andro = Male; Gyne = Female; both constitute an hermaphrodite figure).



**The Androgyne**

5) By the number 5. (5 being composed of 2, an even number representing the Yin, and of 3, an odd number, representing the Yang).

6) By the number 15 [15 being composed of 6 = Yin, and 9 = Yang. The 6 and the 9 are used in the Yi Jing (Dịch Kinh) to represent the Earth and Heaven, the broken line (Yin) and the unbroken line (Yang) ].

The Absolute One begets the world by Emanation and Division. Emanation means irradiation, or emission of its own light or substance. Division is self-explaining:  $1$ ,  $1/2$ ,  $1/4$ ,  $1/8$ ,  $1/16$ ,  $1/32$ ,  $1/64$ ,  $1/128$ ,  $1/n$ ,  $1/\square$  The emanation or division cannot be indefinite, cannot be without end. At some stage of the process, there is a turning point, a changing of direction, a process of regress or absorption...Therefore, after the emanation period, succeeds the absorption or reintegration period. The whole process of emission and absorption is called: The Cyclical Change by the Yi Jing; the Samsara by Hindus and Buddhists; The Ouroboros by Western esoteric schools.

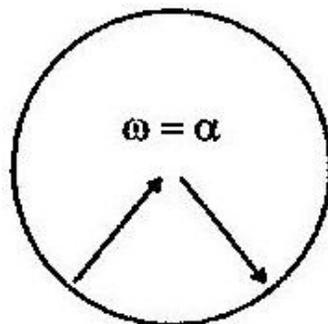
If we represent the beginning of this process by Alpha, and the end of the process by Omega, we can

easily realize that  $\omega = \alpha$ . The whole process is divine, because we read in the Revelation; "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, said the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (Re 1:8)

The philosophy of emanation merges into religion and mysticism if we change the term Essence into God, Tao, Sunyata, or Bhutatatatha.

The emanation theory is linked with these theories: Pantheism, if it means that God is present in everything, but not everything is God; God's immanence in the world; Metempsychosis; Reminiscence of Plato; the final At-One-ment: Union with God, Nirvana.

The idea of the world first emanating from the One, and subsequently reabsorbed by it, can be pictured by a cycle of change:



**The Cycle of Change**

This simple schema not only sums up the monistic theory by showing the world originating from the Principle (The Alpha), and ending in the Principle (The Omega) through a process of cyclical change (evolution-involution; egress- regress; flux-reflux; extroversion-introversion; expire-inspire; day of Brahma-night of Brahma; divergence-convergence; emanation-resorption; dispersion- reintegration etc. ), but it can also give a better view on human nature and destiny, as well as on cosmogony. It is worthy to note that many scientists begin to accept this cyclical theory of the universe.

New York Time, science essayist Malcolm W. Brown wrote: "Two rival theories about the ultimate fate of the universe are running neck and neck just now. The excitement of the race has spurred astronomers, mathematicians, particle physicists, chemists and theorists to search their specialties for clues that might contribute something to the outcome. The question is whether the universe is "open" and will continue for ever its present apparent expansion, or whether it is "closed", destined one day to stop expanding and fall back on itself, to be then reborn. If the universe is "open" and ever expanding, then, of course, the energy needed to sustain life would eventually become so dispersed as to be unusable, and everything would die".

"Some scientists", Brown says, "develop personal preferences for one kind of Gotterdammerung or another. There are those who would prefer an open, one-shot universe, considering it to be consistent with the Biblical Scripture. Some would prefer a closed, oscillating universe esthetically akin to the Hindu wheel of death and rebirth. " (February 10, 1981)

"These scientists, writes the New Yorker, "are coming around to the view that the universe has a heart beat. The cosmos expands and contracts much as a heart does, bringing to life a succession of universes with each lub-dub. "The magazine comments: We congratulate science on finally beginning to discover its true identity, as an agency for corroborating ancient wisdom. Long before the Christian era, and even before Homer, the people of India had arrived at (such a) cosmogony. " (July 17. 1965) [\[16\]](#)

One of the scientist interviewed, Jeremiah Ostriker, who recently won the American Astronomical Society's Warner Prize, stated: "There are a lot of similarities between the mystic view of the world, and of Einstein's. I don't know whether it's coincidental that currently the best cosmology is the "big bang" cosmology and that the best potential rival is a cyclic one, which is more like the Einstein's view. I am intrigued, I suspect that I could learn a lot from thinking and talking about it." Dr. Wheeler added, "One has to be very humble in the face of people who have dealt with these eternal issues over so many generations." The other Princeton scientists interviewed agreed in principle with Dr. Wheeler's views. Several years later, the New York Times quotes one of them, Dr. Robert H. Dicke, as suggesting "a model of successive universes reincarnating themselves in changing forms "almost suggestive of Hindu beliefs." (March 12, 1978).

It is immensely interesting that the black holes of spaces, "originally thought to be most 'passive' objects in the universe, now appear to be the most active. "At an international symposium at Cornell University, Dr. Dennis Sciame of Oxford, made the foregoing statement based on five years of analyzing their characteristics. He described this new concept as a "conceptual revolution", to which theorists "are still trying to adjust". Sciame and other scientists at the meeting considered the possibility that the black hole in its final stages radiates out again into space and starts a new cycle going. (New York Times October 12, 1980)

Astronomer Ernest J. Opik states in his book, *The Oscillating Universe*, "The whole cosmos is performing a giant oscillation. At present, it expands, shoots out of the chaos of the primeval focal point, and while in flight, sheltering the wondrous metamorphoses of life. After many thousands of millions of years, expansion will cease, and the world will collapse into its former focus, the primeval atom, where materiality will melt and disappear, only to rebound and precipitate itself into new expansion, with new metamorphoses and dreams. . ." [\[17\]](#)

The monistic theory is well described by Blavatsky in *Isis Unveiled*. "The esoteric doctrine teaches, like Buddhism and Brahmanism, and even the Kabala, that the one infinite and unknown Essence, or God, exists from all eternity, and in regular and harmonious successions is either passive or active. In the poetical phraseology of Manu (The ancient Hindu lawgiver), these conditions are called the "day" and the "night" of Brahma. Brahma is either "awake" or "asleep".

Upon inaugurating an active period, an expansion of the Divine Essence, from within outwardly, occurs in obedience to eternal and immutable law, and the phenomenal or visible universe is the ultimate result of the long chain of cosmic forces thus progressively set in motion. In like manner, when the passive condition is resumed, a contraction of the Divine Essence takes place, and the previous work of creation is gradually and progressively undone. The visible universe becomes disintegrated, its material dispersed, and "darkness", solitary and alone, broods once more over the face of the "deep".

To use a metaphor, which will convey the idea still more clearly, an outbreathing of the "unknown essence" produces the world and an inhalation causes it to disappear. This process has been going from all eternity, and our present universe is but one of an infinite series which has no beginning and will have no end. [\[18\]](#)

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[\[1\]](#) Cole Editor, *This Is My Faith*, Harper, 1956, pp. 212-213.

- [2] The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, pp. 344-345.
- [3] La Montée du Carmel (Les Oeuvres spirituelles du Bienheureux Père Jean de la Croix. Desclée et Brower, pp. 133-134.
- [4] The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, pp. 344, 345.
- [5] John Dillinberger & Claude Welch, Protestant Christianity, Schreibers, 1954, pp. 217-218.
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- [7] Henri Seroya, La Kabbale, Grasset, 1947, p. 59.
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- [10] John Dillenberger & Claude Welch, Protestant Christianity, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1954, p. 184.
- [11] Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973, p. 7.
- [12] Stewart G. Cole Ed., This Is My Faith, Harper and Brothers New York, 1956, p. 178.
- [13] John Dillenberger & Claude Welch, Protestant Christianity, Charles Scriber's Sons, New York, 1954, pp. 217-222.
- [14] Theodor Gomperz, The Great Thinkers, New York, Humanities Press, 1964, p. 68.
- [15] Stewart G. Cole, Ed., This Is My Faith, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1956, pp. 179-180.
- [16] Sylvia Cranston and Carey Williams, Reincarnation, A New Horizon in Science, Religion, and Society), New York: Julian Press, 1984, pp. 349-351).
- [17] Ibidem, pp. 349-353.
- [18] H. P. Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled, II. pp. 264-265.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 2

### Mysticism and the Monistic Theory

There is an intimate link between the Monistic and Emanation theory with Mysticism. One can say that, if the Emanation Theory is the Tree of Life, Mysticism is its fruit. On the one hand, the Monistic Theory is elaborated and formulated by Mystics who are at the same time philosophers, and on the other hand, the Monistic Theory can help people realize Mysticism or Union with God.

The Monistic theory formulates that the external world is proceeding progressively from the One, while Mysticism proclaims that everything must return to the One. Both form the great circle of world changes and englobes everything in themselves.

The Monistic Theory is the way of creation, it is extrovert, while Mysticism is the way of re-creation, it is introvert.

#### What is Mysticism?

Mysticism, put simply, is selfless, direct, transcendent, unitive experience of God or Ultimate Reality, and the experiencer's interpretation of that experience. [\[1\]](#)

"It is a change whereby that self turns from the unreal world of sense in which it is normally immersed, first to apprehend, then to unite itself with Absolute Reality: finally, possessed by and wholly surrendered to this Transcendent Life, becomes a medium whereby the spiritual world is seen in a unique degree operating directly in the world of sense. In other words, we are to see the human mind advance from the mere perception of phenomena, through the intuition - with occasional contact - of the Absolute under its aspect of Divine Transcendence, to the entire realization of, and union with, Absolute Life under its aspect of Divine Immanence.

The completed mystical life, then, is more than intuitive: it is theopathic. In the old, frank language of the mystics, it is the deified life." [\[2\]](#)

AL-Ghazali comments: "When the mystic enters into the pure and absolute Oneness of the One and into the Kingdom of the One and Alone, mortals reach the end of their ascent... No higher ascent for the soul is possible, for there is no height beyond the highest and no multiplicity in the face of the Unity..." [\[3\]](#)

This Unitive life is rendered in verses by Jalalu'd Din:

"With Thy Sweet Soul, this soul of mine  
 Hath mixed as Water doth with Wine.  
 Who can the Wine and Water part,  
 Or me and Thee when we combine?  
 Thou art become my greater self,

Small bounds no more can me confine.

Thou hast my being taken on,

And shall not I now take on Thine? ..." [4]

If a mystic is a man who seeks the one God, the Substance of things, he is the proselyte of the Emanation Theory. Evelyn Underhill wrote: "One can say that this view appears early in the history of Greek philosophy. It is developed by Dionysius, by the Kabalists, by Dante; and is implied in the language of Rulman Merswin, St. John of the Cross and many other Christian ecstasies.

"The solar system is an almost perfect symbol of this concept of Reality; which finds at once its most rigid and most beautiful expression in Dante 'Paradisio'. The Absolute Godhead is conceived as removed by a vast distance from the material world of sense; the last or lowest of that system of dependent worlds or states which, generated by or emanating from the Unity or Central Sun, become less in Spirituality and Splendor, greater in multiplicity, the further they recede from their source. That Source - the Great Countenance of the Godhead - can never, say the Kabalists, be discerned by man. It is the Absolute of the Neoplatonists, the Unplumbed Abyss of later mysticism: the Cloud of Unknowing wraps it from our sight. Only by its "emanations" or manifested attributes can we attain knowledge of it. By the outflow of these same manifested attributes and powers the created universe exists, depending in the last resort on the Latens Deitas: Who is therefore conceived as external to the world which he illuminates and vivifies." [5]

"St. Thomas Aquinas virtually accepts the Doctrine of Emanations when he writes: "As all perfections of Creatures descend in order from God, who is the height of perfection, man should begin from the lower Creatures and ascend by degrees, and so advance to the knowledge of God... And because in that roof and crown of all things, God, we find the most perfect unity, and everything is stronger and more excellent the more thoroughly it is one; it follows that diversity and variety increase in things, the further they are removed from Him who is the first principle of all." [6]

"Suso, whose mystical system, like that of most Dominicans, is entirely consistent with Thomist philosophy, is really glossing Aquinas when he writes: "The supreme and super-Essential Spirit has ennobled man by illuminating him with a ray from the Eternal Godhead... Hence from out the great ring, which represents the Eternal Godhead, there flow forth... little rings, which may be taken to signify the high nobility of natural creatures". [7]

### The theory of Immanence is the second pillar of mysticism

"To the holder of this theory, wrote Mrs. Evelyn Underhill, the quest of the Absolute is no long journey, but a realization of something which is implicit in the self and in the universe: an opening of the eyes of the soul upon the Reality in which it is bathed... "God", says Plotinus, "is not external to anyone, but is present with all things, though they are ignorant that He is so." In other and older words, "The Spirit of God is within you". "The Absolute, Whom all seek, does not hold Himself aloof from an imperfect material universe, but dwells within the flux of things: stands as it were at the very threshold of consciousness and knocks, awaiting the self's slow discovery of her treasures." "He is not far from any of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being". Aquinas says: "Since God is the universal cause of all Being, in whatever region Being can be found, there must be the Divine Presence." The theory of immanence... "is the philosophical basis of that practice of introversion, which has been the "method" of all great practical mystics of all creeds. That God, since He is in all - in a sense, is all - may most easily be found within our

self... They claim with Ruysbroeck, that "by a simple introspection in fruitful love", they "meet God without intermediary." They hear the Father of Lights "saying eternally, without intermediary or interruption, in the most secret part of the Spirit, the one, unique, and abysmal Word."

"This discovery of a "divine" essence or substance, dwelling, as Ruybroeck says, at the apex of man's soul is that fundamental experience \_ found in some form or degree in all genuine mystical religion - which provides the basis of the New Testament doctrine of the indwelling spirit. It is, variously interpreted, the "spark of the soul" of Eckhart, the "ground" of Tauler, the Inward Light of the Quakers, the "Divine Principle" of some modern Transcendentalists; the fount and source of all true life. At this point, logical exposition fails mystic and theologian alike. A tangle of metaphors takes its place. We are face to face with the "wonder of wonders" - that most real, yet most mysterious, of all the experiences of religion, the union of man and divine, in a nameless something, which is "great enough to be God, small enough to be me".

"According to the doctrine of Immanence, creation, the universe, could we see it as it is, would be perceived as the self-development, the self-revelation of this indwelling Deity.

"I understood", says St. Teresa, "how our Lord was in all things, and how He was in the soul; and the illustration of a sponge, filled of water was suggested to me."

"The world-process, then, is the slow coming to fruition of that Divine Spark which is latent alike in the Cosmos and in man. "If," says Boehme, "thou conceivest a small minute circle, as small as a grain of mustard seed, yet the Heart of God is wholly and perfectly therein: and if thou art born in God, then there is in thyself (in the circle of thy life) the whole Heart of God undivided." [8]

"It is worth noticing that both the theological doctrines of reality which have been acceptable to the mystics implicitly declare, as science does, that 'the universe is not static but dynamic; a World of Becoming'. According to the doctrine of Immanence, this universe is free, self-creative. The divine action floods it: no part is more removed from the Godhead than any other part. "God," says Eckhart, "is nearer to me than I am to myself; He is just as near to wood and stone, but they do not know it." [9]

### Goal of Mysticism: Return to the One, Union with the One

A true mystic must be an emanationist; a true emanationist must be a mystic.

Both start their vocation by an illumination: The mystery of Being is revealed to them. They see nature's secret and God in all things. They realize that the Godhead, as Being or Essence, is manifesting itself by emanation, through all the phenomena.

Thus, they start their new life by a personal experience and not by a hearsay. After experiencing the presence of God in their soul, they see God immanent in the world. They declare with Eckart: "All that a man has here externally in multiplicity is intrinsically one. Here all blades of grass, wood and stone, all things are one." They sing with William Blake:

To see a world in a Grain of Sand,  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour. [10]

The next step is to see the two selves in them:

1). An individual self or the human soul constituting with the body, the world of phenomena and of

becoming: a transient world with transient sentiments, thoughts, dreams and imaginations, with physiological and anatomical changes, a world of actual facts, a world of personalities and separateness.

2). An Universal or Divine Self, constituting the world of Essence, of permanence, of eternity, of immortality and ideal, of serenity and happiness...

If asked for the choice between the two selves, the mystic must naturally opt for the Divine Self, and reject the phenomenal and transitory self. This greatest event, experienced only by greatest mystics in the world, is termed as Sudden Illumination, or Sudden Self-Realization .

Plotinus said: "No doubt we should not speak of seeing; but we cannot help talking in duality, seen and seer, instead of boldly the achievement of unity. In this seeing, we neither hold an object nor trace distinction: there is no two. The man is changed, no longer himself nor self-belonging; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into it, one with it... [11]

Then, no more Thou-I relationship, no more separateness, no more distinction, since:

" All that is not one must ever  
Suffer with the wound of Absence,  
And whoever in Love's city  
Enters, finds but room for One  
And but in One-ness, Union." [12]

Everything external is considered by a mystic as his companions, helping him on his way to God. A dying Hindu ascetic expressed himself as follows:

" Oh Mother Earth, Father Sky  
Brother Wind, Friend Light, Sweetheart Water,  
Here take my last salutation with folded hands!  
For today I am melting away into the Supreme  
Because my heart became pure,  
And all delusion vanished,  
Through the power of your good company. [13]

This transcendental state requires, then, the prior loss of self, prior loss or prior death of human self, or human soul. It is what is referred to in the Gospel as self-denial (Mat. 16:24. Mark 8:34. Luke 9: 23). Jesus was emphatic about that. In the Latin version of the Vulgate, he said: "Qui enim voluerit animam suam salvam facere, perdiderit eam; qui autem perdiderit animam suam propter me, inveniet eam. (Mat. 16:26) (For whosoever will save his soul, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his soul for my sake, shall find it.) [14]

This loss of the human self is termed by Buddhists, as annihilation of personality [15]; by Sufis, as total absorption in God [16]; by Chuang Tzu, as loss of self [17]; by Hindu mystics, as "that art thou" [18].

We see that the greatest mystics always profess the doctrine of annihilation of the ephemeral personality, of the ephemeral self or human soul, or of the limited personality, and they are reluctant to use the term "perfecting of personality", or transformation of the self into God, because, according to their view,

the ephemeral cannot be changed into the eternal.

On the contrary, many Christian and Moslem mystics prefer the I-Thou formula. For them, the mystical life consists of Love, and finally of Spiritual Marriage between the human soul -the Bride- and God or Christ -The Bridegroom-. In the Divine Union, they like to keep their own identity and personality. For me, this is a very low conception of mysticism, because it implicates duality.

The Medieval Alchemists thought that they could purify the Soul, which stands for the Lead -, and transmute it into the "pure Gold", -which stands for God or Christ. They called it "the Great Work". This could be done, if they could have at their disposition the "Philosopher's Stone" -which stands for the "Immanent God".

Common people look at the Mystic Way as an external pilgrimage, a quest for the Holy Grail, or for a Hidden Treasure in some lost land...

Poets, such as the Sufi poet, Attar, describe the mystic way as a journey through "Seven Valley", an arduous trip from the material to the spiritual world.

"Through all these metaphors of pilgrimage to a goal, a road followed, distance overpassed, fatigue endured, there runs one definite idea: that the traveling self, in undertaking the journey, is fulfilling a destiny, a law of the transcendental life; obeying an imperative need. The chosen Knights are destined or called to the quest of the Grail. "All men are called to their origin", says Rulman Merswin, and the fishes which he sees in his Vision of Nine Rocks are impelled to struggle, as it were "against nature ", uphill from pool to pool towards their source.

"All mystical thinkers agree in declaring that there is a mutual attraction between the Spark of the Soul, the free divine germ in man, and the Fount from which it came forth. "We long for the Absolute," says Royce, "only is so far as in us the Absolute also longs and seeks, through our very temporal striving, the peace, that nowhere in Time, but only, and yet absolutely, in Eternity."[\[19\]](#)

As for me, the Goal of all mystics is in our heart, and not outside. We have not to consider it as a long external journey. We must find our way in our self.

To reconcile these different views, we can say that the final Goal is the same - that is Union with God - while initial conceptions and personal expressions can vary according to temperament, to cultural contexts, to linguistic preference and to metaphorical veils.

Mystics are aware of these differences:

"There are two kinds of Samadhi," writes Nikhilananda. In the one, the aspirant "retains consciousness of the individual soul, the body, and the world, and at the same time sees them all as permeated by Brahman..." In the other, "the I-consciousness is totally obliterated, and there no longer remains any distinction between knower, knowledge, and the object of knowledge."[\[20\]](#)

Prabhavananda writes: "Samadhi is chiefly of two kinds: Savikalpa, lower Samadhi, and Nirvikalpa, the higher kind. In the lower form of Samadhi, there exist the sense of "I" as distinct, though not separate from God, wherein is realized the personal aspect of God. God the Creator, God the Father, God the Mother, God the Friend, God the Beloved - any or all of these aspects of God may then be realized in their completeness.

"Nirvikalpa is the higher form of Samadhi, wherein no sense of the separate ego is left, and there is realized the oneness of the self with God, the Impersonal. In that experience, there is neither I nor you.

neither one nor many. Pantajali defines it as the cessation of all waves of the mind, that is, the complete stoppage of all thoughts and impressions of the minds, conscious and unconscious. The Christian mystic Meister Eckhart mentions the same method of attainment in *Mystische Schriften*. "Memory, understanding, will tend toward diversity and multiplicity of thought, therefore you must leave them all aside, as well as perception, ideation, and everything in which you find your self or seek your self. Only then can you experience this new birth - otherwise never." [21]

Evelyn Underhill wrote: "The metaphysical mystic, for whom the Absolute is impersonal and transcendent, describes his final attainment of that Absolute as deification, or the utter transmutation of the self in God."

The mystic for whom intimate and personal communion has been the mode under which he best apprehended Reality, speaks of the consummation of this communion, its perfect and permanent form, as the Spiritual Marriage of his soul with God...

The language of "deification" and of "Spiritual Marriage" then is temperamental language: and is related to subjective experience rather than to objective fact. It describes on the one hand the mystic's astonished recognition of a profound change effected in his personality - the transmutation of his salt, sulfur, and mercury into Spiritual Gold - on the other, the rapturous consummation of his love... [22]

It is worth noticing that these different attitudes can be explained also by the influence of different religions, which exert upon mystics and individuals.

According to Will Herbert "... The higher religions of mankind fall into two main groups distinguished by widely different, often diametrically opposed preconceptions and attitudes.

One group we may quite properly call Hebraic, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The other group consists, as Moore points out, of "the esoteric religions and philosophies of India and of Greece, and the foreign mysteries of the Hellenistic-Roman world." Perhaps the most appropriate designation for this type would be Greco-Oriental; Buddhism and Yoga are its best known modern representatives..."

"... Hebraic and Greco-Oriental religion, agree in affirming some Absolute Reality as Ultimate, but they differ fundamentally in what they say about this Reality. To Greco-Oriental thought whether mystical or philosophic, the Ultimate Reality is some primal impersonal force. To call it God, as so many has done, would be misleading; it is more nearly "goodness" than God, an all-engulfing divine quality, the ground and end of everything. Whether one names it Brahman or the All-Soul or Nature (as Spinoza does), or Nothing At All (as is the way of many mystics) does not really matter; what is meant is very much the same in all cases: some ineffable, immutable, impassive divine substance that pervades the universe or rather is the universe insofar as the latter is all real. This of course is pantheism; the All is "God". Greco- Oriental religion, whatever its specific form, irresistibly tends towards a pantheistic position.

"Nothing could be further from normative Hebraic religion. To Hebraic religion, God is neither a metaphysical principle nor an impersonal force. God is a living Will, a "living", active Being... endowed with personality." As against the Greco-Oriental conception of immanence, of divinity permeating all thing and constituting their reality, Hebraic religion affirms God as a transcendent Person, who has indeed created the universe but who cannot without blasphemy be identified with it.

Where Greco-Oriental thought sees continuity between God and the Universe, Hebraic religion insists on discontinuity. "Hebrew religion, Frankfort declares. "rejects precisely this doctrine (that the divine is immanent in nature). The absolute transcendence of God is the foundation of Hebrew religious thoughts.

God is absolute, unqualified, transcending every phenomenon... God is not in sun and stars, rain and wind: they are his creatures and serve him." [23]

Our study on the Theory of Emanation, and Mysticism leads us to this very important conclusion:

Mysticism can be labeled as an esoteric religion, common to East and West. It is based on the Emanation Theory, viewing the world as proceeding from God; on the dual nature of man - human and Divine -; on the dual aspect of the world - transient and eternal, phenomenal and essential; on the immanence of God; on salvation by personal gnosis and illumination; and on final union with God. We must repeat that for mystics, God or the Ultimate Reality is rather a primal impersonal force, pervading the world. It is an esoteric religion, characterized by "the Kingdom of God within", by the search of the immanent God within the soul.

It is, therefore, reserved for an elected few. The aim of this esoteric religion is Union with God, which means Deification. It does not search for a Spiritual Marriage with God or Christ. It is not a communion with God, because this still implicates duality. It is not a long pilgrimage, because it is an internal quest for the Immanent God. It does not search for Paradise, nor for the beatific vision of God, but for the Identity with God.

In our way back to God, we are given a great gift, namely our Conscience, which, if we listen to it, can become a Pole Star or a beacon, leading us safely to our final goal.

The laws that govern mystics are eternal laws written in the heart of everything, as well as in their heart. These laws are not easy to be found out, and we should be very careful to find them. They are physical, anatomical, physiological, psychological, and spiritual, that guide us only to our best. In our times, we find out that between us and the environment, there is an harmonious symbiosis. And we are trying to keep our balance with the environment: no ecological pollution, no whimsical deforestation, no whimsical killing of animals etc

Institutional religions are based on the theory of creation ex nihilo; on the only human nature of man, and his depravity; on the transcendence and separateness of God from the world; they can be termed as exoteric religions, characterized by the "Kingdom of God without", "Kingdom of God among men, instead of within men"; by the search of God in churches, in temples, in external ceremonies, in sacraments, pomps and prayers. They are different from each other, and try to have as many followers as possible, and can be engaged in inhuman and bloody wars in order to consolidate their power and their control over men. Their aim is the fruition of the Beatific Vision of God in some Paradise, and the avoidance of eternal damnation in Hell. For them, the world is governed by arbitrary laws of God, who can destroy it at any time.

These two views of reality can help us have a better insight on the dual aspect -esoteric and exoteric- of the religious entity.

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[1] Hal Bridges, American Mysticism, Harper and Row, 1970, p. 2.

[2] Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism, A Meridian Book, p. 174-175.

[3] Hal Bridges, American Mysticism, Harper and Row, 1970, p. 2.

[4] Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism, A Meridian Book, p. 426.

- [5] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, A Meridian Book, 1974, p. 97.
- [6] *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1,iv. cap. i.(Rickaby's translation).  
Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, A Meridian book, 1974, p. 97.
- [7] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, A Meridian Book, 1974, p. 97-98.
- [8] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* A Meridian Book, New York, pp.97-100.
- [9] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* A Meridian Book, New York, p. 99.
- [10] Hal Bridges, *American Mysticism*, Harper and Row, 1970, p. 3.
- [11] *Ibidem* p. 3.
- [12] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, A Memento Book, New American Library, 1974, p. 82.
- [13] *Ibidem* p. 208.
- [14] Common translation: "For whosoever will save his life etc and whosoever will lose his life, etc.
- [15] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 171.
- [16] *Ibidem* p. 171.
- [17] Gia Fu Feng & Jane English, trans., *Chuang Tzu*, Alfred A. Knoff. p. 20.
- [18] Hal Bridges, *American Mysticism*, p. 75.
- [19] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, A Meridian Book, 1974, p. 132.
- [20] Hal Bridges, *American Mysticism*, Harper, 1970, pp. 75-76.
- [21] Swami Prabhavananda, *Yoga and Samadhi*. From Christopher Ishwerwood, ed. *Vedanta for the Western Word*. 1945.
- [22] Evelyn Underhill. *Mysticism*, p. 415.
- [23] Will Herbert, *The Fundamental Outlook of Hebraic Religion, from Judaism and Modern Man*, 1951, pp. 282-283.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 3

### Diverse Languages used in the Monistic Theory

The Monistic Theory has used many kinds of languages to express some of its ideas. These are the mythological, the metaphorical, the numerical, the literal, the symbolical, the astrological, and the artistic language etc.

#### A) The Mythological Language

Idea to be conveyed: This world is created from the One.

Mythological language: This world is created from the dismemberment of God or from the Primeval Man. In other words, the Many proceed from the One, or One is All.

##### 1. Myth and religion of the North [\[1\]](#)

The three Gods, Odin, Vill and Ve killed Ymir, the giant... They carried his body into the middle of the great void. They made sea and lakes of his blood, earth of his flesh and the sky of his skull, placing a dwarf under each of the four corners, as if to hold it up. The clouds were made of Ymir's brains and stars and heavenly bodies from sparks which flew from Muspell. The Gods ordered their movements and thus established days and years.

The earth was circular and, on the outside, was a mighty ocean. By its shores the Gods established a dwelling place for the giants. Within, they built Midgard, the world of men, fortified as it seems, with a fence made of Ymir's eyelashes. (See *ib.* p. 293, 275, 276) In the South, there was another world, blazing hot, and it was called Muspell. (see *ib.* p. 275)

Four dwarfs, Austri, Vestri, Sudri, Nordri were said to uphold the four corners of the sky, and several allusions to this myth are found in early poetry. (See *ib.* p. 234)

Iranian tradition also has striking parallels with the Norse creation myth. The creation, as Norse heathens saw it, was a natural evolutionary process, arising from the fusion of polarities, heat and cold, light and dark. Many variants of the Iranian creationist myth are recorded, and they too contain such dualist explanations of the cosmos, the "hot and moist, bright, sweet smelling and light" on one hand, with the "cold and dry, heavy dark and stinking" on the other. The two are separated by a void, as it were, a mighty gap. The first giant Ymir, also finds his counterparts in Iranian and, to some extent, in Indian myth. Ymir, as was seen, was at once father and mother of the giants and was, in other words, bisexual. A myth like this one appears in variant forms in Iranian records. According to one of them, the god Zurvan existed before ages, He conceived twins, one "light and fragrant", the other "dark and stinking". The fair one created heaven and earth, and everything beautiful and good, but the other created demons and everything evil. The formation of the cosmos, as described in some Iranian sources, is also rather like that described in the Norse sources. It was made from the body of the first anthropomorphic figure. The sky

was his head, the earth his feet, the water his tears, plants his hair. This form of the creation myth is said to derive from India. [2]

Ymir, the name of the first anthropomorphic figure in Norse myth, could formerly mean the roarer, which is not a suitable name for a giant, but it has often been associated with the Iranian Yima (Sanskrit Yama) which means "twin" and is the name given to the first man. As they are recorded, the Norse and Oriental myths of creation, are created by many centuries and thousands of miles. They differ fundamentally, but details such as those about the cow and the hermaphroditic progenitor, as well as the cosmos created from the body of a primeval being, resemble each other in ways which make it impossible to think of independent development. [3]

Variant: The three gods took the corpse of Ymir, carried it into the middle of Ginnungagap, and made the world from it. From his flesh, they molded the earth. From the blood that poured from his wounds, they made the salty sea and laid it around the earth. From his mighty bones, they fashioned the mountains and from his smaller bones, jaws, and teeth they formed rocks and pebbles. From his hair they created the forests. [4]

## 2. Myths of Greece

When Uranus became ruler of the world, his son, Chronus, dismembered him, just as priestesses of the great Goddess or Mother Goddess in the female-oriented religion, dismembered the sacred king. They used his blood, which they considered to be a prime source of fertility, to fertilize the ground so that it would produce an abundance of crops. Uranus's blood, too, produces "crops", in the form of monstrous offsprings. [5]

## 3. Myths of Hinduism

A late Rig Vedic hymn describes another kind of creation. A cosmic man, Purusha, was dismembered in a primeval sacrifice and, from the parts of his body, were made the cosmos and the four classes of the social order (priest, warriors, populace and servants). [6]

## 4. Myths from China

According to Lu-Shih-Chun Chui (Lã Thị Xuân Thu), Heaven, Earth and all things are like the body of one man, and this man is called "the Great Unity" (Ta Tung, Đại Đồng) [7]

So Pangu (Bản Cổ) laid down and fell asleep. He died in his sleep, and his body gave shape and substance to the universe. Pangu's head formed the mountain of the East, while his feet formed the mountain of the West. His torso formed the mountain of the Center, his left arm formed the mountain of the South, and his right arm, the mountain of the North. These five sacred mountains defined the four corners of the square earth and its Center. Each stood firmly upon the earth like a giant stone column and did its part to hold up the heavens.

The hair of Pangu's head and his eyebrows formed the planets and the stars. His left eye formed the sun and his right eye the moon. His flesh formed the soil of the earth and his blood the oceans and rivers. His teeth and bones formed rocks, minerals and gems. His breath formed the clouds and the wind, while his voice became lightning and thunder. His perspiration formed rain and the dew. The hair on his body formed trees, plants, and flowers, while parasites, living on his skin became animals and fish. [8]

## 5. Myths from Babylonia

Once Marduk had subdued all his enemies, he returned to Tiamat, stamped on her legs and crushed her skull with his mace. When he had severed her arteries, the North wind bore her blood to the secret places. Marduk then divided Tiamat's body into two parts like a shellfish. Half of Tiamat, he set up as the sky; the other half he formed into the earth. From Tiamat's saliva, he created the clouds and filled them with water... He put Tiamat's head into position to form the mountains of the earth, and he caused the Tigris and the Euphrate rivers to flow from her eyes...[\[9\]](#)

## 6. Myths from Toltecs and Aztecs

Quetzalcoatl, the light one, and Tezcatlipoca, the dark one looked down from the sky and saw only water below. A monstrous goddess floated upon the water, eating whatever she could find with her many mouths, for every joint in her body contained eyes sharp enough to spot any source of food, and mouths that bit like wild animals. "We must find some way to stop that goddess from devouring whatever we create," they said to one another. So it came to pass that the two great gods transformed themselves into two huge serpents. One of them quickly grabbed her by her arms, while the other quickly grabbed her by the feet. Then before she could resist, they pulled until she broke apart in the middle. Her head and shoulders became the earth, while the lower part of her body rose into the sky and became the heavens.

The other gods were angry at what Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca had done to the goddess. They came down to earth and decided to give her gifts that would compensate for her mutilation. They decreed that whatsoever human beings needed for survival, she would provide. They created trees, tall grass, and flowers from her hair, fine grasses and tiny flowers from her skins, small caves, fountains, and wells from her eyes, large caves and rivers from her mouth, hills and valleys from her nose, and mountains from her shoulders. [\[10\]](#)

## 7. Myths from Central and Southern Africa

According to the creation myth of the Bakuba (in Zaire), Mbombo the white god, ruled when the earth was nothing but water shrouded in darkness. One day, he felt a terrible pain in his stomach, and he vomited the sun, the moon and the stars. The sun shone so fiercely that the water steamed up in clouds and dry hills gradually appeared. Mbombo vomited again, and, out of his stomach came animals and people and many other things: the first woman, the leopard, the eagle, the falling star, the anvil, the monkey Fumu, the first man, the razor, medicine and lightning. [\[11\]](#)

### B) The Metaphorical Language

**Idea to be conveyed** in ordinary language: All creations are emanations from the Imperishable Soul.

**Metaphorical Language:** In the beginning this world was merely non-being. It was existent. It developed. It turned into an egg. It lay for a period of one year. It was split asunder. One of the two egg-shell-parts became silver, one gold.

That which was of silver is this earth. That which was of gold is the sky. What was the outer membrane is the mountains. What is the inner membrane is cloud and mist. What were the veins are the rivers. What was the fluid within is the ocean. (Chandogya Upanishad, 3. 19. 1-2)

As a spider might come out with his thread, as small sparks come forth from the fire, even so from this Soul come forth all vital energies, all worlds, all gods, all beings. The mystic meaning (Upanishad) thereof is the Real of the Real. Vital energies, verily, are the Real. He is their Real. (Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad 2. 20)

As a spider emits and draws in (its thread), as herb arise on earth, as the hairs of the head and body from a living person, so from the Imperishable arises everything here. (Mundaka Upanishad, 1. 7)

This is the truth: as from a well-blazing fire, sparks by the thousand issue forth of like form, so from the Imperishable, my friend, beings manifold are produced, and thither also go. (Mundaka Upa. 2.1)

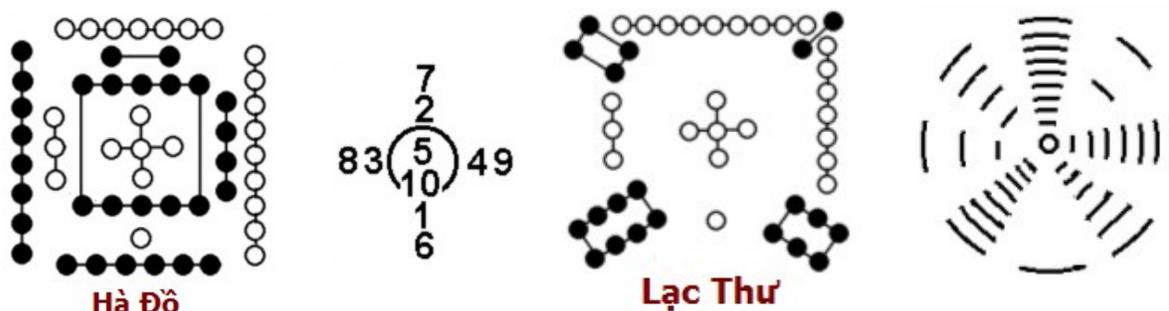
The Soul (Atman) which pervades all things as butter is contained in cream, which is rooted in self-knowledge and austerity. This is Brahma, the higher mystic doctrine (Upanishad). (Svetasvatara Upa.1. 16)

### C) The numerical language

**Idea to be conveyed:** All is one, one is all. Or from the One proceed the Many.

**Numerical language:** From the One, issue the Ten Thousand.

In the Yi Jing, there are two sets of numbers, one is called He Tu (Hà Đờ), another is called Luo Shu (Lạc Thư), the meaning of them, I will try to give as follows:



The He Tu and Luo Shu Diagrams

We see in these two sets of numbers, some are in the middle, and some are in the periphery. The number 15 (5+10) and the number 5 in the middle represent the bisexual Tai Ji (Thái Cực) (Please note that 15 = 6+9; and 5 = 2+3. 6 and 2 are Yin numbers ; 9 and 3 are Yang numbers, therefore the Tai Ji in the middle englobes both Yin and Yang numbers, and is called bisexual numbers). The Tai Ji represents the One.

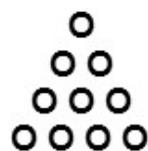
Numbers in the periphery represent the Many, and derive from the Tai Ji (Thái Cực) in the middle. We see that 3 and 2 = 5; 1 and 4 = 5; 8 and 7 = 15; 9 and 6 = 15. In the Luo Shu (Lạc Thư), if we add all the numbers horizontally, vertically, and diagonally, we have always 15. If we add the numbers horizontally, vertically and diagonally without the number 5, we always has the total of 10, or twice the number 5. It means that all the beings in the periphery equal 15 or 5, or the Tai Ji (Thái Cực). Therefore the Many equal the One.

We remark also that in the He Tu (Hà Đờ), we have two layers of numbers. The inside layer contains 1, 2, 3, 4 representing the 4 elements: water, fire, wood (air) and metal. It stands then for all beings. As for the 7 and 8, and the 6 and the 9, in the outside layer, they represents the two ways of change in our life, the extrovertive way (6 and 9), and the introvertive way (7 and 8).

It is worth noting that Chinese people called their Elected men Tzu (Tử), or the Man who has realized the One, and we have Confucius (Kong Tzu; Khổng Tử), Mencius (Meng Tzu; Mạnh Tử), Lao Tzu (Lão Tử), Chuang Tzu (Trang Tử), Lie Tzu (Liệt Tử) etc.

It implies that we should return to the One.

## The Pythagorean Tetractys:



Y = O  
H = OO  
V = OOO  
H = OOOO

O + OO + OOO + OOOO = 10 ( All beings)

YHVH = Yaweh

YHVH = 10 = All beings

## D) The literal language

Idea to be conveyed: This world come from the dismemberment of the One, or is made with the same material of the One.

Literal Language: YHVH creates everything from his own substance:

Y  
YHVH = H                      H  
V

Idea to be conveyed: The Eternal Om (Aum) englobes all the states of a man. Literal Language:

A (The waking state)  
Om (AUM) = U (The dreaming state)  
M (The deep-sleep state)

(See Mandukya Upanishah, 1-12)

## E) The symbolical language

One of the most famous symbolical languages, common to East and West is the Center and the Circle.

The Center stands for the One, immobile in the midst of everything. The circle represents the Many, or all the phenomena ever changing outside.

We see this meaning in all oldest civilizations and literature of the world (Egypt, Chaldea, Veda, Pythagoras, Zoroaster, Confucius, Chuang Tzu etc.). The Center represents, then, God, and the Circle, all the creatures. The Isvara's symbol (God's symbol) is the Circle with the point in the Center. We read in Chuang Tzu (Trang Tử), Chapter 2, C that: "The Point which is the pivot of the norm is the immobile Center of a circumference, on the periphery of which rolled all contingency, all distinctions and individualities." [\[12\]](#)

We know also that: "the Signet of Zoroaster, - the wise man of the East - the Point within the Circle... was hailed among all the nations as the Beginning and the End, the Cause and Effect, the Principle of Life and Action which pervades, animates and governs the universe..." [\[13\]](#)

According to Vedantic texts, there was none before the creation except Brahman, the pure Being, the non-manifested, the undifferentiated Maha Bindu, the Supreme Point, the Conscience-Energy-Potentiality...From this Supreme Point, Source of all Creations, emanate rays in all direction. This Point can be assimilated to the Center of the Zodiac, from which emanate the twelve signs in 12 directions.

This Point can be compared with the Void in the Veda (Shunya), having no forms while it is not yet surrounded by the Maya. It can be called also as the Nothing of J. Boehme. [\[14\]](#)

This Center and this Circumference, besides, express the relation between liberty and necessity. If man identified oneself with the manifested and transitory world, then he will undergo the fate of this world. But if he withdraws his Energy, his Self-Consciousness in his Center, he will become a pilgrim of the Middle Way, and this Middle Way itself, he will withdraw from necessity, which reigns in the Circumference, and what happens in the Circumference could no more attain him. Living in the Essence, he is free to participate or not to the changes in the substance outside. [\[15\]](#)

Instead of talking directly of the Point and the Circumference, the Ancients can use the Compass and the Square, as seen in the picture of Chinese Fu Xi (Phục Hi) holding the Compass, and Nu Wa (Nữ Oa) holding the Square, meaning that we can find God in the Center of everything. [\[16\]](#)

The Freemasonry takes as their symbol, the Compass and the Square with the letter G, representing God, in the Center. They explain it as follows:

"Yet I this forme of the formless Deity,

Drewe by the Square and Compasses of our creed" [\[17\]](#)

...The letter G then has in Freemasonry the same force and signification that the letter Yod had among the Cabalists. It is only a symbol of the Hebrew letter and, as that, is a symbol of God. [\[18\]](#)

We see also the Compass and the Square in the figure of the Rebis [\[19\]](#)

The Symbol of the Rosicrucians, is a Rose (the Circle), put on the Cross (the Square). René Guénon and C. G. Jung said the all the rose-windows seen in Europa's cathedrals have also the meaning of the Circumference and the Center. [\[20\]](#)

In the Esoteric Alchemy East and West, they used also the Point and the Circle to sum up their method, their technics to liberate men and to sanctify them. The Center represent the Essence, the Immortality's Pill, the Mercurius, the "Lapis Philosophorum", the Tai Ji, the Golden Pill. The circumference represents all the phenomena, and all the vessels necessary for making the pill. [\[21\]](#)

C. G. Jung, after 30 years of study on all the Mandalas, concluded that the Center in them represented the Real Self in Man, and not the Ego. He wrote: "Unless everything deceives us, they (the Mandalas) signify nothing less than a psychic center of the personality, not to be identified with the ego." [\[22\]](#)

He also said: "I may define "self" as the totality of the conscious and unconscious psyche, but this totality transcends our vision; it is a veritable lapis invisibilitatis..." [\[23\]](#)

In sum, the Center always suggests the One, the Eternal in the midst of everything. And the Circle around, depicts all changes (Evolution and Involution) happened to men, and also the descending of God among men, to promote the ascension of men to God ("Suo nobis descensu ac salubrem dedicavit ascensum". Saint Bernard).

The Center is then the Absolute, the Essence from which emanates everything. One can call it Ether, Akasha, Brahma, Sunya, Chakravarti, the Golden Pill, the Immobile Motor of everything, Mercurius, Prima Materia, Archetype of the Divine Child, Anthropos, Hermes, Philosophical Gold, Quintessence, Unum,

Unica Res, Monad, Rebis, The Drug of Immortality etc [\[24\]](#)

The Center is also The Coincidentia Oppositorum, where opposites meet. It is then the Anima Mundi, guide of Mankind, herself guided by God. It is then the Red and White - Hermaphroditic-Double Eagle. It is called also the Mystic Vessel where the two natures unite - sol et luna caduceus - to produce the Filius Hermaphroditus. It is called also The Fountain of Life as Fons Mercurialis, or the Symbolic City as center of the Earth, or the Lapis Sanctuary, or the Golden Fleece [\[25\]](#)

In this case, the Alchemists try only to help people find their own Essence, their own identity, and use time, their body, and their ego to reach their Essence.

C.G. Jung says also that everything derives from God. "Res ex qua sunt res, est Deus invisibilis et immobilis." (That from which things arise is the invisible and immovable God.) [\[26\]](#)

Egyptians called God as the Center of everything, or Tem, the pivot of all stars. [\[27\]](#)

The Center can be called as Mercurius, the Creator of all changes. [\[28\]](#)

In one drawing of the Tarot, we see in the middle the Tetragram Yod, He, Vau, He, meaning God or Yahwe. [\[29\]](#)

As for the Circle outside the Center, one is unanimous to consider it as a place where everything transitory evolves.

Jean Chabosseu wrote: "The Wheel is a symbol of the world. The Circumference represent the manifestation produced by all the spokes emanating from the center.

Regeneration, realization of the universal harmony, Evolution and Karma are interpretations given to the Circumference, especially if one consider the two figures, one prepared by successions of conscious and rational existences, is the Elected, who is coming near to the final elevation; the other still close to matter, and attached to it, by all terrestrial benefits, fails and must begin again. The image of Samsara is imperative: In the midts of the turning around rises the hope of a purified being who ascends to Brahma and live there... [\[30\]](#)

The Circumference represents then:

The Wheel of Change (Confucianism)

The Wheel of Fate and Generation of Orphism (Rota fati et generationis)

The Wheel of Fate (Tarot)

The Wheel of Samsara (Hindouism, Buddhism)

The Abred Cycle (Bardism)

The Zodiac (Astrology)

The Ouroboros (Theosophy)

The Cycle of the Twelve Nidanas (Buddhism)

The Wheel of Brahma (Hinduism) (See Svetasvatara Up. 1-6; 6-1.Brih. 6. 2. 15-16. Chand. 5. 10; Bhagavad Gita 8, 24-26)

The Cycles of the Moon.

The Cycle Ren-Du (Nhâm Đốc) in Man (Taoism).

In sum, the Center stands for what is unchanging, and eternal, while the Circumference symbolizes all the changing phenomena. It is suggested that man must find what is Eternal, and not the transitory. The Bible teaches that we must construct on rock and not on sand. (Mat. 7:24-27)

## F) Astrological Language

**Idea to be conveyed:** The One, the Eternal is in the Center. The Many, the Transitory is in the periphery.

**Astrological language:** The Point and the Circle.

Ancients East and West have written their creeds in the Monistic Theory in the sky. We will study its Center, and the Circle around it, called Zodiac, (Zoo = life; Diakos = Wheel) and the meaning of the Zodiac.

We know that Babylon, Egypt, Israel, Persia, India, Tibet, China, America North and South, and Islamic countries have their own Zodiac.

When we look at Celestial Atlas, East and West, we see that it has a Center located in the Pole-Star. Western people don't give to the Pole-Star any special significance. But Oriental people think that God has his residence there. Most of them consider this star as immobile in the midst of all stars. It is said in the Confucian Analects: "He who exercises government by means of his virtue, may be compared to the North Polar Star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it." (Confucian Analects, Book II, chap. I)

Oriental called this star the Central Palace of the Sky, or Tian Ji Xing, where the Summum Unum resides. [\[31\]](#)

I can't accept that the Polar Star, being a star, that means - being a visible phenomenon - can be unchanged and immobile. And from a study of Chinese Astronomy, I found out soon that Chinese Astronomers don't accept that the Polar Star is immobile. Zu Heng Zhi (Tổ Hằng Chi; 430-501) discovered that the Polar Star turned around the middle of the sky about 1°. Chen Kuo (Tràm Quát), astronomer under the reign of Song Shen Zong (Tống Thần Tông; 1068-1077) also found out that the Polar Star turned around the middle of the Sky or the North Pole, 3°. [\[32\]](#)

Therefore, the Celestial Pole is always an empty spot. And after every 25920 years, period of time needed for the Sun to make a tour of the twelve signs of the Zodiac - he is now in Aquarius - there will be a new Polar Star.

If the Sky has its Center close to the Pole Star, the Circumference is then the Zodiac. The Western Zodiac has 12 signs or 12 constellations: Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini.

The 12 constellations describe the general movement of Energy:

The Primeval Energy, impregnates itself, goes from virtuality to actuality, from unity to multiplicity, from imponderable to ponderable, from Spirit to Matter, from the realm of informal to the world of forms which becomes denser and denser. In the gradual descent of Energy into the ultimate density, the pure conscience wraps itself and has stolen away behind veils more and more compact until the term of its involution.

Then arriving at the lowest point of the cycle, Energy goes back in the ascending arc. It takes forms

more and more subtle, associated with states of consciousness more and more vast and penetrating, toward the realm of intangible and non manifested, while multiplicity tends to reintegrate in the One. This is the cosmic sense of the Zodiac revealed by the study of its elements. [33]

It means that the cycle of change has two senses: from God to Creatures, and from Creatures to God. Denys Aréopagite calls the first movement, the Creative one which proceeds from God, and the second movement the Conversive one which goes back to God. [34]

In the Zodiac, its circle is also divided into two parts: From Cancer (Cự Giải) to Sagittarius (Thiên Yết) (from God to Man), and from Capricorn (Ma Yết) to Gemini (Song Tử) (from Man to God) [35]

According to the Ancients, men have to pass through two Gates. The Gate of Men, in Cancer (Cự Giải), and the Gate of the Gods in Capricorn (Ma Yết). "One, "Macrobius says, in his dream of Scipio, "was styled the Gate of Men; and the other, the Gate of the Gods. Cancer was the former, because souls descended by it to the earth; and Capricorn the latter, because by it they reascended to their seats of immortality, and became God." [36]

So from Cancer to Sagittarius is the Gate and the Way of Man. This can be called also the Extroversion way, where man is deeper and deeper engaged in mundane affairs, and become denser and denser, like Matter that is and surrounds him. From Capricorn to Gemini is the Gate of Gods, and the Way of Gods. This can be called the Introversion way, where man try to disentangle from mundane affairs, and become more and more subtle, finer and finer, like the Energy that surrounds him.

The Bible says that man has two ways of working. It said:

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace... [37]

Cancer and Capricorn are also the two Gates of the Sun. The Sun is at the Summer's Solstice when he is in Cancer. He is at the Winter's Solstice when he is in Capricorn. When the sun is in Capricorn, he is reborn, he is resuscitated. The 25th of December of each year, the Winter's solstice day, is therefore chosen first to represent the birth of Mithra or of the Sun in the Mediterranean area, and afterward to commemorate the unknown birthday of Jesus Christ.

Now we must know how to connect these two Gates with God. Father Theophile Moreux said: At the origin of all substances there is the Prima Materia (God), an indestructible substance serving as the stuff of everything. From this matter, derive two principles: the philosophical Sulfur and Mercury, which by combination produced the four Elements" Earth, Fire, Water and Air. We must know that these appellations have nothing in common with all the vulgar substances bearing these names. They are only philosophical symbols. [38]

The Four Elements in astrology are:

**Lion (Leo) with the star Regulus.**

Eagle (Scorpio) with the Star Antares.

Man (Aquarius) with the star Fomalhaut.

Taurus with the star Aldebarran.

The Oriental Astrology has similar writings:

The Oriental Zodiac has 28 constellations, but occupy the same place as the Occidental Zodiac. We can also divide the Oriental Zodiac into two part: East and West. Jing, Gui (Cancer), Liu, Xing, Zhang (Leo), Yi, Zhen (Virgo). Jue, Gang (Libra), Ti, Fang, Xin (Scorpio), Wei, Ji (Sagittarius) (Tinh, Quỷ, Liễu, Tinh, Trương, Dực, Chấn, Giác, Cang, Đê, Phòng, Tâm, Vĩ, Cơ).

Can, Zui (Gemini), Bi, Mao, Wei (Taurus), Lou, Gui (Aries). Bi, Shi (Pisces), Wei, Xu, Nu (Aquarius), Niu, Dau (Capricorn) (Sâm, Chủy, Tất, Mão, Vĩ, Lâu, Khuê, Bích, Thất, Ngụy, Hư, Nữ, Ngưu, Đẩu) .

The Four Elements in Oriental Astrology is then:

Liu, Xing, Zhang (Liễu, Tinh, Trương) (Leo)

Ti, Fang, Xin (Đê, Phòng, Tâm) (Scorpio)

Wei, Xu, Nu (Ngụy, Hư, Nữ) (Aquarius)

Bi, Mao, Wei (Tất, Mão, Vĩ) (Taurus)

The Gate of Man is then in Niu, Dau (Ngưu, Đẩu). The Gate of Gods is in Jing, Gui (Tinh, Quỷ).

The Galaxy crosses the Zodiac in two opposite points, Cancer and Capricorn, the tropical points in the sun's course, ordinarily called the Gates of the Sun, and the Milky Way (The Silver River) crosses at the signs Cancer and Capricorn. It means that it is very hard for a man to find the Gates of Gods. Fortunately, Ancient Chinese astronomers have named one star in the constellations Niu, Dau (Ngưu, Đẩu; Capricorn), the Ford of the Sky (Tian Jin, Thiên Tân), where one can cross the Milky Way by foot. [\[39\]](#)

To enter the Gate of Gods, is then a rare privilege reserved only for a very few men. "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Mat. 20: 16 and 22: 14)

The Yi Jing has also a picture representing the 64 hexagrams disposed in a circle. This Circle can also be divided into two halves: The right one has 32 hexagrams disposed from top to bottom, in a an increased order of density, from the less dense to the densest, from the hexagram Kou, (Cấu) Meeting, or Coming to Meet, or Meeting with the Mundane (See R. Wilhelm, The I Ching, p. 170), to the densest hexagram The Receptive or the Earth (Khôn). These 32 hexagrams represent the Way of Man, or the Mundane Way. They are the extrovertive way.

The 32 hexagrams of the left half disposed from bottom to top, according to a decreased order of density, from the less pure to the purest, from the Hexagram Fu (Phục), Return or Conversion to God (See Wilhelm, the I Ching, p. 97) to the hexagram Ch'ien (Kiền), The Creative or the Heaven.

Shao Kang Jie (Thiệu Khang Tiết) says that everything comes from the Center and ends up in the Center. In that case our great circle of Change starts from the Center, passes by the hexagram Kou (Cấu) and the hexagram Earth (Khôn) (this is the extroversion way, with the Material Civilization). After that it passes by the Hexagram Fu (Phục), and Heaven (Kiền) and ends up in the Center. It means that we must return to God. Chuang Tzu called it "resting in God" (See Léon Wieger, Chuang Tzu, Chapter 2, C, p. 218). The second half is called the introvertive way.

The time for man to Return to God is approximately from 34 to 36, but it can be sooner or later. It is

then time for Illumination. Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke says that it is time for man to go from Self to Cosmic Consciousness. In his book *Cosmic Consciousness*, on p. 81, he has given a list of 43 Elected, and we can see that Gautama, Jesus, Paul, Dante, Behmen etc attain illumination at 35. [\[40\]](#)

Confucius declared that he attained illumination at 50 [\[41\]](#)

The Yi Jing said: at the time of Fu, or of the Return to God, one will see his Real Self, and will have self-knowledge. [\[42\]](#)

Shao Kang Jie (Thiệu Khang Tiết) has written a poem saying roughly that: as an intelligent man, and having the Creator, in our heart, we are not poor. In the first half of our live, we should devote ourselves to study materialistic and pragmatic things, while in the second half of our life, we must study to know our Cosmic Origin. In that case, we will have a happy life. [\[43\]](#)

"It is in searching to transfigure the limited and to render it worthy of immortality... that a man can find out the profound sense of life and escape from spiritual sterility. [\[44\]](#)

It is said in Upanishads:

He is the Luminous One, the Creator of everything, the Mahatma,

He is always set in people's heart,

And is revealed by the heart, by intuition, by intelligence

He who knows him, becomes immortal. [\[45\]](#)

## G) The Artistic Language

We see that the Monistic Theory is very rich in its artistic language.

We see that the Sun and its rays can be used to represent God. [\[46\]](#)

The Eternal can be represented by the ever seeing Eye, as in Caodaism.

The most famous beautiful art form is seen in Mandalas, or Yantras of the world. Mandalas and Yantras are symbols of cosmic unity.

Mahu Khanna said: in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishah (2,1,19) there is the metaphor of a spider sitting at the center of its web, issuing and reabsorbing its threads in concentric circles, all held at one point: This image occurs in several Upanishads since it points to the basis of the Indian world-view: Unity in diversity. The spider's threads symmetrically expands into a visible circumference, and though there are divergent lines in between and varying distances to be spanned they can all be traced back to the central point of the web.

This apparently simple metaphor also condenses the essence of Indian thought: All existence is governed by a single principle, and the point of origin of the supreme consciousness is simultaneously an infinite reservoir of collective energy, from which everything issues and into which everything returns. This Center is the One, the potential All-point, which not only serves as a bridge, but is Cosmic Unity underlying the physical diversity of the world. The metaphor also alludes to the Indian vision of the structure of the cosmos, which is conceived as a 'holon', growing and expanding in concentric circles, and then contracting, dissolving into a single principle... Like a spider in its web, the bindu (point) at the center of the yantra is a center of every creation, the radiating source of energy that generates all forms.

The Central quest of Indian thought is to achieve total experience of the One. Man is a spiritual traveler whose main aim, in Indian tradition is to intuit the unity of the One. The traveler, whether he is driven directly to the summit, whether he pauses for a while, whether he stumbles on the path or turn away, knows intuitively that all his movements inevitably lead him back to the starting point, the All-point, the origin and the end of all existence. [\[47\]](#)

The Yantra, therefore, depicts the evolution and the involution of the cosmos. The expanding and contracting currents of vibration symbolized by the Sanskrit letters form a web-like image, as the cosmos emanates and returns again to the primordial center, the One. [\[48\]](#)

Mandala, in Sanskrit literally means Circle and Center. To Westerners, the popular reintroduction of the Mandala concept can be traced to the work of Carl G. Jung, who rediscovered the Mandala as a basic structural device in the alchemical tradition of the West, and as a therapeutic, integrative art form created by patients in their own search for individuation. [\[49\]](#)

The aim of Yantra and Mandala is to arrive back at the primordial point where man can exclaim: I am That! or in the worlds of the ancient Vedic seers: That art Thou - Tat Tvam Asi. To understand the divine nature of things is to become rooted in the heart of the divine. This is the privilege of man. The Ancient Mexicans described the artist/seer as a Yolteotl, one whose heart is rooted in God. [\[50\]](#)

Mantra and Yantra lead us to the One, to the Center.

"You, O nameless One, we invoke:

Enter our hearts and speak through us

Lend to us the Vision of Unity

Teach us the Science of the Whole

Make known to us once again the Rite of the Mandala.

Hear us, o Lord of the Center

Keeper of the Radiant Law

In our silence may Your Voice ring clear

We are as Seeds:

Only You Who walk the Sky

Can show to us the Path

Our feet must follow in this earth

Only You can heal and make us whole

Only through our submission to You

May we heal ourselves and become whole.

In this way may we be led once again on the Path of Beauty. [\[51\]](#)

Mandala and Yantra, with its Center and Circle, not only depict for us the way this world of diversity is made, but also show us our way of return to the One, to the Center. In their first step, they are scientific, and in their second step, they are religious.

Some one compare them to the eyes. Ralph Metzner and Timothy Leary said: "The mechanism of the

mandala can also be understood in term of the neurophysiology of the eye...[as] the mandala is a depiction of the structure of the eye, the center of the mandala corresponds to the foveal "blind spot". Since the "blind spot" is the exit from the eye to the visual system of the brain, by going "out" through the Center, you are going to the brain. The Yogi finds the mandala in his own body. The mandala is an instrument for transcending the world of visually perceived phenomena by first centering them and turning them inward." [\[52\]](#)

The Center of the Mandala shows us then the Center, the true city of Brahman in us. It is said in the Chandogya Upanishad (VIII, I, 1-3): "Within the city of Brahman, which is the body, there is the Heart, and within the heart there is a little house. This house has a shape of a lotus, and within it dwells that which is to be sought after, inquired about, and realized.

What then is that which dwells within this house, the lotus of the heart?...

Even so large as the universe outside is the universe within the lotus of the heart. Within it are heaven and earth, the sun, the moon, the lightning and the stars. Whatever is in macrocosm is in this microcosm... Though old age comes to the body, the lotus of the heart does not grow old. It does not die with the death of the body. The lotus of the heart, where Brahman resides with all his glory - that, and not the body is the true city of Brahman."

Where we can find this Center in our body? As I have said many times in this book, this Center can be found in the middle of our brain and it is called Ni Wan Gong (Nê Hoàn Cung), or the Third Ventricle.

If the Third Ventricle is the immobile Center in our body, and is the residence of the One, where is then the Zodiac, where all the phenomena roll in our body? Chinese people called it the Ren Channel (Nhâm), an imaginary Channel in the mid-section of the thorax and the abdomen, and the Du Channel (Đốc Mạch) running through the spinal column.

The Ren Channel (Nhâm Mạch) starts at Chengjiang (Thừa Tương), in the depression in the center of the mentolabial groove. It corresponds to Cancer. It finishes at the point Huiyin (Hội Âm), in the Center of the perineum and corresponds to Sagittarius.

The Du Channel (Đốc Mạch) starts at the point Changqiang (Trường Cường), midway between the coccyx and the anus. It corresponds to Capricorn. It finishes at Mouth-Yinjiao (Khẩu Ngân Giao), between the upper lip and the upper labial gingiva, in the frenulum of the upper lip. It corresponds to Gemini.

Taoists and Indian Yogi used these two channels to practice the medullar respiration (respiration through the spinal column), where expiration passes through Ren Channel (Nhâm Mạch), and inspiration passes through the spinal column (Đốc Mạch). Indian Yogis called this practice the opening of the Kundalini.

Once we know the meaning of Yantras and Mandalas, we do not worry as to their structure. We don't care if they are made of triangles, spheres, or circles, or lotuses. We have to note anyhow, that "at the periphery of the figure are four T-Shaped portals at the four cardinal directions and known as cosmic doors because it is through them that the aspirant symbolically enters the cosmic force-field. Pointers directing towards the interior of a yantra, the portals are an initiatory threshold which simultaneously opposes the phenomenal and embraces the Noumenal." [\[53\]](#)

Besides Mandalas and Yantras, the Four Elements are frequently used in the Artistic Language.

As we have seen, that the Four Elements in the West are Fire, Water, Air and Earth, and are

represented by four stars or four beasts (Taurus: Aldebaran, Man or Aquarius = Fomalhaut, Leo = Regulus, Scorpio or Eagle = Antares).

Afterwards, The Four Elements stand for the Four Evangelists:

Taurus stands for Luc

Man stands for Matthew

Leo stands for Marc

Eagle stands for John.

The Four Elements can be fused in One Sphinx, as seen in Ezekiel. Ezekiel in the vision that he had by the river Chebar, saw four sphinxes, each of them with four faces: "As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the faces of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of one eagle." (Ezekiel. 1:4-15).

The Four Elements appear again in Revelation, 4:6: "And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast has a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle."

The Yi Jing gives to Spring, or to Wood (Air) the Green color.

It gives to Summer or to Fire the Red color.

It gives to Autumn or to Metal the White color

It gives to Winter or to Water the Black color

The Yi Jing disposes the Tai Ji (Thái Cực) or the Summum Unum in the Center, the Yin and the Yang also called the Moon and the Sun in the second layer, and the Four Elements in the third layer. Now, if we like to reach the Tai Ji (Thái Cực), we must go from the outer layer to the innermost. Strangely enough, the Revelation talked about the Breaking of the Seven Seals, and the order of these seals are as follows (Rev. 6: 1-17):

In the first Seal, we see a White horse; in the second, a Red horse; in the third, a Black horse; in the fourth, a Pale horse; in the sixth, we see crisis in the Sun and the Moon; in the seventh, we see the coming of God... In Zechariah, we see again the vision of the Four Chariots driven by four kinds of horses: Red, Black, White and Bay. (Zek. 6: 3,4)

The Four Elements or the Four Beasts are fused in one to form the Egyptian Sphinx (Gizeh Sphinx), the Greek Sphinx and especially the Assyrian Sphinx.

The four elements sometimes are replaced by the sacred word INRI.

The Four Beasts used by Oriental people are the Green Dragon (Thanh Long), the Red Pheasant (Chu Tước), the White Tiger (Bạch Hổ) and the Black Warrior (Huyền Vũ) They can be also: Dragon (Long), Unicorn (Ly), Eagle (Phụng), Tortoise (Qui).

In Indian physiology, we see that Chakras are disposed in the spinal column, from the densest to the less dense:

We have:

1. the Muladhara (Chakra Earth) at the plexus sacro-coccygeal.

2. the Svadhishtana (Chakra Water) at the plexus sacral.

3. the Manipura (Chakra Fire) at the solar plexus).
4. the Anahata (Chakra Air) at the Cardiac plexus).
5. the Vishudha (Chakra Ether) at the region of the throat.
6. the Ajna (Chakra in the middle of the eyebrows). It equates to the third Eye.

These six Chakras are called seats of Shahti, or of the Yin Deity

7. the last Chakra is called the Shahasrara, at the top of the head. It is called the seat of Shiva, or of the Yang Deity. [\[54\]](#)

The Shahasrara is also the meeting point of God and man.

The Tarot, used mostly in divination, has 78 cards. 22 are considered as major arcana. 56 remaining cards are called minor arcana or People Cards and are divided in four suits or elements: 16 are called the Swords (Air) suit. 16 are called the Wands (fire) suit. 16 are called the Cups (Water) suit. 16 are called the Discs (Earth) suit.

The Tarot proclaims also the Monistic Theory.

Robert Wang, author of the Cabalistic Tarot, wrote: "The chances are good that most readers of this book are disillusioned with both organized religion and science. Neither seems to provide the insight into our human condition demanded by an increased and world-wide sophistication. We have learned so much through the wonders of technology and modern communications, that the explanations of our fathers appear more placebo than panacea... Esoteric tradition, as represented by the Tarot, makes some very basic statement about man and the nature of the Universe which is his ultimate environment. It says that there is a perfect order which one has the capacity to perceive, and that there is no such things as an accident. For every movement of every leaf on every tree is a reason, and every movement of everything is inter-related. Separateness is a myth. We are all part of one great unity.

These principles have been expressed for thousands of years, and in thousands of way. And somehow, as expressed, they are always so simple. The concept that All is One, and we are All has a certain poetry in this. It may strike a deep-rooted chord and then be quickly forgotten..." [\[55\]](#)

Tarot teaches people to develop a conscious awareness of, and contact with, an innermost spiritual nature which is the essence of God. And Tarot, then, become a means of self-exploration, and can lead us to a mystical life...[\[56\]](#)

Lévi (Éliphas) was among the first to declare that the Tarot was more than merely a quaint device for telling fortune, and that it was virtually the key to all occult science. [\[57\]](#)

The Four Elements have their own property

Fire is Hot.

Earth is Cold.

Air is Dry.

Water is Humid.

These four fundamental properties, are mingled with each other to produce properties of everything in the world.

Men were divided in the past into:

Sanguine (Hot + Humid)

Lymphatic (Cold + Humid)

Bilious (Dry + Hot)

Nervous (Dry + Cold).

The Four Elements show that East and West have the same conception about the creation of the world, and of man. We must restore these antique notions and the uniqueness of our own culture.

The Four Elements lead us to talk about the Swastika and the Cross: We see that the Swastika has four wings that can be rotated. It represents the world rotating around a fixed point in the middle. The Swastika was not only the symbol of Buddhism, but it was much more ancient than Buddhism. We see it in the digging of Mohenjo-Daro in West-Pakistan, or in Samarra, north of Bagdad. We find it also in many Catholic cathedrals and in many Catholic pieces of Art. We find it for instance in the Nativity Basilic of Bethlehem, in the napkin covering the altar of Heiligen-Grabe church (Germany), in the church Sainte Marie des Champs, in Soest (Germany), in a painting in a church at Dalby (South Swede), or in a bell in the Church Utterslev, Denmark [\[58\]](#)

The Swastika appears frequently in the catacombs signifying Christ as the power of the world. In Greece, it is an attribute of Zeus. Among Asian Moslems, the Swastika denotes the four cardinal directions and control of the four seasons by angels. In Rome, it is the symbol of Jupiter Tonans and Pluvius...

There are two forms of Swastikas, one having four corners turning to the left, and one having four corners turning to the right. One is clockwise, and the other is anti-clockwise, one is lucky and the other is unlucky.

The Cross is also an universal symbol. The oldest Cross is now kept in the British Museum under the No 89.128. It is made in the dynasty of Kassite, in Babylone, around 1746 B.C. and 1171 B.C. It is a world center and therefore a point of communication between heaven and earth and a cosmic axis, thus sharing the symbolism of the cosmic tree, mountain, pillar, ladder etc It is dualism in nature and the union of opposites and represents spiritual union and the integration of man's soul in the horizontal- vertical aspects necessary to full life. It is Supreme Identity. The Cross is the figure of man at full stretch. It represents also the four rivers of Paradise flowing from the root of the Tree of Life. It comprises the cardinal axes; the quaternary under its dynamic aspects; the quincunx, the four elements of the world united at the fifth point, the Center.

It is worth noting that the four branches of the Cross must be equal.

The four branches of the Cross symbolize four directions of the sky (North, South, East, West), the four angles of the astrological theme (AS, DS, FC, MC), the four sunny seasons, the four Royal Stars that marks in ancient Egypt, the commencement of the four seasons: Aldebaran (The Taurus's Eye), Regulus (The Lion's Heart), Antares (The Scorpio's Heart) and Fomalhaut (The Mouth of the Southern Fish - Aquarius). The Christ's message is transmitted through four Evangelists John, Matthew, Mark and Luke, with difference in nature symbolized by The Eagle, The Man, The Leo, and the Ox. St Irenaeus first established this correspondence, and connects them to the four regions of the world, and to the four principal winds. [\[59\]](#)

We see that in the Cross, in the Swastika, or in the Four Elements, a Center is always implied. This Center is the Summum Unum, or the Eternal around which everything evolves. This Center is called the

Quintessence, in the Four Elements.

The Four Elements, and their quintessence can be erected into temples, such as the temple of Koumboum in Gyantse (Tibet) [\[60\]](#)

Louis Lallement thus wrote about the Quintessence: "One can observe that all the ancient cosmogonies present the world as made up of four Elements: fire, air, water and earth. They considered "the Quintessence" not as a fifth element, but as something belonging to an order of subtle reality intermediary between spirit and matter, or as something like the immaterial matter of the Creation, containing united in an original indistinction the principles of the four elements.

Generally speaking, the Quintessence symbolizes the pure spiritual reality in relation to its quaternary translation tarnished by expression or incarnation. The Quintessence is similar to the Word, the Logos in comparison with the four Evangelists. The Quintessence is not a pure symbol, it has its own reality, even still unseizable by human senses...

As for the quaternary law in time, we have only to remind here the four ages of humanity, the four epochs of human life, and the four seasons in the year..."[\[61\]](#).

In Antiquity, men considered high and famous mountains as the Center of the World, as the pivot of the earth, where heaven and earth meet together. These mountains are for instance the Mount Kun Lun, the Fuji, the Elbrouz, The Thabor, the Olympus etc

Gradually, they considered temples and monuments such as Jerusalem, the Pyramids, Angkor-Thom and many Hindu Temples as Axis Mundi.

In a great temple, always we have a Central Chamber or Cella reserved to the highest divinity, and around which we have walls symbolizing mountains, and trenches standing for rivers. The whole meaning is that if man likes to climb up to divinity, he must pass by mountains, and oceans, and must endure many tribulations and hardships. [\[62\]](#)

If we look at art, we see that many temples are built with Stone disposed concentrically, with the highest divinity in the Center.

In India, there are many vestiges of stone disposed in circle, such as in Dipaldiana. [\[63\]](#)

In the Druid religion of ancient Gaul and Britain, we see many huge stone disposed in circle such as in the Stonehenge, and Avesbery. [\[64\]](#)

Other Druid temples have also stones disposed in circles: in the middle of them, there is a big rock, symbolizing the Supreme Being. We see these vestiges at Y Cromlech in Pembrochire, or at Keswich in Cumberland (England). [\[65\]](#)

In Norway and Sweden, we see that temples consecrated to Odin have 12 seats reserved to 12 principal deities and a seat in the middle reserved for Odin. We see these vestiges at Scandia, Zeland and Jutland. [\[66\]](#) Looking into myths of Creation of diverse religions such as Jewish, Catholic, Persian, Atlantes, Greek, or Hindu, we see that Paradise is in the middle, with Four Rivers coming to it from the four corners of the Earth. This means that Paradise comes from a Center.

In our brain, the third ventricle is in the middle, having four arteries issuing from the Circle of Willis, and depart to four directions. Hindus and Taoists called it the Shahasrara, or the Ni Wan Gong (Nê Hoàn Cung), the point where God and Men meet. The West also considered our brain was a lodging house of

the divine part. [\[67\]](#)

We know that many countries considered the Center as their native land. Jewish people considered for instance Sion as the center of the world. Pindar, Sophocles, Titus Livius, Ovid etc. considered Athena or Delphi as the Navel, the Center of the World. Hindu and Buddhist considered Mount Meru as the Center of the world. Babylonian considered Babylon as the Center of the World. China considered itself as the Center of the world, and as the most civilized people. It considered all the surrounding countries as barbarious.

I have demonstrated that the Center of the World is in each of us. And we can easily prove it: If we go into an open space, in the country side for instance, in every of our steps we will see that the horizon around us changes its limits, while we are always in the middle of a circumference determined by our standing position.

We see that everywhere in the world, ancient people try to teach us how to find the Eternal Center. And we know that to find the Eternal Center in the midst of all turmoil is to find God himself. The Eternal Center is then the Fountain of Immortality. To find it is to know how to be united with God.

In so doing, we must go back into our heart, dissipate all the clouds of concupiscence and of ignorance, imitate Saints and Sages of all creeds.

José and Miriam Arguelles wrote:

"The good painter is wise  
 God is in his heart  
 He puts divinity into things  
 He converses with his own heart." [\[68\]](#)

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 4

### Zoroastrianism and the Monistic Theory

The Zoroastrian religion or Zoroastrianism was founded by Zoroaster (Zarathushtra) during the late 7th and early 6th centuries B.C. The religion he preached spread throughout Iran and beyond, and influenced the later development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and of Greek thought. It was the State religion under the Sasanian dynasty (A.D. 211-640). After the Arab invasion of Iran in 642 A.D., Islamic religion supplanted Zoroastrianism in Iran, and the official language of Iran was no more Persian but Arabic. In the early 10th century (in the year 936 A.D.) many Zoroastrians emigrated to India, and were called Parsis (Persians) there. Actually, there are about 40,000 Zoroastrians in Iran, 92,000 in India, especially in Bombay. There are small communities also in Karachi (Pakistan), in London, Toronto, New York, Washington, California, Sidney, Hong-Kong, Singapore etc

#### The Prophet: Spitama Zarathushtra

Zoroaster is the corrupt Greek form of the Old Iranian name Zarathushtra. No one knows for sure when he was born. Thus, there was a Zarathushtra:

- In Hystaspas's reign (Behistun stone inscription) 550 B.C.
- As stated by Xanthos, 600 years before the Trojan war 1800 B.C.
- As recorded by Berossos, the Babylonian 2000 B.C.
- In Vishtaspas's reign supported by the comparative time required to write the Avesta and the age of its language 3000 B.C.
- As recorded by Pliny, a couple of thousand years before Moses: 4000 B.C.

Actual Zoroastrians like to have Zoroaster living about 1500 B.C.

European scholars, based on some Iranian tradition, believe that Zoroaster lived "258 years before Alexander." This is taken to mean that 258 years before Alexander's conquest of Iran (330 B.C.), the principal event in Zoroaster's life took place; i.e., either his first vision when he was 30, the beginning of his preaching when he was 40, or his conversion of King Hystaspes, when he was 42. Zarathushtra's dates are therefore (since, traditionally, he lived 77 years) 630-553, 628-551, or 618-541 B.C.

Modern Zoroastrians like to call their prophet: Spitama Zarathushtra. He is also called Zoroaster.

#### Zoroastrian sacred scripture

The Zoroastrian literature falls into two distinct parts:

The Avesta, the original scriptural work, written in the ancient Iranian language, called Avestan; and the much later text written in Pahlavi, a dialect of Middle Persian, or in Persian.

Avesta.

The Avesta, the sacred book of ancient Iran, contains the teachings of the prophet Zarathushtra, or Zoroaster, and serves at the present day as the holy scriptures of the Parsis of India and the so-called Gabars of Persia. It is known in Europe as Zend-Avesta, since the time of A.H. Anquetil Duperron (c.1771) who introduced the work to Europeans. Anyhow, one should keep in mind that Avesta is the original text, while the Zend is only its Pahlavi paraphrase and commentary.

The Avesta consists of the following parts:

1. The Yasna, the principal liturgical book of the Parsees, recited by the priest at the solemn yasna ceremony, the general sacrifice in honor of all deities. It is divided into 72 chapters.
  - a. The introduction (1-27), consists mainly of invocations.
  - b. The Gathas (28-54) contain the discourses, exhortations, and revelations of the prophet, written in a metrical style and archaic language. All the Gathas (or Divine songs) are then contained in the Yasna. There are Five Gathas which are the very basic principles of the Zoroastrian Religion: Ahunavaiti Gathas of 7 songs, Ushtavaiti Gathas of 4 songs, Spenta Mainyu Gathas of four songs, Vohu Khshathra Gatha of one longer song, and Vahishta Ishti Gatha of one shorter song.
  - c. The so-called Later Yasna (57-72) is also composed of invocations.
2. The Vispered is a minor liturgical work in 22 chapters.
3. The Vendidad, the priestly code of the Parsi, has also 22 chapters. It contains a dualistic account of the creation (Ch. 1) the legend of Yima and the golden age (chap. 2). In the remaining chapters, it is devoted to the precepts of religion with regard to the cultivation of the earth, the care of useful elements, the protection and the respect of the sacred elements such as earth, fire, water, and air, and keeping the human body from defilement and elaborate ceremonies of purification, of atonement, and so forth. Thus, the whole Zoroastrian legislation is subordinate to the underlying theme, the war against Satan and his noxious creatures, the war against the evil in all its forms.
4. The Yashts (i.e. songs of praise) are a collection of invocations of angels, of mythology and of legendary history, of vivid descriptions of Zoroastrian deities, of the Iranian heroic saga and of the prophetic account of the end of the world.
5. The Khordadh Avesta (i.e. the Little Avesta) is a collection of prayers.

### The larger Avesta and the twenty-one Nasks

In its present form, the Avesta is, however, only a fragment of the old priestly literature of Zoroastrianism. The entire corpus of Zoroastrian literature is said to comprise two million verses divided into 21 books called Nasks. Each Nask contains an original text known as the Avesta and a commentary, called Zend. The term Avesta originally was applied to the sacred texts ascribed to Zarathushtra and his immediate disciples, but in the course of time, it has come to be applied to all the sacred writings. Of the 21 Nasks, only the 19th the Vendidad, has survived intact. All the others are in fragments or totally obliterated. Aside from religious subjects, the Nasks dealt with medicine, astronomy, agriculture, botany, philosophy, government, home management and hygiene.

### Pahlavi and Persian texts

Pahlavi Texts.- The majority of Zoroastrian works were written in Pahlavi, in the 9th century, when the national religion revived briefly and determined attempts were made to prevent its traditions from disappearing completely under the triumph of Islam.

The Denkart (Acts of Religion) is an encyclopedia of Zoroastrianism, written in 9 books, the first two of which are lost. It deals with moral questions, as well as with theology and medicine. We can find in it an outline of the history of mankind, more especially of the Iranian race, and the legendary life of Zarathushtra. It discusses also the contents of the 21 books of the Avesta which were extant at the time of writing.

The Bundahishn ("Original Creation") deals with cosmogony, with the initial conflict of Ormazd and Ahriman, with the doctrine of man as a microcosm, and with the history of the world from creation to the final resurrection.

Besides these two main works, we can find many other books, apologetic or moral.

Persian Texts.- Many Zoroastrian books written in the 13th, 14th, 17th, 18th centuries were written in Persian. Among them, mention must be made of the Zardusht Nama ("Book of Zoroaster"), the Sad Dar (One hundred Doors) which was translated into Latin by the Orientalist Thomas Hyde in 1700. [1]

We have only to remember that Avesta is the Zoroastrian Bible. Avesta contains many parts, but the main message of Zarathushtra is called Gathas. The keystone of the Gatha is Asha, the divine law which governs the entire creation of Ahura Mazda. By Asha, we must understand that it was the law of progress, movement, harmony, goodness, justice, and love. Therefore the word conveys much more than mere righteousness. [2]

### Main teachings of Zarathushtra

Zoroaster was one of the earliest sages to teach monotheism. He proclaimed that Ahura Mazda (or Ormazd) is the omniscient, omnipotent God, creator, sustainer, and promoter of the world. He is the Absolute.

Ahura Mazda created the universe and with it were born the Twin Spirits- born inseparable and parts of this world: Spenta Mainyu, the Beneficent Spirit, and the other, Angre Mainyu (or Ahriman), the Evil Spirit. They produce the spiritual and material worlds and are always at war with each other. They do not exist independently but in relation to one another and are parts of the universe.

For a better understanding of these theological view, we can associate Ahura Mazda to the Chinese famous TAO or TAI JI, and Spenta Mainyu and Angre Mainyu to the YANG and the YIN of the Chinese philosophy, or to the twin aspects of the universe: Energy and Matter and their interplay.

Ahura Mazda represents the realm of continuity, of immortality and of Absoluteness, while the Twin Spirits belong to the sphere of discontinuity, of phenomenology, of contingency and of mortality. If we accept the views of Mr. Albert Pike, author of the famous Morals and Dogma, we can say that the creation took place by emanation from Ahura Mazda. The first emanation is then Spenta Mainyu, and the second emanation is Angre Mainyu. The Monistic theory, or the Unity of Being, is personified by Ahura Mazda, and later on by the theory of Fravashi, the divine element present not only in man, but also in all things animate and inanimate.

The dualistic view of the phenomenal world is represented by the Twin- Spirits. Man then has the duty to follow the suggestions of the Beneficent Spirit, to have good thoughts, to say good words and to do good deeds.

The Zoroastrian Religion is based of Good Thoughts (Humata), Good Words (Hukhta) and Good Deeds (Hvarshta).

The Zoroastrian Center in California admirably presents a summary of Zoroaster's teachings as follows:

"Zoroaster proclaimed one Omniscient, Omnipotent God as the creator, sustainer, and promoter of the universe. His teachings explain how God's divine attributes are reflected in the universe and in our living world. He advises people to acquire and cultivate divine attributes, particularly "good mind" and righteousness to elevate themselves in harmony with God and to listen to God's guiding voice within them; to be creative and progressive; to work in harmony with nature in creating an ever-better world; to establish a universal fellowship in an ideal society chosen by people for peace and prosperity; to attain perfection and immortality; and to become godlike and live in divine happiness for ever after..." For me, it is a Manifesto proclaiming that the world is the glorious manifestation of God, that Man is great in so far as he can cultivate and be endowed with divine attributes and can live a divine life. If the origin of man is from God, his destiny - his Khawarenah, in Pahlavi - will be his return to God.

Zoroaster teaches that Hell and Heaven are "all in the soul". Hell consists of mental tortures originated from evil thoughts, words and deeds. Heaven is mental bliss derived from good thoughts, good works and good deeds. Zoroaster sustains that all righteous men, living according to the divine laws, (Asha law, or natural law) will be saved.

All the followers of Zoroastrianism must be initiated at seven or at fifteen, when they are considered fully grown to accept the responsibilities of their social life. The ceremony is known as Navjote among the Parsis and as Sudred Pooshi among the Iranians. In this occasion, the new initiate or the newborn, will wear Sudreh and Kushti. Sudreh is a sacred shirt made of white moslim cloth. Kushti is a sacred thread tied around the waist. It is prepared from the wool of white lamb. Sudred and Kushti are the visible symbols of the Zoroastrian Religion.

In studying Zoroastrianism, one of the oldest religions in the world, we can see clearly the shift of the Monistic theory, from the philosophical form into a religious one by means of personification.

The Primeval Being, The Supreme Being was personified and was named as Ahura Mazda. What was applied to the Supreme Being in philosophy could be applied without change to Ahura Mazda in Zoroastrianism. So Ahura Mazda is the Supreme Being through whom everything exists. Beyond Him, apart from Him, and without Him, nothing exists. He is brighter than the brightest of creation, higher than the highest heavens, older than the oldest in the universe. He is the best one (cf. Ys. 28.8\). He knows no elder, no equal. He is the most perfect being. He is almighty (cf. Yasna 28. 5; 33. 11). He is changeless (cf. Ys. 45. 3). He is the same now and for ever (cf. Ys. 31. 7) He was, He is, and He will be the same transcendental Being, moving all, yet moved by none. In the midst of the manifold changes wrought by Him in the universe, Ahura Mazda remains changeless and unaffected, for He is mighty (cf. Ys. 43. 4). He will decide victory between the rival hosts of good and evil (cf. Yasna 44. 15) He is the first possessor of felicity and joy (cf. Ys. 45. 6). Everything comes from Him and through Him. He is the Lord of all. Many are his attributes. They are not accidents of his being, but are his very essence...

In dealing with the relation between the Supreme Being and the phenomenal world, we can say that Being is both transcendental and immanent. The same features can be ascribed to Ahura Mazda. He is transcendent inasmuch as he is infinitely more sublime and greater than his creatures. Yet he is not so remote and ineffable as not to be approached and addressed and greeted by his ardent worshippers. He is immanent in the sense that man can enter into close and loving relations with Him and own Him as his father and brother and friend. Zoroastrianism has another way to stress upon Ahura Mazda's immanence

in men by sustaining that every man has his Fravashi - a God's element - in the kernel of his Being.

The twin polar forces - the positive and the negative forces -, or spirit and matter are personified by Spenta Mainyu and Angre Mainyu.

According to the Gatha Ahunavaiti, Yasna 30: In the beginning there was a pair of two twins, two spirits, each of a peculiar activity; these are the Good and the Base, in thought, word, and deed.

Choose one of these two spirits! Be good, not base!

So with the creation of the universe, enter two opposing forces, two opposing entities; be they called light and darkness; day and night; joy and sorrow; misery and happiness; Spenta Mainyu and Angre Mainyu. This couple of forces coexist in the phenomenal world, as two divergent directions, or as the obverse and the reverse side of the same coin. Anyhow, the personification of the evil has enriched the demonology of the world with a famous personage, that is, Satan. Born in Zoroastrianism, He made his appearance in the biblical field, via the Book of Job, written in the post-exilic period (circa 450). Both in Zoroastrianism and in Christianity, Satan become soon a fierce adversary of God, and apparently has a powerful reign over this world.

Spenta Mainyu can be called also Vohu-Manah and Angre Mainyu, Ako Mano.

Vohu-Manah is then the positive, constructive Good mind, and Ako-Mano, the negative, destructive Evil mind...If you follow Vohu-Manah in your life, you will grow spiritually, progress and prosper but by following Ako-Mano, you will cause harm to yourself as well as to your community. [3]

The concept of Fire in Zoroastrianism is of deep scientific philosophy. It does not mean the worship of physical fire. Fire or Light is regarded as the cosmic symbol of Ahura-Mazda, the symbol of universal energy, the flame of consciousness, the light of reason and the glow of pure emotion and love in every heart. It just serves as altar symbol in Zoroastrian religion, like the Cross in Christianity, or the Black Stone of Mecca in Islam. [4]

It will be interesting for modern man to know that intellect is finite and it cannot reach the infinite. Man must transcend the limitations of intellect and enter into what Zarathushtra calls the region of Sraosha-Intuition which dispels darkness, conflict and confusion in the human mind. The relativity of Good and Evil, right and wrong is transcended and the subject and object are merged together in one flash of intuitive light. Then Truth dawns upon the consciousness of man. [5]

Zoroastrianism teaches, also, that things happen in Nature and in Man not by the whim of some hidden invisible dictator, but by the operation of the Immutable Law of Asha - the law of harmony, order, truth, causation and purity. Zarathushtra gave a scientific teaching regarding the law of cause and effect - the law of Karma. At several places in his Gathas he reiterates: "As you sow, so must you reap." With this law of Asha is tied up the conception of happiness and misery, heaven and hell. Those who follow the law, walk on the path of truth, righteousness and goodness out of which happiness comes. Those who break the law, punish themselves and suffer misery. Heaven and Hell are no places and locations, they are the subjective states of man's spiritual consciousness. God is a Loving Father. He never punishes man and hurls him into Hell for eternal condemnation. The greatest good in life is Goodness itself which brings happiness. Zarathushtra says: "Happiness to him who gives happiness to others [6]

It is written in the Gatha:

Who hears the Truth and lives it in his life,

Soul-healing Lord of Wisdom he becomes;  
To spread true teachings, Ahura, his words  
Are eloquent and able to convince;  
O Mazda, through Thy Fire blazing clear,  
Unto each man his place do Ye assign,  
The Wise, who follow the Soul-healing Lord,  
The Light Eternal shall be their abode...[\[7\]](#)

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- [\[1\]](#) Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1972, volume 23, Article on Zoroastrianism, pp.1011-1015.
- [\[2\]](#) Pamphlet given by Mobed Bahram Shahzadi, priest of California Zoroastrian Center, in Westminster.
- [\[3\]](#) Ib.
- [\[4\]](#) Ib.
- [\[5\]](#) Zoroastrianism, an ancient faith for modern man, p. 39. Pamphlet given by Mobed Bahram Shahzadi.
- [\[6\]](#) Zoroastrianism an ancient faith for modern Man. p. 38-39. Pamphlet given by Mobed Bahram Shahzadi.
- [\[7\]](#) I. J. Taraporewala, The Religion of Zarathushtra, Printed by Arun Naik at Akshar Pratiroof Pvt Ltd, 42. Amgekar Marg. Wadala, Bombay 400031 and Published by B. I. Taraporewala, India House No 3, August Kranti Marg. Bombay 400036., pp. 144-145.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 5

### The Kabbalah and the Monistic Theory

The Kabbalah has many spellings:

Kabbalah, refers to the Jewish mystical tradition which has emphasized prayer and study of esoteric commentaries on the Torah (Pentateuch) and other scriptures.

Cabala, refers to the spread of Kabbalistic teachings and symbols into Christian circles during the Renaissance (14th century and later).

Qabalah, implies the magical/occult use of the Kabbalah, beginning in the mid-1800s. [\[1\]](#)

But today, these words are used indifferently in Encyclopedias and books.

#### Sources and influences

Apparently, the main source of the Kabbalah was the doctrine and literature of the Jewish Tradition, mainly the Torah. But a wide variety of other sources has been noted, showing the impact of the various cultures with which the Jewish people have come in contact in their dispersion. Among these influences, should be included some Persian elements, both Parsi and Zoroastrian, Neo-Platonist and Neo-Pythagorean elements, Hermetic, Christian and Monistic themes, and even borrowings from Muslim sectarianism after the emergence of Islam. [\[2\]](#)

But, truly speaking, mystical experience lies at the root of the Kabbalah. Mystic Jews, throughout history, had independently discovered eternal truths. Their findings, when compared with those discovered by other mystics of other cultures, presented striking similarities. That led people to think about mutual borrowings. This is a very misleading view. A comparative study of the Yi-Ching and of the Kabbalah, for instance, will show striking similarities. But one cannot conclude that there are mutual borrowings between these two currents of thought. A similar phenomenon happened in other fields. For instance, we find in science, the case of Russell Wallace (1823-1913) whose independent discovery of Natural Selection spurred Darwin (1809-1882) to publish his work.

#### Crystallization of the Kabbalah, its evolution and its main books

The crystallization of the Kabbalah took place in the 13th century when Sefer Ha-Bahir appeared, and a number of Spanish personalities, philosophers and commentators lent their intellectual weight and fame to mysticism, men like Nahmanides (Moses Ben Nahman or Ramban), Abraham Abulafia, Joseph Gikatilla and Moses de Leon. The teachings of the Kabbalah spread to Germany where Rabbi Judah Hasid was especially important, and reached their culmination during the 16th century in Palestine in the city of Safed, where Rabbi Isaac Luria created a new system of Jewish mysticism. The period of the 14th to 17th centuries may be looked upon as the aftermath of Kabbalistic creativeness; in addition to the personalities already mentioned, one must also name R. Isaiah Horwitz (Shelah Ha-Kadosh). [\[3\]](#)

The basic works of the Kabbalah are the Sepher Yetzirah (The Book of Formation), and the Sepher Ha Zohar (The Book of Splendor). The dates of the writing of these books are by no means thoroughly established. Some Kabbalists claim that the Sepher Yetzirah was written by Abraham. But it was probably written by the Rabbi Akiba in A.D. 120. The Sepher Ha Zohar, presumably written by Simeon Ben Jochai of the second century, has been compiled by Moses de Leon of Spain about A.D. 1305.

### Teachings of the Kabbalah

The Kabbalah is known for its obscurity, its secrecy, its enticing air of mystery. But we know that it has two main characteristics:

1. As philosophy, it professes the monistic theory combined with the emanation theory.
2. As religion, it professes a mystic way of life, the final goal of it being the union with God.

From these two features, we can deduce almost all the main tenets of the Kabbalah.

A priori, we have already the following guide-posts:

1. An ineffable Godhead is the Principle of everything in this universe.
2. This Godhead, as Center, emanates the world.
3. The emanation process is performed in successive steps, and is governed by eternal and immutable laws. The building materials of the world are classified according to their densities: fire, air, water, earth...
  4. Everything in this world, is intimately interconnected, interrelated to form an organic whole, with the Godhead as Center or Head. In other words, all the various phenomena of the universe form an underlying unity: all things are parts of an organized whole. There are secret laws which govern the universe and hidden connections between things which do not appear to be linked on the surface. The building materials of all things, as well as the different directions of the space which serve as theaters of change, are represented by the 10 numbers, called the 10 Sephiroths. The 10 numbers or Sephiroths also stand for immutable laws presiding all changes. They represent all the attributes of God and all the moral qualities of man. Letters stand for all the connections between things in the universe, for all the paths between the 10 numbers or Sephiroths. Letters and numbers provide a key to the pattern of the universe, because they give rise to innumerable different combinations and permutations resulting in words and languages: They are then images of the innumerable phenomena of the world which are produced by the combination and the permutation of few fundamental building blocks, and by their interactions. Numbers and letters in the hand of man, and building blocks in the universe are similarly used as instruments to evolve complexity from an underlying simplicity, the many from the One.
  5. The process of change in the world is effected in two opposite directions - flux and reflux - to form a cycle: Everything comes out from the principle and returns finally to it.
  6. God is transcendent (Ein-Sof) and at the same time immanent (Kether) in the world.
  7. A mystic, if he realizes the presence of God in his heart, can be united to God. He can find his way to go back to the hidden Godhead.
  8. The final aim for life for a mystic is to be united to God.
  9. This is also the glorious destiny of the whole mankind, although for many, it can be realized only after many successive lives. This is the Theory of Reincarnation.

## The Kabbalah as a Monistic Theory of the Universe

While official Judaism, as well as other prophetic religions in the world, is basically dualistic (God, the Transcendent Creator, the "wholly other", over against his creation), the Kabbalah, as well as all the other mystic brands in the world is monistically inclined (the essential unity of man with God, or of all beings, as such, with God.)

The Zohar was very emphatic about that. It wrote: "All is linked in a same Whole, so that it is easy to see that all is One; that all is the Ancient and that there is no distinction between the Whole and Him." [4]

"The Whole is One, and the Whole is He; the Whole is the only thing without distinction nor separation." [5]

"The Ancient Saint exists, wrapped in the figure of the One. He is One, and All is One, and all the lights which radiate from Him are One and re-enter in the One."

"God is the beginning and the ending of all the degrees of the creation. All these degrees bear his mark and his character; and one cannot designate Him otherwise than the One. He is One in spite of the numerous forms which He had upon Him. It is upon Him that are suspended things, superior and inferior." [6]

"Before the creation, all was contained in the same unity." [7]. In other words, if one declares that the universe is God or God is the universe, one says the same thing. "The En-Sof", says indeed the Zohar, "is clothed and wrapped by the Sephiroths, as the charcoal by the flames." Besides, after emanating the radiation of the primordial light in ten lights, it adds: "Nevertheless, all is One." [8]

The universe then appears less as a development of God than as a degradation of God...

### Emanation as mechanism for the world appearance

The Kabbalah diverges from the exoteric Judaism, in rejecting the creation ex nihilo of the Bible, and in professing, instead, the Theory of Emanation, as mechanism for the world appearance. Botril cites the following words which, he says, are quoted literally from the "Philosopher's Stone":

"O thou man who drawest from the cisterns at the source, guard thyself, when tempted, from revealing anything of the doctrine of emanation which is a greatest mystery for all the Kabbalists, and this mystery is hidden in the words of the Law: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord". [9]

Saadia sums up the Kabbalistic doctrine of Emanation as follows: "Now, as the Creator is the only Being Who was in existence at first, they maintain that He draw everything from his own substance". [10]

We can use some excerpts from Albert Pike's *Morals and Dogma* to describe the Kabbalistic Theory of Emanation.

"In the Kabbalah, as in the Persian and Gnostic doctrines, He is the Supreme Being unknown to all, the "Unknown Father". The world is His revelations and subsists only in Him. His attributes are reproduced there, with different modifications, and in different degrees, so that the Universe is His Holy Splendor: it is but His Mantel: but it must be revered in silence. All beings have emanated from the Supreme Being: The nearer a being is to Him, the more perfect it is; the more remote in the scale, the less its purity." [11]

The Kabbalah conceived God as Non-Being, Being and Existent. We will examine these three modes.

### God as Non-being

The Kabbalah sustains that before the apparition of the world, the Supreme Being was a hidden and non-manifested Godhead. It was infinite, ineffable, homogenous and undifferentiated. It was then represented by a Circle without Center, and was termed as En-Sof (Ain-Soph).

"The Zohar didn't hesitate to replace the denomination En-Sof for a negative term, Ayin (No-thing). This term which was extended to the first divine manifestation, the first Sefhira (The Crown), was foreign to all positive conceptions. God "in se" was the Ayin of Ayin, the No-thing of No-thing, or the quintessence of No-thing." [12]

"Thus, the Kabbalists claim to remain true to the popular belief that it was only by the power of the Divine Word that the World issued from nothingness. But we know already that "nothing" had quite another meaning for them. In the word of Abraham Dior, one of the commentators of the Sefer Yetzirat: "When it is maintained that all things were called forth from nothingness, nothingness in its proper sense is not what it meant, for being can never come out of non-being. Rather, what is meant is the Non-Being that cannot be conceived either through its cause or through its essence; in short, it is the Cause of Causes. It was what we called the Primitive Non-Being, preceding the universe; not only material objects, but also Wisdom, on which the world was founded. To inquire after the essence of Wisdom and how it coheres in Non-Being, or in the Supreme-Crown, is to ask an unanswerable (sic) question, for there is no differentiation and no manner of existence in Non-Being. Nor can we understand how Wisdom is united with life." [13]

It is worth noticing that Chinese philosophers also called the Supreme Being, Wu Ji (Vô Cực, Non-Polarized), or Void (Xu, Hư), or Chaos (Hun Tun, Hỗn Độn), which does not mean chaos or disorders, but rather indifferenciation and homogeneity. They represented it also by a Circle without Center.

### God as Being

"In the process of creation, the diffused life of Ain-soph retires from the circumference to the Center and establishes a point, which is the first manifesting One - the primitive limitation of the all-pervading O. When the divine essence thus retires from the circular boundary to the Center, It leaves behind the Abyss, or, as the Kabbalists term it, the Great Privation. Thus in Ain-Soph is established a twofold condition where previously had existed but one. The first condition is the central point - the primitive objectified radiance of the eternal, subjectified life. About this radiance is darkness caused by the deprivation of the life which is drawn to the center to create the first point, or universal germ. The universal Ain-Soph, therefore, no longer shines through space, but rather upon space, from an established first point. Isaac Myers described this process as follows: "The Ain-Soph at first was filling All and then made an absolute concentration into itself which produced the Abyss, Deep, or Space, the Aveer Qadmon or Primitive Air, the Azoth; but this is not considered in the Qabbalah as a perfect void or vacuum, a perfectly empty Space, but it is thought of as the Waters or Crystalline Chaotic Sea, in which was a certain degree of Light inferior to that by which all the created (world and hierarchies) were made" [14].

"Concerning this, the Zohar says: "When the Concealed of the Concealed wishes to reveal Himself, He first made a single point: The Infinite was entirely unknown, and diffused no light before this luminous point violently broke through into vision".

The name of this point is I Am, called by the Hebrews Eheieh. The Qabbalists gave many names to this Dot. On this subject, Christian D. Ginsberg writes, in substance: The Dot is called the first Crown, because it occupies the highest position. It is called the Aged, because it is the first emanation..." [15]

"It is called the White Head, the Long Face - Macroposophus - and the Inscrutable High, because it

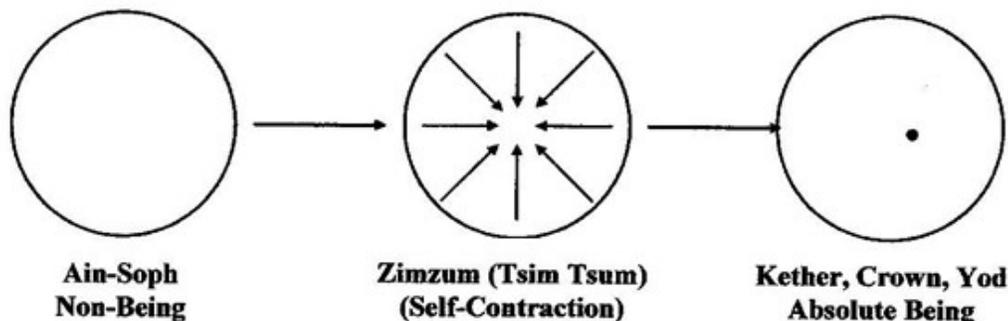
controls and governs all other emanations. When the White Shining Point had appeared, it was called Kether, which means the Crown..." [16]

Kether is also called Yod. Thus one can say that Yod is the beginning and the end of all things that are. The stream that flows forth is the Universe of things, which always becomes, having no cessation...All things are included in Yod; wherefore it is called the Father of All." [17]

To sum up, "when the infinite God willed to emit what were to flow forth, He contracts Himself in the Center of his light, in such manner that the most intense light should reach to a certain circumference, and on all sides upon Himself. And this is the First Contraction, and termed Tsemsum [18]

Luria called this Contraction, The Zimzum Theory. [19]

We can draw this diagram:



The ZimZung Diagram

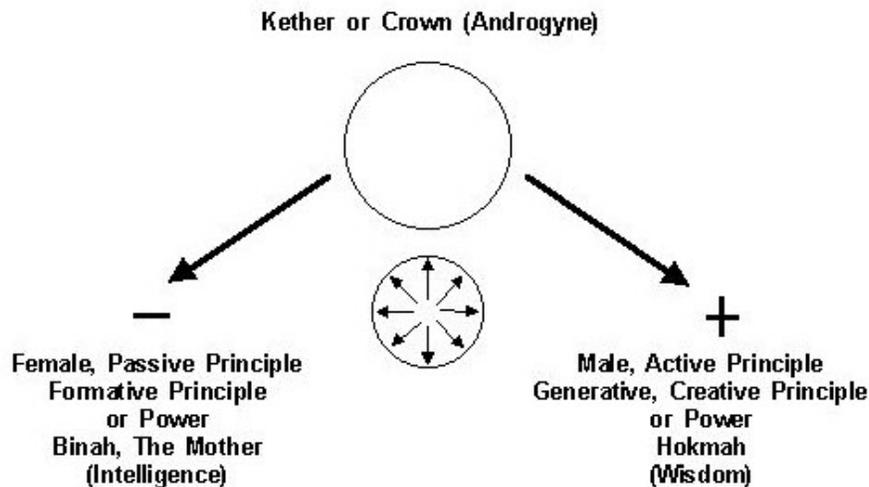
### God as Existent

The Godhead can be designated as Existent, when it manifests itself into the myriad of things and the Universe. This self-manifestation is done by two mechanisms:

Emanation.

Self-differentiation or division.

This double phenomenon is summarized by the first three Sephiroth:



The Three Sephiroth

"Briefly, the Kabbalah posits God prior to creation as existing in an undifferentiated state (En-Sof). The Universe, the World, and Humanity are the result of the emanation of the Divine from "out" of this fullness

into particularity.

"The path or progression of this emanation is generally represented by the visual glyph of "The Tree of Life." [20]

### Relation between Ain-Soph and Kether

So we see, Ain-Soph can be considered as the non-manifested Godhead, and Kether is the manifested Godhead. Ain-Soph is the infinite God, while Kether or Crown is his Will to create. In spite of this distinction, this name Ain-Soph can be applied to Kether or Crown.

Albert Pike wrote: "Ainsoph, Aensoph, Ayensoph, is the title of the Cause of Causes, its meaning being "endless", because there is no limit to its loftiness, and nothing can comprehend it. Sometimes, also, the name is applied to Kether or the Crown, the first emanation, because that is the Throne of the Infinite that is, its first and highest Seat, than which none is higher, and because Ainsoph resides and concealed therein: hence it rejoices in the same name." [21]

### The Ten Sephiroths or the Tree of Life

The Ten Sephiroths, as manifestations of the Supreme Being, are endowed with many signification. They can mean facets or aspects of the divine personality, stages in God's revelation of himself and phases of the divine life, driving forces of the universe and the impulses which move man. They are also numbers from One to Ten, the building blocks from which all other numbers are constructed

### Ten Sephiroths as working-stocks of the universe

There are ten emanations of numbers out of nothings:

1. The Spirit of the Living God.

2. From the Spirit, emanated Air.

3. From the Air, Water.

4. From the Water, Fire.

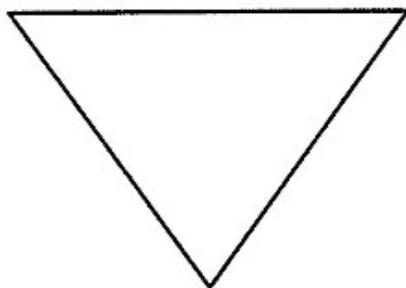
5-10. From the Fire, the Height (5), and the Depth(6), the East (7) and the West(8), the North (9) and the South (10). [22]

The Ten Sephiroths, as speculations on the universe.

The Ten Sephiroths are frequently represented by three triangles and one circle.

The first triangle is constituted: Crown, Hokhmah and Binah .

**8 Hod ( Glory)  
(change & Flux)**



**7 Netsah (Success,  
Victory, Perfection)  
(Attraction & Cohesion)**

**9 Yesud (Foundation)  
(Permanence and Stability)**

### The Sephiroth First Triangle

It deals with the way by which the universe emanated from God.

From the One, or Kether or the Androgyne Godhead, spring two first Principles: The Masculine and the Feminine, the Father and the Mother of everything. One can also assimilate the Crown to the Will of God; Hokhmah to the Wisdom of God, and Binah to his Intelligence.

The Godhead wills to manifest itself into the world; he plans and then performs

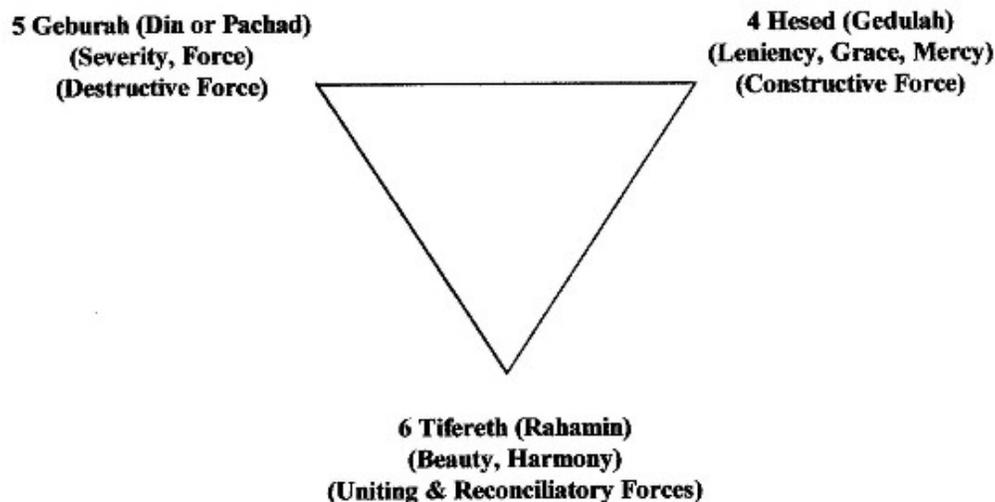
"The Infinite first limits Himself by flowing forth in the shape of Will, of determination to act. This Will of Deity, or the Deity as Will, is Kether, or the Crown, the first Sephirah. In it are included all the Emanations...For to the creation of anything, it is absolutely necessary that the Infinite should form for Himself and in Himself, an idea of what He willed to produce or create: and as there is no Time with Him, to will was to create, to plan was to will and to create; and in the Idea, the Universe in potency, the universal succession of things was included. Henceforward, all was merely evolution and development."

[\[23\]](#)

The nature of the Active Principle is to diffuse: of the Passive Principle, to collect and make fruitful.

The next two triangles are dealing with immutable laws that govern the existence of everything.

The second triangle is represented as follows



The Second Triangle of Sephiroth

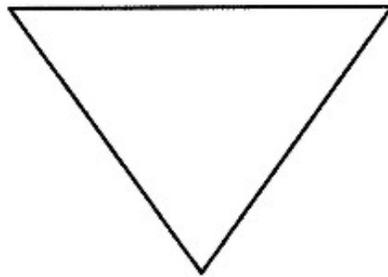
Hesed or Gedulah, the love or mercy of God, is the force which molds and organizes things, which constructs and builds up (Anabolism)

The opposite Sephira, Geburah (Din or Pachad), the power and stern judgment of God, balances the constructive activity of Hesed with the destructive activity (Catabolism). All phenomena are then governed by the law of the opposites, by the interplay of construction and destruction, of growth and decay, of birth and death.

They are united and reconciled in Tiphareth (Or Rahamin), the beauty of God, resulting in Harmony and Equilibrium.

In the third triangle, we have:

**8 Hod ( Glory)  
(change & Flux)**



**7 Netsah (Success,  
Victory, Perfection)  
(Attraction & Cohesion)**

**9 Yesud (Foundation)  
(Permanence and Stability)**

The Third Triangle of Sephiroth

Netsah is the force of attraction and cohesion of the universe. Its opposite Sefira, Hod, represents essentially a mercurial quality of things - ever flowing, shifting and in constant flux... [24]

The Kabbalah, by its Sephiroths, likes to convey an eternal truth: That under the apparent strife between opposing forces, there is Harmony and Beauty, which is the result of a just Equilibrium.

Thus the Tree of Life can be considered as a balance. "...The Scales of the Balance are designated as Male and Female. In the Spiritual world, Evil and Good are in equilibrium, and it will be restored, when, of Evil, Good becomes, until all is Good... For Hakemak is on the right hand, on the side of Gedulah, and Binah on the left, on the side of Geburah; and Kether is the beam of the balance above them in the middle, so Gedulah or Khased is on one hand, and Geburah on the other, and under these, Tephared; and Netsah is on one side, and Hod on the other, and under these, Yesod..." [25]

As implied in Yesod, the Stability and the Permanence of the Universe, can only be realized by the harmonious cooperation of the two opposite forces. By Harmony and by Equilibrium, God realized His Perfection, His Success, and His Glory.

The last Sefira, Malkhuth, is the sphere of the earth, matter, and physical body. Malkhuth is the union of the Sephiroths in the entire tree. It is frequently called the Shekhinah, the divine presence in the world, the divine presence in God's people, Israel, and the divine presence in man. Thus, The Kingdom, or Malkhuth, does not express any new attribute, but simply the harmony which exists between all the other attributes and their absolute rule over the world.

To realize the Divine Presence of God in the world and in oneself is illumination, is Gnosis, is the first step for the regeneration. So Malkhuth, with Yesod, Tiphareth and Kether in the Middle Column, form what the Kabbalist called the Tree of Life, while the Right Column was called the Tree of Good, and the Left Column was called the Tree of Evil, in reference to the creation story in Genesis.

The discovery of the Divine Presence in oneself is the first step of Ascent from the phenomenal world to God. The second step, is to lead a harmonious life, suggested by Yesod. The third step is to live an ideal life, represented by Tiphareth, and the final step is to get back to the One, the Absolute, represented by Kether. [26]

The idea of returning back to the Origin is frequently suggested in the Sephiroths. It was written in the Sepher Zetzirah: "The appearance of the Ten Spheres (Sephiroths) out of nothing is as a flash of lighting or a sparkling flame, and they are without beginning or end. The Word of God is in them when they go forth and when they return. They run by His order like a whirlwind and prostrate themselves before His Throne. The Ten Sephiroths have their end linked to their beginning and their beginning linked to their

end, conjoined as the flame is wedded to the live coal, for the Lord is Superlatively One and to Him there is no second." [27]

"All things will re-enter the Foundation from which they issued. Thus in the cosmic process, there are two tendencies - the eternal flux and reflux - designated by the Kabbalists as Hitpashtuth (exit), and Hitalhut (re-entry) which keep on acting and re-acting. In the same way as the human organism exists by the double process of inspiration and expiration - the one cannot be conceived without the other -, the whole creation is a gigantic process of divine inspiration and expiration..." [28]

### There are many ways of presenting the 10 Sephiroths:

1. It can be presented in columns:

The right column is the Tree of Good.

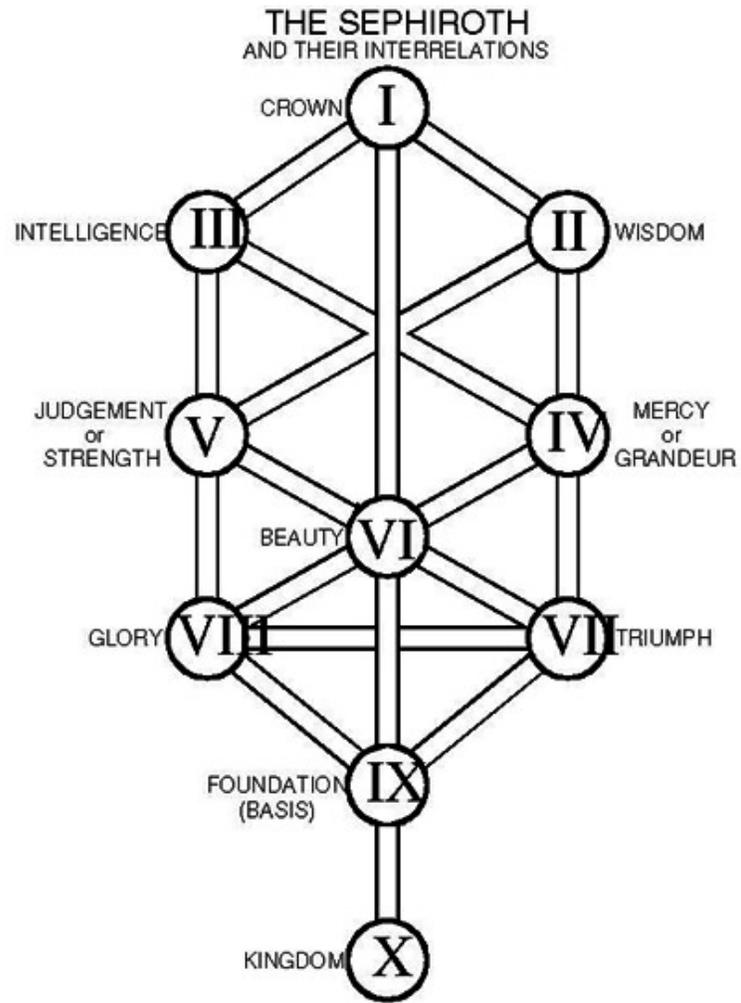
The left column is the Tree of Evil.

The middle column is the Tree of Life.

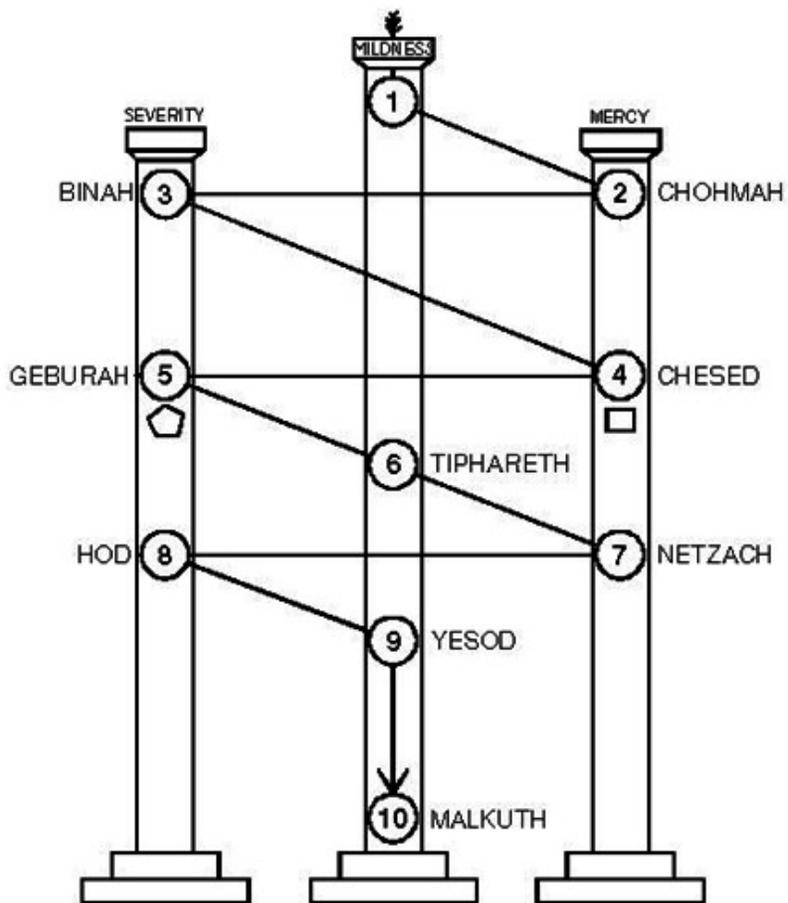
2. It can be presented by three triangles and one circle.

3. It can be presented by a human figure: The man being Adam Kadmon, the "heavenly" or "universal" man, the original spiritual and ideal form of humanity.

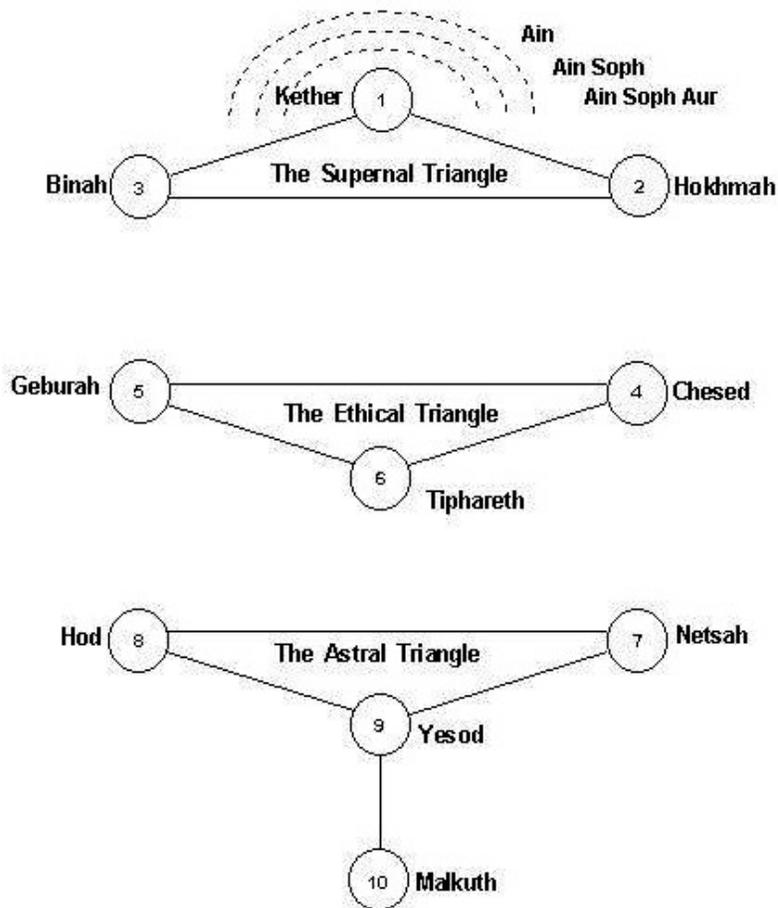
When they are presented in three columns, they suggest the idea of a balance, the two hands of which suggest the two opposing forces in the universe, and the beam of which suggests the eternal law of Poise or Equilibrium resulting from the harmonious interaction of the two opposing forces.



The Sephiroths And Their Interrelation



The Three Pillars and Their Ascent



The Three Triangles

The 10 Sephiroths are linked together by 22 paths, representing the 22 letters in the Jewish alphabet. It aims to show that everything in the universe is interdependent, that everything forms an inseparable whole. If so, man can never be separated from God, his Source and Origin.

To sum up, the Ten Sephiroths are used to describe the relation between the hidden, non-manifest, inaccessible and transcendent Godhead (En-Soph) and the manifest, dynamic, a creative aspect of God. The Sephiroths (for which many other synonyms are used in the Kabbalistic literature, e. g. crowns, attributes, steps, principles, names) mediate between the hidden, mystical "Cause above all Causes" and the world of plurality and matter. Together, they compose a Tree of Life. It is a map of everything and a classification of everything. The Tree's branches spread through the entire universe, reconciling all diversity in a unified pattern. Furthermore, it shows both the descent of the divine into manifestation and the ascent by which man can reverse the process of emanation and climb back up the Tree, as it were, to regain the Godhead.

The presentation of the Ten Sephiroths in the figure of a Man, called Adam Kadmon, or Macroprosopos, the first prototype or Universal, or Macrocosm teaches us this very important lesson: that man really has two aspects: The existential aspect which is the existential man, the visible man of everyday, and the essential man, the divine man, the essential aspect which is co-eternal with the Godhead itself.

The existential man, is in fact, the Malkuth, the Shekhinah, the God in exile in the material world, the divine spark imprisoned in everything. As the existential man cannot be separated from the essential man, the existential God (Malkuth) cannot be separated from the essential God (sometimes represented by

Tiphareth). If man can be re-united to God, if the Material Man can be re-united to the Divine Man, it is called Unio Mystica, or Hierosgamos (sacred marriage), or in a lesser degree, communion with God or Devekuth (a turning to God, a loving clinging or adhering to Him which implies no loss of identity.)

Everything in the mystic Kabbalah is directed to the rooting of the soul in God and the ransoming of the divine spark (Tikkun), the return of Divine Presence, from its abandonment in the Exile and its diffusion through the world's brokenness, and the redemption into unity.

The Kabbalah's Tree of Life suggests that all life is bound into unity which descends from the Most High to the world beneath. But, as a matter of fact, the world is splintered by duality of perception: men are estranged from each other, nature is estranged from man and the estrangement enforces upon men the strategy of power and manipulation which, however much it affords temporary protection and insulation, augments the estrangement.

The Kabbalist mystic, beginning as he does with the vision of the unity which preceded creation, a unity in which all life shared, has the task of returning men to an interior depth which enables them at first to grasp their own unity, and at the end, to do for others the work of unification.

### The 22 paths or the 22 letters of the Hebraic alphabet

The 22 letters are divided into three groups:

The three Mothers **ש, מ, א** (Sh, M, A) representing the three primordial elements in the universe:

Heaven was created from the elementary Fire (or Ether) (**ש**, C).

The Earth, comprising sea and land, from the elementary Water. (M, **מ**).

And the atmospheric air, from the elementary Air, or Spirit (A, **א**) which establishes the balance among them. Thus, were all things produced.

God appointed and established three Mothers **ש, מ, א** combined, weighed, and exchanged them, forming by them three Mothers **ש, מ, א**, in the universe, in the year, and in man (male and female). [29]

The three Mothers in the universe are: Air, Water, and Fire. The three Mothers in the Year are: heat, coldness and the temperate state. Heat was created from Fire, coldness from Water, and the temperate state from Air, which equilibrates them. The Three Mothers produced in man (male and female) breast, abdomen and head. The head was formed from the Fire, the abdomen from the water, and the breast (thorax) from Air, which places them in equilibrium. [30]

The seven double letters **ב, ג, ד, כ, ה, ו, ז** (B, G, D, K, P, R, Th) have a duplicity of pronunciation (two voices), aspirated and unaspirated. They serve as a model of softness and hardness, strength and weakness.

The seven double letters symbolize wisdom, riches, fertility, life, power, peace and grace.

The seven double letters also signify the antithesis to which human life is exposed. The opposite of wisdom is foolishness; of riches, poverty; of fertility, sterility; of life, death: of power, servitude; of peace, war; and of beauty, deformity.

The seven double letters point out six dimensions, height, depth, East and West, North and South, and the Holy Temple in the Center, which sustains them all.

The double letters are seven and not six, they are seven and not eight; reflect upon this fact, search into it and reveal its hidden mystery and place the Creator in His throne again. (It means that the throne of

God, like the Holy Temple is always in the Center of everything). The seven double letters having been designed, established, purified, weighed, and exchanged by God. He formed, of them, seven planets in the universe, seven days in the Year, and seven gateways of the senses in man (male, female). From these seven He also produced seven heavens, seven earths, and seven Sabbaths. Therefore He loves seven more than any other number beneath His throne.

The seven planets in the universe are: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and Moon. The seven days in the Year are the seven days of the week (possibly the seven creative days are meant). The seven gateways in man (male and female) are two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and the mouth.

With the seven double letters He also designed seven earths, seven heavens, seven continents, seven seas, seven rivers, seven deserts, seven days, seven weeks (from Passover to Pentecost) and in the mist of them His Holy Palace. There is a cycle of seven years and the seventh is the release year, and after seven release years is the Jubilee. For this reason God loves the number seven more than any other thing under the heavens. [\[31\]](#)

The 12 simple letters ק, צ, ע, ס, ג, ל, ט, י, ה, ז, ו, ה (Q, X, U, S, N, L, Y, F, J, Z, W, H) symbolize the twelve fundamental properties: speech, thought, movement, sight, hearing, work, coition, smell, sleep, anger, taste (or swallowing), and mirth.

The simple letters corresponds to twelve directions: east height, northeast, east depth; south height, southeast, south depth; west height, southwest, west depth; north height, northwest, north depth. They diverge in all eternity and are the arm of the universe.

The simple letters having been designed, established, weighed, and exchanged by God. He produced by them twelve zodiacal signs in the universe, twelve months in the year, and twelve chief organs in the human body (male and female).

The signs of the zodiac are: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces. The months of the Year are: Nisan, Ijar, Sivan, Tammus, Ab, Elul, Tisri, Marchesvan, Kislev, Tebet, Sebat, and Adar. The organs of the human body are: two hands, two feet, two kidneys, gall-bladder, small intestine, liver, esophagus, stomach, and spleen. [\[32\]](#)

Thus, the 22 letters suggest that this world is formed from some substances, and is governed by opposing forces. But in the middle, in the Center of all phenomena, God is always present to govern, to direct and to conserve...They stress on the immanence of God, and the unity, the interconnection of everything.

To be complete, we must mention briefly the Four Worlds according to the Kabbalah:

[Atziluth, the Boundless World of Divine Names.](#)

[Briah, the Archangelic World of Creations.](#)

[Yetzirath, the Hierarchical World of Formations.](#)

[Assiah, the Elemental World of Substances.](#)

Each world has 10 powers, or spheres, because each world contains the 10 Sephiroths or their reflections. So we have 40 spheres of creation out of the En-Sof.

It is important to mention that the four Kabbalistic worlds are associated with the four elements:

[Atziluth corresponds to the Element Fire.](#)

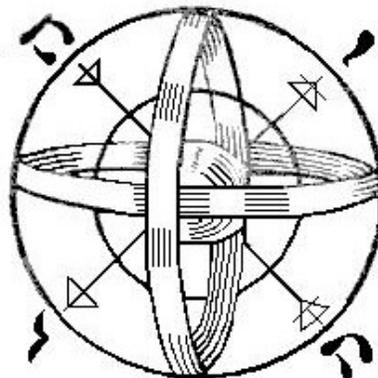
Briah is associated with the Element Air.

Yetzirah is linked with the Element Water.

Assiah is connected with the Element Earth. [33]

Simply speaking, we can posit the Four Worlds respectively as Divine, Spiritual, Psychical and Material.

We can see in some Kabbalistic books that the Four Elements correspond to the four letters in the Tetragrammaton, such as shown in the following picture. [34]



The Tetragrammaton

Thus, some Kabbalists accept three elements (Fire, Air, Water) as the primal elements of the world, while others prefer to accept four elements as building blocks of the universe (Fire, Air, Water, Earth).

So for the Kabbalists, the world is formed by a complex system of mechanisms: Emanation (En-sof emanating the ten Sephiroths), Self-Division (Kether dividing itself into Binah (Female Principle) and Hokhmah (Male Principle), Fecundation (Interaction among Binah and Hokhmah), Combination, Permutation, Inversion (The Four Elements) Mutual Modification and Interchange (the Three Elements), and Reflection (The first three Sephiroths reflecting themselves in the lower spheres. [35]

### Commentaries

As the Jewish Kabbalah is mostly written in code, and all of it in the form of allegories, it takes much effort to form a clear idea of its chief tenets.

The Kabbalah is a proponent of the Emanation Theory: It asserts that the world is not created ex nihilo by God, but emanates from Him.

It does not consider God as a spiritual Being creating the world ex nihilo, by His command, radically separated from the world, but rather as a Principle manifesting itself step by step into this visible world. He is not separated from the world but is immanent in it, embodied therein. God is the Soul and the World His body, or his garment.

The Kabbalah makes an exhaustive inquiry about God. It follows Him step by step, from the depth of Nothingness (En-Sof), to Being (Kether) and to Existence (Ten Sephiroths). It explains how the Absolute can generate the Relative, the One can generate the Multiple, and how the Multiple can re-gain the Unity with the One. In the Kabbalah, it is shown how the Godhead can engender the world, and the complex mechanism of the world appearance is mentioned; Emanation (Ein-Soph and the Ten Sephiroths), Differentiation (Kether differentiating itself into Hokhmah and Binah - Male and Female Principles), Mutual

Fecundation and Interaction (Binah and Hokhmah), Reflection (three superior Sephiroths into seven inferior Sephiroths), Interplay of Opposite Forces (Tree of Good and Tree of Evil), and their Reconciliation creating Harmony and Beauty, Stability and Permanence (Tree of Life, Tiphareth, and Yesod).

The Kabbalah considers the Godhead as comprehending the world and as acting inside each being (transcendent and immanent). Guided by these two apparently contradicting views, we can say with Paul: "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts, 17, 28), or with Jesus Christ: "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke, 17, 21) or again with Paul: "Know thee not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God." (1. Cor. 6, 19), and "I think also that I have the Spirit of God" (1. Cor. 7, 40).

One of the main ideas of the Kabbalists is that the world is engendered from Kether, considered as a dot in the center of a circle. Thus the development of beings is done by successive degeneration and from the Center to the Periphery. Henri Serouya wrote: "Thus the development from the Infinite to the Finite carried in itself degradation from the perfect to the imperfect. The perfection diminishes in proportion to the distance which separates the arrival point from the primordial point or focus. Beings are characterized by multiplicity and thus inferior to One. The more a being, on its way of evolution, tends to go away, the more it is prone to be condensed and to be materialized. In this sense, the development of beings is done from the Center to the Periphery and thus in successive order; these orders are arranged like concentric circles. Each order is the cover, the rind, the matter of the order which is immediately superior to it; and the spirit of the order which is immediately inferior to it."

"This subtle theory of rinds is emphasized in the Zohar, and bears an interesting metaphysical conception in regards to the entire being. Thus for Jewish mystics, God is considered as the Center. The development of Sephiroths, and of their action, is suggested by concentric circles. The inferior wraps the superior and served as its protecting rind. "The whole created universe including the Sephiroths, is then only the rind of En-Sof, as rinds of the onion are the garments of the seed. Thus according to these ideas, spirit and matter are not two separate essences, independent from each other, two distinct substances but two modes of the same substance, considered in its distance, lesser or greater from the Initial Point. For the Zohar, matter is somewhat spirit becoming visible. It is the visible imprint of the invisible seal call spirit..." [\[36\]](#)

The Kabbalistic view of the world as concentric circles, organized according to their respective Densities (Fire, Air, Water, Earth), is shared by universal symbolism, and by other occult schools. "The ancient sages considered above and below as indicating degree of distance from source, source being posited in the actual center and relative distance being the various points along the various points along the radii from the Center toward the circumference. In matter pertaining to philosophy and theology, up may be considered as toward the center, and down as toward the circumference. Center is Spirit, circumference is matter. Therefore, Up is toward Spirit along an ascending scale of spirituality; Down is toward matter along an ascending scale of materiality. The latter concept is partly expressed by the apex of a cone when viewed from the above, is seen as a point in the exact center of the circumference formed by the base of the cone." [\[37\]](#)

The Kabbalah teachings present striking similarities, when compared with those of other Esoteric schools. The division of the Tree, into Three Pillars, for instance, "reminds us of the three channels of Prana, described by the Yogis, Ida, Pingala, and Shushuma; and the two principles, the Yin and the Yang

of Chinese Philosophy and the Tao (or Tai Ji) which is the equilibrium between them. By the agreement of witnesses, truth is established, and when we find three of the great metaphysical systems of the world, in complete agreement, we may conclude that we are dealing with established principles and should accept them as such." [38]

The division of the universe into four worlds, the hierarchies of which, are based upon their densities, namely:

Atziluth, the Archetypal World, meaning Emanation and symbolizing the celestial realm or divine realm, consisting of Kether, and corresponding to the Element of Fire.

Briah, called the Creative World, consists of Hokhmak and Binah, and is represented by the Element of Air. It is the Spiritual Realm.

Yetzirah, meaning Formation, is the Formative World, consisting of the six central Sephiroths, viz. Chesed, Geburah, Tiphareth, Netzach, Hod, and Yesod. Its emblem is the Element of Water. It can be called the Psychological or Astral World.

Assiah, meaning Action, consisting of Malkuth, is The Material World and corresponds to the Element of Earth. [39]

If we consider Fire and Water as two extreme terms, and Air and Earth as two middle terms, we can say that these four Elements represent the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, viz.:

Fire corresponding to the Yod

Air corresponding to Vau

Water corresponding to the first He

Earth corresponding to the second He. [40]

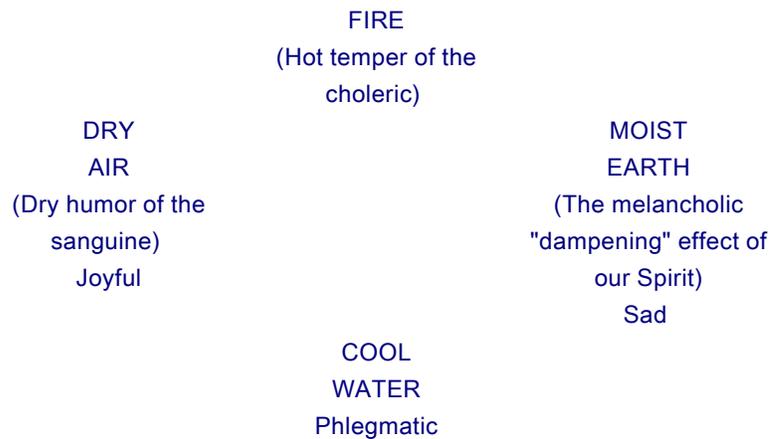
Let us be reminded that among other signification, the famous word INRI can also stand for the Four Elements, namely: Its four letters are the initials of the Hebrew words that represent the Four Elements - Iammim, the Sea or Water; Nour, Fire; Rouach, The Air; and Iebeschah, the dry Earth. [41]

In ancient times, the Four Elements found applications in every field, be it Medicine, Astrology or Divination.

"The Four Elements correspond to the four temperaments as described by Hippocrates, the four Tarot suits, the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and the seven planets. If the implications are worked out, it will be seen that herein are contained some very important keys. "The Element of Earth corresponds to the Phlegmatic Temperament, the suit of Pentacles (Diamond), the signs of Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn, and the planets Venus and Luna. "The Element of Water corresponds to the Biliary Temperament, the suit of Cups (Heart), the signs of Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces, and the planet Mars. "The Element of Air corresponds to the Choleric Temperament, the suit of Swords (Spade), the signs of Libra, Gemini and Aquarius, and the planets Mercury and Saturn. "The Element of Fire corresponds to the Sanguine Temperament, the suit of Wands (Club), The signs Aries, Sagittarius and Leo, and the planets Sol and Jupiter. [42]

Other authors using these four elements, classify men into four temperaments, but a little bit differently, as follows:

HOT



The Yi Jing associated the Four Elements with four colors: Fire with Red; Air (Wood) with Green; Metal (Earth) with White; Water with Black. Amazingly enough we see the four horses in Zechariah having the same colors (red horse, black horse, white horse, grised and bay horse) (Zechariah 6, 2-7). The Revelation mentionned also the four horse in the same colors (Rev. 6, 2-8).

Thus the Four Worlds of the Kabbalah, corresponding to the Four Elements, with the Two Principles - Hokhmah and Binah - are the two main tenets that stand for the Emanation Theory. So we can use the Four Worlds, the Four Elements as pass-words to regroup all the Esoteric schools East and West that profess the Emanation Theory. The Four Elements are expressed variously as:

- The four letters in YHVH and in INRI.
- The four geometrical solids in Timaeus of Plato: Fire (Tetrahedron), Air (Octahedron), Water (Icosahedron), Earth (Cube).
- The Four Beasts, symbolizing the Four Sides of the Sky: Taurus, Leo, Scorpio (Eagle), Aquarius (Man). Each Beast is also represented by a brightest Star in the Zodiacal band: Aldebarran (Taurus), Regulus (Leo), Antares (Scorpio) Fomalhaut (Aquarius).
- The Four Beasts become the emblems for the Four Evangelists: Taurus stand for Luke, Leo for Marc, Eagle for John, Aquarius for Matthew. They become the Four Creatures found in Ezechiel's vision (Eze. 1, 10, and 10,14), and in John's vision (Rev. 4, 7).
- The four beast enter in the composition of the Sphinxes, especially in Assyrian Sphinxes (Encyclopaedia of Art, Plate 523, and 488).
- The Four Elements in Buddhist and Hinduist philosophy: Fire, Water, Earth, Air.
- The Four Elements in the Yi-Ching with some modification, viz.: Fire, Wood (Air), Metal (Earth), Water.
- The Four Suits of the Tarot: Wands (Club) (Fire); Cups (Heart) (Water); Swords (Spade) (Air); Pentacles (Diamond).
- The Four Elements of Alchemy (Fire, Air, Water, Earth).
- The Four Elements in the Zoroastrian religion of Persia.
- The Four First Chakras in the Indian physiology:
  - The basal, supra-anal center (Four Petals), Muladhara Chakra: Earth
  - The penile center (Six Petals), Svadhishtana: Water.
  - The umbilical center (Ten Petals), Manipura: Air.

- The cardiac center (Sixteen Petals): Anahata: Fire

The Four Worlds in the Kabbalah.

- Atziluth: Fire.
- Briah: Air.
- Yetsirah: Water.
- Assiah: Earth.

Dion Fortune assimilates this fourfold classification to the Rosetta Stone, which gave the key to Egyptian hieroglyphs, for on it were inscriptions in Egyptian and Greek; Greek being known, it is possible to work out the meaning of the corresponding hieroglyphs. [\[43\]](#)

But we have not to be far-fetched. We have only to remember this succession of number taught by the Yi-ching: 0, 1, 1/2, 1/4, 1/8, 1/16, 1/32/ 1/64 etc and we will know how the World has been created: It has been created by Emanation and by Division by the One.

So the Four Worlds of the Kabbalah, or the Tree of Life, consisting of the Ten Sephiroths, arranged in the 4 worlds will give the real esoteric clue to each of these systems of Oriental and Occidental occultisms. Hence the vital importance of the Four World, the Four Elements, the Tree arranged in the Four Worlds in Western Occultism. We will also use the Four Elements, as our key to open all the esoteric teachings, and all the esoteric symbols in the world. We will use the Four Elements, in combination with the Circle and the Center to decipher all the hieroglyphic code of occultism.

The esoteric teachings about the nature of man and the human destiny, are given in the figure of Adam Kadmon, as Primordial Man, or Divine Man, and of the Existential Man or Actual Man. So man has a double nature. Apparently, he is entangled in the material and social world, as man destined to die, but essentially, he is divine, and is consubstantial to God. His destiny is then to return to the Godhead, and to enjoy immortality.

To realize his true nature, his divine nature, and to find the way back to the Godhead, he is guided by the meditation on the Central Column of the Tree of Life. He must, first of all, realize the presence of God (Malkuth) in himself, as well as in everything in this world. His human Self must be united to the Divine Self. He must lead a harmonious life and avoid all excesses and defects (Tiferet) which will result in the final union with God, represented by Kether.

Thus, when the divine nature and the human nature are separated, man is on his downward journey toward a materialistic existence. When his human nature will be re-united with the divine nature [Tiferet suggesting Union, Beauty resulting from the reconciliation and union of these two polar forces (human and divine)], man is on his upward journey toward the Ancient of Days considered as androgyne (both male and female). Thus the Fall is characterized by the separation from God; and salvation requires re-union with God. This is the true "Atonement" (At-One-Ment).

The Tree of Life, with all its interconnecting paths, suggests that all life is bound into a unity which descends from the Most High to the world beneath. Unfortunately, as a matter of fact, the world is splintered by dualities of perception: men are estranged from each other; nature is estranged from man and the estrangement enforces upon men the strategy of power and manipulation, which, however much it affords temporary protection and insulation, augments the estrangement. The Kabbalistic master, beginning as he does with the vision of the unity, which preceded creation, a unity in which all life shared,

has the task of returning men to an anterior depth which enables them at first to grasp their own unity and, at the end, to do for others the work of unification.

It is said that Binah and Chokmah are the archetypal Positive and Negative. It is from these primary pairs of Opposites that the pillars of the universe spring between which is woven the web of manifestation. It is between these two polarizing aspects of manifestation - The Supernal Father and The Supernal Mother that the web of life is woven; souls go back and forth between them like a weaver's shuttle. In our individual lives, in our physiological rhythms, and the history of the rise and the fall of the nations, we observe the same rhythmic periodicity. Thus, the pairing of opposites does not only occur in type, it also occurs in time, and we have alternating epochs in our lives, in our physiological processes, and in the history of nation, during which activity and passivity, construction and destruction alternatively prevail; the knowledge of the periodicity of these cycles is part of the secret and guarded ancient wisdom of the initiates, and is worked out astrologically and qabalistically.

The universal life is a flow of changes carried out from Kether to Malkuth, i.e. from Spirit to Matter and vice versa. Thus does consciousness descend in the course of involution from the First Manifest through the subtle planes of existence to dense Matter; then ascends from Matter back to Spirit; this second phase can be also termed as evolution. According to the Kabbalah, the mystic should, strictly speaking, only use the term evolution, when describing the ascent from Matter back to Spirit, for then is evolved that which was involved through the subtle phases of development. It is obvious that nothing can be evolved, unfolded, which was not previously involved, enfolded.

The deeper insight we can have of the Kabbalah, the more useful lessons we can learn from it.

It is mainly because of the high rank the Kabbalists assign man, that they recommend themselves to our interest and that the study of their system assume great importance for the history of philosophy as well as of religion.

According to the Kabbalah, man is both divine and human. Essentially, man is truly YHVH. The Tetragrammaton written vertically represents effectively a standing man, Yod being his head; He, his arms; Vau, his body; and the He final, his leg [\[44\]](#)



The Middle Column of the Tree of Life teaches us the way back to God, and shows us all the successive steps of the process of this Magnum Opus (Great Work)

Let us meditate again upon Malkuth, Yesod, Tiphareth and Kether.

**Malkuth**

Malkuth is Shekhinah or the Divine Presence. But it can be called the Gate of Death (or the Gate of Tears) or on the contrary, the Gate of the Garden of Eden. If we go outwardly, in this phenomenal world, for the quest of material riches and honors, Malkuth is then the Gate of Death or Tears. But, if we realize the Presence of God in our self, and go inwardly for the quest of the union with the immanent God, Malkuth is then the Gate of Eden. Thus, The Kabbalah reminds us that God and the Garden of Eden is within us. It is worthy noticing that while Malkuth represents the Gate of Eden, its Indian counterpart, the Muladhara Cakra is also termed as Brahma's Gate. We are then, the Temple of God and the Kingdom of God is effectively within us (Luke 17, 21).

### Yesod

Yesod is associated with the Holy Spirit, and with the vision of the machinery of the universe. [\[45\]](#)

This means that under the apparent state of continual flux and reflux, the world is stable and permanent on its foundation (Yesod). Furthermore, under the Four Material Elements represented by Malkuth, we must discover the Fifth Element, the Quintessence, the Spirit, which is the Spirit of God (Yesod). Thus behind the flux and reflux of phenomena conditioned by the interplay of opposing forces, there is an equilibrating power, which maintains the harmony, the stability and the permanence of the world. Thus, in its apparent aspect, Yesod is unquestionably the sphere of Illusions. If the soul is immersed in the Lath of its passions and fascinations, she forgets its divine origin. But, if she has a true knowledge about the machinery of the world, she will be emancipated from Maya and Illusions.

### Tiphareth

Tiphareth is associated with the vision of the harmony of things, and of the mysteries of the Crucifixion. Its symbol is the Calvary Cross or a truncated pyramid. [\[46\]](#)

Besides, Tiphareth is the junction between the Divine and the Human. The four Sephiroths below Tiphareth represent the Personality, or the Lower Self. The four Sephiroths above Tiphareth are the Individuality or The Higher Self. [\[47\]](#)

Thus, Kether is metaphysical, divine; Yesod is psychic; and Tiphareth is mystic, the junction between the two.

God must be sacrificed on the Cross at the level of Tiphareth, to become man; and man must die on the Cross at the level of Tiphareth to become God. Tiphareth is, then, the symbol of Union of God through self-renunciation... The human consciousness, rising from Yesod, is illuminated in Tiphareth. By illumination, by the recognition of his divine nature, man can be called the Son of God. From thence, man is very dignified. He can say: "The greatest evil is when I forget that I am the son of a King."

### Kether

Kether has many names: It is called Existence of Existences, Concealed of the Concealed, Ancient of the Ancients, Ancient of Days, The Primordial Point, The Point within the Circle, the Most High, the Vast Countenance, the White Head, Macroprosopos, Amen, Lux Occulta, Lus Interna...

It stands for the Union with God. It can be termed as the Completion of the Great Work of Alchemists. It corresponds to the Divine Spark; the Cranium; the Thousand Petals Lotus. (Sahamsara Chakra) [\[48\]](#).

Thus, from the Primordial Point, sprung out the whole world, and to this Point, the whole universe will be re-absorbed at the end of the time. Ein-sof, Kether and other Sephiroths are the hidden God, and his emanated manifestation. The hidden God and his emanated manifestation in the Ten Sephiroths

describes the process of wrenching the being of God from his concealment before creation into the act of creation, and thereafter into that immanent ebb and flow which describes the lost-and-found world of the Spirit.

Kether is the Lux Interna - the Internal Light -, the Divine Spark which is the warrant for our divine nature.

Kether shows us that the throne of God is located, not in Heaven - but in the Center of our Brain, in our Third Ventricle - called also: The Thousand Petals Lotus, by Hindus; and Ni-Huan Palace, or Nirvana, by the Chinese. [\[49\]](#)

In Kether, the Union with God is achieved through the loss of self-identity. The polar opposition between Divine and Human, Male and Female, I-Thou disappears and is replaced by a new state of indifferentiation (Kether is Androgyne, per se).

Kether is the abyss from whence all arose, and back into which it will fall at the end of its epoch. Then Kether is the summary of the Emanation Theory and the Consummation of Mysticism. Hence, it is termed as the Completion of the Great Work (Magnum Opus).

Kether, understood as the Completion of the Great Work, will give us also the key to unlock the mysterious castle of Alchemy.

## Conclusion

"Kabbalah is, as Scholem has observed, theosophical mysticism, not theosophical in the sense in which this term had come to mean pseudo-religious ideology, but theosophical as signifying "a mystical doctrine, or school of thoughts, which purports to perceive and to describe the mysterious workings of the Divinity.." (Scholem, Major Trends, p. 206) "The God of such theosophy unfolds himself toward the world, establishing through the variety of his emanations and influences connecting with the variegations of natural and human life. By coming to understand the rhythm and pulse of this mysterious life of divinity, the mystic adept can transform himself into a repose for the divine presence, can perfect himself toward the divine, can even, under the most rare of circumstances, believe himself merged with the divine."

"One is filled", wrote Albert Pike, "with admiration, on penetrating into the Sanctuary of the Kabbalah, at seeing a doctrine so logical, so simple, and at the same time, so absolute. The necessary union of ideas and signs, the consecration of the most fundamental realities by the primitive characters; the Trinity of Words, Letters, and Numbers; a philosophy as simple as the alphabet; profound and infinite as the Word; theorems more complete and luminous than those of Pythagoras; a theology summed up by counting on one fingers; an Infinite which can be held in the hollow of an infant's hand; ten ciphers, and twenty-two letters, a triangle, a square, and a circle, -these are all the elements of the Kabbalah. These are the elementary principles of the written world, reflection of that spoken Word that created the world." [\[50\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) Gnosis, A Journal of the Western Inner Tradition, No 3, p. 6.

[\[2\]](#) The Jewish Encyclopedia.

[\[3\]](#) The Jewish Encyclopedia, p. 258.

[\[4\]](#) Jean de Pauly, Sepher Ha Zohar III, pp.289b-290a.

[\[5\]](#) Zohar III, pp. 290a-290b.

- [6] Zohar I, p. 21a.
- [7] Henry Serouya, La Kabbale, Grasset, 1947, p. 224.
- [8] Henri Serouya, La Kabbale, Grasset, Paris, 1949, p. 226.
- [9] Adolphe Franck, The Kabbalah, Bell Publishing Co, 1940, p. 44.
- [10] Adolphe Franck, The Kabbalah, Bell Publishing Co, 1940, p. 44.
- [11] Albert Pike, Morals and Dogma, Charleston, 1944, pp. 266-267.
- [12] Henri Serouya, La Kabbale, Grasset, Paris, 1947, p. 226.
- [13] Adolphe Franck, The Kabbalah, Bell Publishing Co, 1940, p. 112.
- [14] Manly P. Hall, The Philosophical Society, 1977, p. 117.
- [15] Ibidem, p. 117.
- [16] Manly P. Hall, The Secret Teachings Of All Ages, The Philosophical Research Society Inc., Los Angeles California, CA 90027, 1977, p. 117.
- [17] Albert Pike, Morals and Dogma, Charleston, 1944, p. 763.
- [18] Ibidem, p. 763.
- [19] Henri Serouya, La Kabbale, Grasset, Paris, 1947, Introduction: Pour les Kabbalistes anciens, le processus cosmogonique commence par un acte dans lequel Dieu projette sa puissance créatrice hors de son propre Être dans l'espace. Chaque acte nouveau est une étape de plus dans l'extériorisation qui se développe "en accord avec la doctrine émanationiste du Néoplatonisme en ligne droite, de haut en bas. Il marque ainsi un processus strictement simple. Luria s'appuie sur la doctrine de Zimzum au sens de retraite, solitude, pour expliquer "que l'existence de l'univers est possible par un processus de contraction en Dieu".
- [20] Jay Kinney, Some Kabbalistic ABC's in Gnosis No 3, p. 8.
- [21] Albert Pike, Morals and Dogma, Charleston, 1944, p. 747.
- [22] Manly P. Hall, The Secret Teachings of All Ages, The Philosophical Research Society, Inc. 1977, p. 115.
- [23] Albert Pike, Morals and Dogma, Charleston, 1944, p. 766.
- [24] Richard Cavendish, Cabala, in the Encyclopedia of the Unexplained, p. 57-59.
- [25] Albert Pike, Morals and Dogma, Charleston, 1944, p. 762-763.
- [26] Adolphe Franck, The Kabbalah, Bell Publishing Company, New York, 1940, p.103.
- [27] Manly P. Hall, The Secret Teachings of All Ages, The Philosophical Research Society, Inc., 1977.
- [28] Henry Serouya, La Kabbale, Grasset, Paris, 1947, Introduction.
- [29] Manly P. Hall, The Secret Teachings of All Ages, The Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles,

California, 90027, 1977, p. 115.

[30] Ibidem, p. 115.

[31] Manly P. Hall, The Secret Teachings of All Ages, The Philosophical Research Society, Inc. Los Angeles, California, 90027, 1977, p. 116.

[32] Ibidem, p. 118.

[33] C. C. Zain, The Secret Tarot, The Church of Light, p. 27.

[34] Henri Serouya, La Kabbale, Grasset, 1957, p. 130.

[35] Ibidem, p. 133 note 2, and p. 135 note 4.

[36] Henri Serouya, La Kabbale, Grasset, 1967, p. 271.

[37] Manly P. Hall, The Secret Teachings of All Ages, The Philosophical Research Society, Inc. Los Angeles, California 90027, 1977, p. 74.

[38] Dion Fortune, The Mystical Qabalah, London, Williams and Norgate, 1957, p. 80.

[39] Ibidem, p. 60.

[40] Henri Serouya, La Kabbale, Grasset, 1967, p. 130.

[41] C. C. Zain, The Sacred Tarot, The Church of Light, Doctrine of Kabbalism, Serial No 48, p. 27.  
Albert Pike, Morals and Dogma, p. 291.

[42] Dion Fortune, The Mystical Qabalah, p. 274.

[43] Dion Fortune, The Mystical Qabalah, p. 74.

[44] Robert Zoller, The Lost Key to Prediction, Inner Traditions International, 1947, p. 28. S.L. MacGregor Mathers, trans. The Kabbalah Unveiled, Routledge & Regan Paul, 1957, p, 210, notes.

[45] Dion Fortune, The Mystical Kabbale, London, William and Norgate, 1958, p. 252.

[46] Ibidem, p. 188.

[47] Ibidem, p. 190.

[48] Dion Fortune, The Mystical Qabalah, London, William and Norgate, 1958, p. 109.

[49] According to Dion Fortune, Kether -The Crown- is not in the head, but above the head, as the Sahamsara Chakra is in the aura above the head. (Cf. The Mystical Qabalah, p. 111). But my research demonstrates that God has his seat in the Third Ventricle, in the middle of our head.

[50] Albert Pike, Morals and Dogma, 745.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 6

### Catholicism and the Monistic Theory

In order to have a right opinion on this subject, a clear distinction between the masses and Catholicism as publicly taught and Christian Mystics should be established.

From the standpoint of the masses and the Catholic doctrine as publicly taught, one can say that those of the Catholic faith have never admitted the Emanation Theory. Catholic Doctrine professes that all creatures are created by God "ex nihilo" (from nothing); and God is completely separated from the world.

But according to Albert Pike, God cannot be severed from the world, and Monotheism seems to derive from the Monistic Theory. He wrote: "Timaeus of Locria and Plato his Commentator wrote of the Soul of the World, developing the doctrine of Pythagoras, who thought, says Cicero, that God is the Universal Soul, resident everywhere in nature, and of which our Souls are but emanations, "God is One", says Pythagoras, as cited by Justin Martyr: "He is not, as some think, without the world, but within it, and entire in it, and entire in its entirety..."

God, in the view of Pythagoras, was One, a single substance, whose continuous parts extended through all the Universe, without separation, difference or inequality, like the soul in the human body. He denied the doctrine of the spiritualists, who had severed the Divinity from the Universe, making Him exist apart from the Universe, which thus became no more than a material world, on which acted the Abstract Cause, a God, isolated from it. The Ancient Theology did not so separate God from the Universe. This Eusebius attests, in saying that but a small number of wise men, like Moses, had sought for God or the Cause of all, outside of the All; while the philosophers of Egypt and Phoenecia, real authors of all the old Cosmogonies, had placed the Supreme Cause in the Universe itself, and in its parts, so that, in their view, the World and all its parts are in God. [\[1\]](#)

In any case, we know for sure, that Catholicism is against the Emanation Theory, and never avers that All is One, and One is All.

It condemned these two propositions of modern pantheistic tenets:

"There is no supreme, all-wise, and all-provident Godhead distinct from this universe. God is identical with nature and consequently, subject to change. God is actually in the process of becoming, in man and in the world. All things are God and have the very substance of God himself. God and the world are one and the same thing. In like manner spirit is identical with matter, necessity with liberty, truth with falsity, good with evil, and justice with injustice.

Any action of God upon man and the world must be denied." [\[2\]](#)

It said: "If anyone denies that there is one true God, creator and lord of things visible and invisible: let him be anathema.

If anyone says that God and all things possess one and the same substance and essence: let him be anathema.

If anyone says that finite things, both corporeal and spiritual, or at least spiritual, emanated from the divine substance;

Or that the divine essence, becomes all things by a manifestation or evolution of itself;

Or, finally, that God is universal or indefinite being, which by determining itself makes up the universe, which is diversified into genera, species, and individuals: let him be anathema." [3]

"If anyone believes that human souls or angels are composed of the substance of God, as Manes and Prescillians said: let him be anathema." [4]

So according to Catholicism, the Essence of God is completely different from the essence of creatures. We can say also that the essence of each creature is different from each other, or everything has no essence at all, because everything is created out of nothing. "the soul is created from nothing, immaterial, incorruptible, immortal, and gifted with intelligence and free will. This rational soul is essentially different from the human body, but it is truly, of its own nature, and essentially the form of that body, so that together with the body it constitutes human nature truly and really one." [5]

"When God willed, in his goodness, he created all creatures spiritual and corporeal. These creatures are good because they were made by the Supreme Good, but they are changeable because they were made from nothing." [6]

Catholicism affirms that only the Trinity has the same substance.

"The Holy Roman Church, founded by the decree of our Lord and Savior firmly believes, professes and teaches: There is one true God, all powerful, unchangeable, and eternal, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one in essence, but three in persons... these three persons are one God, not three gods, for the three persons have one substance, one essence, one nature, one divinity, one immensity, one eternity." [7]

It claims also that only Jesus Christ had two natures: God's nature and Man's nature. Every man has only Man's nature, therefore every man is imperfect, save Jesus Christ. Catholicism never admits that man can be united to God and participate in the nature of God. Man then, can be sanctified but not deified. It said: "But if they do not want to deviate from the true doctrine and from the legitimate teaching authority of the Church, they must accept the following general and indisputable principle: to reject every explanation of this mystic union according to which the faithful would in any way so pass beyond the sphere of creatures and sacrilegiously encroach upon the divine, that even a single attribute of the eternal Godhead could be predicated of them as their own..." [8]

The Catholic Church, in its public teaching never teaches introversion, or finding God in our self. The famous teaching of Jesus Christ: The Kingdom of God is within you (Luke, 17, 21) is mostly rendered as the Kingdom of God is among you. (See La Sainte Bible, » Ecole Biblique de Jerusalem, p. 1356). It condemns metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, in the fourth Lateran Council (November, 1215). It considers itself as the true and unique holder of the truth. It declared: "Furthermore, it is a dogma of faith that no one can be saved outside the Church." [9]

It condemns everyone who says that:

"Everyone is free to follow and to profess the religion which the light of reason leads him to judge to be

the true religion. Men can find the way to eternal salvation, and they can attain eternal salvation in the practice of any religion whatever. There is good reason at least to hope for the eternal salvation of all those who are in no way in the true Church of Christ. Protestantism is simply another form of the same true Christian religion, and it is possible to please God just as much in it as in the Catholic Church." [10]. In that case, all people, outside the Catholic Church are damned to Hell.

In sum, it considers itself as a revealed religion made known to the creature by God. Man has to accept it. The act of acceptance is called Faith. Revelation and Faith are supernatural. It said: "The Church has always found it necessary to insist on the supernaturalness of revelation and of faith." [11]

It insists also on the reasonableness of faith. But, for many people, things are natural (commandments of God) or artificial (commandments of men). Everything that is not natural is artificial. And there is nothing supernatural. Jesus said: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do." (King James version, The Holy Bible, Mark, 7: 7, 8).

I have fully demonstrated that the Catholic Church has banned all the propositions of the Emanation theory. It did not declare that everything proceeds from the One (Monistic Theory), but from God (Monotheism).

It is rare, anyhow, to find, in the West, someone declaring that God was the Prima Materia like David de Dinant, or that creatures are but modifications of God like Spinoza. [12]

Now, if we read books of Christian mystics, we can find that they profess:

1. That God is the Essence of everything. (Monistic Theory)
2. That from God everything has emanated. (Emanation Theory)
3. That God is the kernel of everything. (Immanence Theory)
4. That we must find God in our self. (Introversion)
5. Man can be united with God. (The return to the One)

Before demonstrating these points, I must say that no Catholic mystic professes all these propositions in full. They are not Emanationists in full term, but rather only mystics in some ways.

### I.- God is the essence of everything

In the *Theologica Germanica*, a mystical book, written around the thirteenth or the fourteenth century, by an unknown author, we read: "St Paul says: "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." (I.Cor.13.10)- Now mark what is "that which is perfect" and "that which is in part".

"That which is perfect" is a Being who has comprehended and included all things in Himself and His own substance, and in whom all things have their substance. For he is the substance of all things, and is in Himself unchangeable and immovable, and changes and moves all things else. but "that which is in part", or the imperfect, is that which has its source in or springs from the Perfect; - just as a brightness or a visible appearance flows out from the sun or a candle and appears to be somewhat this or that. And it is called a creature,- and of all these "things which are in part", none is the Perfect. So also the Perfect is none of the things which are in part. The things which are in part can be apprehended, known, and expressed. But the Perfect cannot be apprehended, known, or expressed by any creature as creature.

Therefore we do not give a name to the Perfect, for it is none of these. The creature as creature cannot know or apprehend it, name or conceive it. [\[13\]](#)

The Book wrote again that the Soul, which likes to know the Perfect, should empty itself from all the contingencies, and be raised above all that is imperfect. It wrote: "For one might say: 'Now since the Perfect cannot be known or apprehended by any creature, but the soul is a creature, how can it be known by the soul?' answer: This is why we say 'by the soul as a creature'. We mean it is impossible to the creature by virtue of its creature- nature and qualities - that by which it says I and myself. For in whatever creature the Perfect shall be known, therein creature-nature, qualities, the I and self, and the like must all be lost and done away. This is the meaning of the saying of St. Paul; 'When that which is Perfect is come, '(that is when it is known), 'then that which is in part' (to wit, creature-nature, qualities, the I, the self, the mine) will be despised and counted for naught. So long as we think much of these things and cleave to them with love, joy, pleasure or desire, so long the Perfect remains unknown to us." [\[14\]](#)

Christian mystic profess that "God is in all and all are in God" [\[15\]](#)

St. John of the Cross sustains that God is the Essence of every soul. He wrote: "We must know that God resides in every soul, even in the soul of the greatest sinner, and he is present there in substance. And this manner of union is always between God and all creatures, according to which God keeps them in their essence, so that if it happens to be deficient, creatures will be annihilated and are no more. Therefore when we speak about union with God, we don't talk about this substantial union of God, which is always in all creatures, but about the union and the transformation of the soul into God, which is not always done, but happens only when there is similitude, like the other is called substantial or essential union. The former is natural, the latter is supernatural which happens when the two wills, that is the will of the soul and the will of God will be shaped in one, having nothing in the one that is contrary to the other. So when the soul gets rid completely off everything contrary and not in conformity with the will of God, she will be transformed into God by love." [\[16\]](#)

These phrases reminds us the words of the monk Dao Sheng (Dao Sinh): "The greatest sinners in the world have in themselves the Buddha-nature and can become a Buddha."

St. Bernard wrote: "What is God?" "Length, breadth, height and depth. 'What,' you say, 'you do after all profess to believe in the fourfold Godhead which was an abomination to you?' Not in the least... God is designated One to suit our comprehension, not to describe his character. His character is capable of division, He Himself is not. The words are different, the paths are many, but one thing is signified: the paths lead to one Person." [\[17\]](#)

Meister Eckart says: "God is nearer to me than I am to myself; He is just as near to wood and stone, but they do not know it" So too, we read in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri "raise the stone and there thou shalt find Me. Cleave the wood and there am I." [\[18\]](#)

This reminds us of a similar assertion of Plotinus, a pagan mystic (c. 205-270): "God" says Plotinus, "is not external to anyone, but is present with all things, though they are ignorant that He is so." (Mysticism, p. 99). St. Catherine of Genoa declared: "My Being is God, not by simple participation, but by a true transformation of my Being." [\[19\]](#)

## 2. From God, everything emanates

From this Primordial Essence, or Prima Materia, everything irradiates like rays from the Sun, or from a

candle. St. Thomas Aquinas virtually accepts the doctrine of Emanations when he writes: "As all the perfections of Creatures descend in order from God, who is the height of perfection, man should begin from the lower creatures and ascend by degrees, and so advance to the knowledge of God...And because in that roof and crown of all things, God, we find the most perfect unity, and everything is stronger and more excellent the more thoroughly it is one; it follows that diversity and variety increases in things, the further they are removed from Him who is the first principle of all. [20]

So to attain God, we must go "from the less to the more Divine", we must go forth from our normal self and from our normal universe, to the cosmic Self. As said St. Augustine, "we must ascend the ways that are in our heart, and sing a song of degrees; we glow inwardly with the Fire of God, and we go upwards to the peace of Jerusalem." [21]

We know that the Theory of Emanation, and the view that God is at the Apex of our souls appears early in the history of Greek philosophy. It is developed by Dionysius, by the Kabalists, by Dante ; and is implied in the language of Rulman Merswin, St. John of the Cross and many other Christian ecstasies. [22]

### 3. God is at the kernel, in the Center of everything (Doctrine of Immanence.)

The discovery of a "divine" essence or substance, dwelling, as Ruysbroeck says, at the apex of man's soul is that fundamental experience, found in some form or degree in all genuine mystical religion, which provides the basis of the New Testament doctrine of the indwelling spirit. It is variously interpreted, the "spark of the soul" of Eckhart, the "ground" of Tauler, the Inward Light of the Quakers, the "Divine Principle" of some modern transcendentalists; the fount and source of all true life... It is here that the mystic encounters Absolute Being. Here is his guarantee of God's immediate presence in the human heart, then in that universe of which man's soul resumes in miniature the essential characteristic. [23]

Many Christian mystics sustain that God is immanent in our soul.

We find also that the Gospels profess the same thing, for instance: "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luc, 17:21) or "The Spirit of God is within you" (I. Cor. 3:16). The spirit of God is within you. The Absolute Whom all seek does not hold Himself aloof from an imperfect material work, but dwells within the flux of things: stands as it were at the very threshold of consciousness and knocks, awaiting the self's slow discovery of her treasures. [24]

"He is not far from any one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being," (Acts, 17:27-29) is the pure doctrine of Immanence. The truth that "God and man initially meet where man is most inward" i.e. in the spark or ground of the soul is the cardinal fact in their experience of the transcendental world. [25]

"According to the doctrine of Immanence, creation, the universe, could we see it as it is, would be perceived as the self-development, the self-revelation of this indwelling Deity. The world is not projected from the Absolute, but immersed in God. "I understood," says St. Teresa, how the Lord was in all things, and how he was in the soul; and the illustration of a sponge filled with water was suggested to me. The world-process, then, is the slow coming to fruition of that Divine Spark which is latent alike in the Cosmos and in man. "If", says Boehme, "thou conceivest a small minute circle, as small as a grain of mustard seed, yet the Heart of God is wholly and perfectly therein: and if thou art born in God, then there is in thyself (in the circle of thy life) the whole Heart of God undivided." [26]

Therefore, the Absolute, that everyone endeavors to reach, is not far from us, and not far from our World of Becoming, but is in fact, already, in our heart. "Our world of Becoming rests on the bosom of that

Pure Being which has ever been the final object of man's quest: The "river in which we cannot bathe twice" is the stormy flood of life flowing toward that divine sea, "How glorious", says the Voice of the Eternal to St. Catherine of Sienna, "is that soul which has indeed been able to pass from the stormy ocean to me, the Sea Pacific, and in that Sea, which is Myself, to fill the pitcher of her heart"... This intuition of the Real lying at the root of the visible world and sustaining its life, is present in a modified form in the arts: perhaps it were better to say, must be present if these arts are to justify themselves as heightened forms of experience. [\[27\]](#)

Eucken called the Pure Being as the transcendental principle in man, or the core of personality. Eucken declares that: "there is a definite transcendental principle in man. He calls it the Gemuth, the heart or the core of personality, - and there, he says, "God and man initially meet". He invites us, as we have seen, to distinguish in man two separate grades of being, - "the narrower and the larger life, the life that is straitened and finite, and can never transcend itself, and an infinite life through which he enjoys communion with the immensity and the truth of the universe." [\[28\]](#)

When mystics see this Transcendental Principle in man - what Buddhist Mystics called "To see the Nature" (Kiến tinh), they become non-plussed, because they witness something very strange, what they called by Union with God, because in themselves they see something great enough to be God, and small enough to be them.

The Emanation Theory truly understood, leads us to find God in our self. Our pilgrimage is "not outward bound but rather on the journey to its center." St Teresa showed us the habitations of the Inner Castle through which she leads us to that hidden chamber which is the sanctuary of the indwelling God. (Mysticism, p. 103).

It is called Going back to our Origin. Rulman Merswin says: "All men are called to their origin" and he compares us to salmons impelling to struggle, "against nature" uphill from pools to pools towards their source. [\[29\]](#)

The Theory of Immanence can lead us to the doctrine of deification in which the mystic holds his transfigured self to be identical with the Indwelling God. Since God is in all - and in a sense is all - may be found within our self. Ruysbroeck claims that "by a simple introspection in fruitful love" mystics "meet God without intermediary." They hear the Father of Lights "saying eternally, without intermediary or interruption, in the most secret part of the spirit, the one, unique, and abysmal Word." [\[30\]](#)

We know that Jewish mystics (Kabalists) and Islamic mystics (Sufis) profess also the Immanence Theory. According to the Zohar "God is considered as immanent in all that has been created or emanated, and yet is transcendent to all." So too the Sufis (Islamic mystics), God, they say, is to be contemplated a) outwardly in the imperfect beauties of the earth; b) inwardly, by meditation. Further, since He is One, and in all things, "to conceive one's self as separate from God is an error; yet only when one sees oneself as separate from God, can one reach out to God." [\[31\]](#)

Since the Absolute God is for mystics substance, ground or underlying Reality of all that is, and is already as truly immanent in the human soul as in the universe, the Mystic Way will then be described, not as a journey, but as an alteration of personality, the transmuting of "earthly" into "heavenly" man. (Mysticism, p. 127). In that case, we can forget all the intervening "worlds" or "planes" between the soul and the Absolute. Everything that God does is very simple. Complications come from men only. (Mysticism, p. 99 and 101).

#### 4. To find God, one must go deep into the soul. (The Introversion way)

Mystics believe that if God is in our soul, to find Him we should go deep in our soul. St. Teresa said: "This performance is a retreat inwards to that "ground of the soul" where his Majesty awaits us"... It is a pilgrimage in which the soul is not outward bound, but rather on a journey to its center. [\[32\]](#)

Then, when man can go to the depths of his soul, he will see that all differences vanish, and everything will be fused in one point. St Teresa saw that in the deepest recess of her spirit, in that unplumbed abyss where selfhood ceases to have meaning, and the individual soul touches the life of the All, distinction vanished and she "saw God in a point" [\[33\]](#)

Thomas R. Kelly wrote: "Deep within us all, there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a divine center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warning us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing our self in body and soul, utterly and completely to the light within, is the beginning of true life. It is a dynamic center... It is a Light within which illumines the face of God and cast new shadows and new glories upon the faces of men. It is a seed stirring to life if we do not choke it. It is the Shekinah of the soul, the Presence in the midst. Here is the Slumbering Christ, stirring to be awakened, to become the soul we clothe in earthly form and action, and he is within us all. [\[34\]](#)

According to Thomas R. Kelly, our soul seems to have two layers: a superficial layer dealing with external mundane affairs, and a profound layer concerning with the divine. He wrote: "There is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one levels at once. On one level, we may be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship and a gentle receptiveness to divine breathings." [\[35\]](#)

A religious man is a total man. He cannot forget what is the best in him, and lives only for what is partial and superficial. The Listening to the Saints said: "The secular mind is an abbreviated, fragmentary mind, building only upon a part of man's nature and neglecting a part - the most glorious part - of man's nature, power and resources. The religious mind involves the whole of man, embraces his relations with time within their true ground and setting in the Eternal lover..." [\[36\]](#)

The very heretics of Christianity have often owed their attraction almost wholly to the mystical element in their teaching. The Gnostics, the Fraticelli, the Brethen of the Free Spirit, the Quietists, the Quakers are instances of this. [\[37\]](#)

St Augustine wrote: "We ascend, thy ways that be in our heart, and sing a song of degrees; we glow inwardly with thy fire, with thy good fire, and we go, because we go upwards to the peace of Jerusalem." [\[38\]](#)

The Mystery of Being is now revealed to the traveler. He sees Nature's secret, and God in all things. It is the height of illumination. [\[39\]](#)

Nature's secret is then the Becoming in quest of the Being, the Time in quest of the Eternity, the Appearance in quest of the Reality, the Many in quest of the One. We see now what we mean by man and what we mean by God.

"Over and over again - as Being and Becoming, as Eternity and Time, as Transcendence and Immanence, Reality and Appearance, the One and the Many -these two dominant ideas, demands, imperious instincts of man's self will reappear; the warp and woof of his completed universe." [40]

To know that God is in our self is to know our Origin, is to know that from this origin comes forth our Small Self, and to this Ground our self will go back. This is the great Circle of becoming from Alpha to Omega Rev. 1-8, 1-17, 2-8) [41]

"For well we know," says Ruysbroeck, "that the bosom of the Father is our ground and our origin, wherein our life and being is begun."

"This Absolute is discerned by mystic intuition as the "End of Unity" in whom all diversities must cease, the Ocean to which that ceaseless and painful Becoming, that unresting river of live, in which we are immersed, tends to return." [42]

Great religions in the world have ascertained what is the everlasting value in man. Confucianism has four words: Zheng, Dai, Guang, Ming (Chính, Đại, Quang, Minh) Just, Great, Luminous, in opposition to Si, Xie (Tư, Tà) Private and Evil. Buddhism has also four words: "Chang, Le, Wo, Jing" (Thường, Lạc, Ngã, Tinh) Eternity, Happiness, Self, Purity, in opposition to Wu Chang, Ku, Wu wo, Hui Za (Vô Thường, Khổ, Vô Ngã, Uế Tập): Transiency, Misery, No-Self, Impurity. Brahmanism has a prayer:

From the unreal lead me to the real,

From darkness lead me to light.

From death lead me to immortality.

(Brihah Aranyaka Up. 1. 3. 28).

The Transient, the Non-self, the Evil, The Dark, the Unreal, the Death point to the Human Soul, or to the small Self, the Ego ; and the Eternal, the Luminous, the Self, the Right etc refer to the Great Self. Man must get rid of his Small self or the Human Self, and to put on the Great Self. This action is call Renunciation, and the changing from small self to Great Self is called the Rebirth.

"We have seen that the idea of the New Birth, the remaking of transmutation of the self,... runs through the whole of mysticism and much of theology. It is the mystic's subjective reading of those necessary psychological and moral changes which he observes within himself as his spiritual consciousness grows. His hard work of renunciation, of detachment from the things which that consciousness points out as illusory or impure, his purification and trials, all form part of it. If that which is whole or perfect is to come, then that which is in part must be done away: "for in what measure we put off the creature, in the same measure are we able to put on the Creator: neither more nor less." [43]

To sum up, the quest of the Absolute is no long journey, but a realization of something which is implicit in the self and in the universe: an opening of the eyes of the soul upon the Reality in which it is bathed. Earth is then literally crammed with heaven. 'Thou were I, but dark was my heart, I knew not the secret transcendent," says Tewekkul Beg, a Moslem mystic of the seventeenth century. [44]

The result of self-cultivation is to break the barrier between the Celestial heart (Tian Xin = Thiên Tâm) and the Human Heart (Ren Xin = Nhân Tâm), and to go deeper and deeper in the core of our self and to meet God there. "The more controllable ingoing experience, the breaking down the barrier between the surface-self and those deeper levels of personality where God is met and known "in our nothingness", and

a mysterious fusion of divine and human lives take place." [\[45\]](#)

The soul then enjoys the greatest happiness, and there is no more distinction of distance, and of space. In that consummation of love with Ruysbroeck has called "the peace of the summit" they meet: Then distinction between inward and outward, near and far, cease to have any meaning, in "the dim silence where lovers lose themselves." [\[46\]](#)

St Albert the Great said: "To mount to God is to enter into one's self. For he who inwardly entereth and intimately penetrateth into himself, gets above and beyond himself and truly mounts up to God." [\[47\]](#)

Mencius, the Chinese philosopher has said something similar:

"He who has exhausted all his mental constitution knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows God". (The works of Mencius, Book seven, Tsin Sin, part I.)

To go deep in the soul, is to practice introversion recollection and quiet. Mystics taught us abundantly on these things. In Eckhart' s writings, we are taught about the emptying on the field of consciousness, and the cleansing of all images. "The soul," he says, "with all its powers, has divided and scattered itself in outward things, each according to its functions: the power of sight in the eye, the power of hearing in the ear, the power of taste in the tongue, and thus they are the less able to work inwardly, for every power which is divided is imperfect. So the soul, if she would work inwardly, must call home all her powers and collect them from all divided things to one inward work... Eckhart' s view of the primary importance of "Quiet" as essentially the introverted state is shared by all those mediaeval mystics who lay stress on the psychological rather than the objective aspect of the spiritual life. They regard it as the necessary preliminary of all contemplation; and describe it as a normal phase of the inner experience..." [\[48\]](#)

Eckhart also said: "God is near us, but we are far from Him, God is within, we are without, God is at home, we are in the far country." [\[49\]](#)

In sum, Christian mystics believe that God is not far from us, but is in us, and to find Him, we have only to be introverted. According to St. Bernard, "the normal and deliberate practice of introversion, on the contrary, is bound up with the sense of Divine Immanence. Its emphasis is on the indwelling God Who may be found "by a journey towards the center": on the conviction indeed that "angels and archangels are with us, but He is more truly our own who is not only with us but in us." [\[50\]](#)

So "the kingdom of God is within us." But whilst the contemplation of Nature entails an outgoing towards somewhat indubitably external to us, and has as its materials the world of sensible experience: the contemplation of Spirit, as it seems to those who practice it, requires a deliberate refusal of the messages of the senses, an ingoing or "introversion" of our faculties, a "journey towards the center." The Kingdom of God, they say, is within you: seek it, then, in the most secret habitations of the soul." [\[51\]](#)

## 5. Man can be united with God, can be transmuted in God.

Euckensays: "The wonder of wonders, whom no one can accuse of a conscious leaning towards mystic doctrine, "is the human made divine." The mystic life results in the transformation of personality: it abolishes the primitive consciousness of selfhood, and substitutes for a wider consciousness; the total disappearance of selfhood in the divine, the substitution of a Divine Self for a primitive self." [\[52\]](#)

"Some may ask," says the author of the Theologia Germanica, "What is it to be a partaker of the Divine Nature, or a Godlike (vergottet, literally deified) man? Answer: He who is imbued with or illuminated

by the Eternal or Divine Light and inflamed or consumed with Eternal or Divine Love, he is a deified man and a partaker of the Divine Nature." (Mysticism, p. 418).

The Christian mystics justify this dogma of the deifying of man, by exhibiting it as the necessary corollary of the Incarnation - the humanizing of God. They can quote the authority of the Fathers in support of this argument. "He became man that we might be made God," says St. Athanasius. "I heard." says St. Augustine, speaking of his pre-converted period, "Thy voice from on high crying unto me, 'I am the Food of the full-grown: grow, and then thou shalt feed on Me. Nor shalt thou change Me into thy substance as thou changest the foot of thy flesh, but thou shalt be changed into Mine.'" Eckhart also wrote: "Our Lord says to every living soul, 'I became man for you. If you do not become God for me, you do me wrong.'" [53]

Eckhart says also: "If I am to know God directly, I must become completely He and He I: so that this He and this I become and are one I." [54]

"When," says St. Augustine, "I cleave to Thee with all my being, then shall I in nothing have pain and labor; and my life shall be a real life, being "full of Thee."...The achievement of reality, and deification, are then one and the same thing: necessarily so, since we know that only the divine is the real. [55]

St. Paul said: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Galatians, 2:20) and again: "But, he that is joined unto God, is one spirit." "Qui adhaeret Deo, unus spiritus est cum illo." (I. Cor. 6, 17).

As we have said before, declaring that man can be transformed into God, is blasphemous to the Catholic Church. Then how can it canonize people like Paul, who declares that man can be of the same Spirit as God (I. Cor. 6, 17), or St. John of the Cross who says that God is present in substance, in the soul of every man, even if he is the greatest sinner. (see note 16), or St. Catherine of Genoa who declares "My Being is God, not by simple participation, but by a true transformation of my Being" (see note 19), and St. Augustine St. Teresa of Avila etc?

Of all the mystics quoted above only Eckhart (1260-1327) were condemned by Pope John XXII, on March 27, 1329, (after his death). Many of his propositions were condemned as heretical. [56]

The mysticism of Eckhart is emanationist, and pantheistic. According to him, the divine Essence is in every one; each human soul contains a divine spark; by the knowledge and the mystical experience, the soul can be united with God, which is the ultimate finality for every man. (E. Royston Pike, PUF, 108, Bld Saint Germain, Paris, 1954, Dictionnaire des Religions, p. 114)

Even condemned, Eckhart is still considered as one of the greatest mystics in the West. He has two famous disciples, John Tauler (c. 1300-1361), and the Blessed Henry Suso (c. 1295-1365). They intend to bring life - the terribly corrupt and disordered religious life of the fourteenth century - back into relation with spiritual reality, to initiate their neighbors into the atmosphere of God.

Evelyn Underhill tries to explain this fact as follows: "The greatest mystics, however, have not been heretics but Catholic saints. In Christianity the "natural mysticism" which, like "natural religion," is latent in humanity, and at a certain point of development breaks out in every race came to itself; and attributing for the first time true and distinct personality to its Object, brought into focus the confused and unconditioned God which Neoplatonism had constructed from the abstract concept of philosophy blended with the intuition of Indian ecstasies, and made the basis of its meditations on the Real... "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto You." [57]

The thesis of Evelyn Underhill is not solid. I agree that in our soul we must have a "natural religion"

and "a natural mysticism". They can be found by every man of good will, and of determination. But Christian Mystics did not brought into focus the confused and unconditioned God that Mystics around the world has talked about. We see only that Mystics in the world have talked about something similar, and have reached something similar. This "something similar" must be then the truth that every one is longing. We see that Christian mystics must be complemented by mystics of other religions in the world, because they are mostly monotheists, and dare not say that the world comes from the One, and that the world returns to the One, and only some dare say that they are transformed by love into God.

We can see that Christian mystics are only about hundred at all. An incomplete list follows. First, we have St. Paul, and afterwards we have Clement of Alexandria (c. 160-220), St. Augustine (354-430), Dionysius the Areopagite (writing between 475 and 525), St. Macarius of Egypt (c. 295-386), St. Gregory the Great (540-604), John Scotus Erigena (around 850) St. Romuald (c. 950-1027), St. Peter Damian (1007-1072), St. Bruno (1032-1101), St. Anselm (1033-1109), St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), St. Hildegarde of Bingen (1098-1179), Joachim of Flora (1132-1202), Richard of St. Victor (ob. c. 1173), Hugh (1097-1141), St. Elizabeth of Schonau (1138-1165), Nun Gertrude (Abbess 1251-1291), St Mechthild of Hackborn (ob. 1310), Mechthild of Magdeburg (1212-1299), St. Gertrude the Great (1256-1311), St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), St. Douceline (n. 1214), John of Parma (ob. 1288), John of La Verna, Jacopone da Todi (1228-1306), the Blessed Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), St. Bonaventura (1221-1274), St. Thomas Aquinas (1226- 1274), Ramon Lulli (ob. 1315), Dante (1265-1321), Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), John Tauler (c. 1300-1361), the Blessed Henry Suso (c. 1295-1365), Rulman Merswin (c. 1310-1382), the Blessed John Ruysbroeck (1293-1381), Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471), Nicolas of Cusa (1401-1464), Denis the Carthusian (1402- 1471), St. Aldred (1146-1166), Walter Hilton (ob. 1396), St. Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373), St. Catherine of Sienna (1347-1380), St. Colette of Corbie (1381-1447), St. Bernadino of Siena (1380-1444), St. Catherine of Bologna (1413-1463), St. Joan of Arc (1412-1431), St. Lydwine of Schiedam (1380-1432), St. Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510), the Venerable Battista Vernazza (1497-1587), St. Peter of Alcantara (1499-1562), St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), St. Teresa (1515-1582), St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), St. Catherine dei Ricci (1522-1590), St. Maria Maddelena dei Pazzi (1566-1607), St. Francois de Sales (1567-1662) St. Rose of Lima (1586-1617), St. Jeanne Francoise de Chantal (1572-1641), Pascal (1623-1662), Madame Guyon (1638-1717), Echartshausen (1752- 1803) etc

In almost 2000 years, Catholicism can produce only around a hundred mystics; that is very little. And it is very amazing that these mystics have a language and a doctrine almost completely different from that of the Bible, but are similar to that of pagan mystics, that they ignore. Now, if we read books of pagan mystics such as Plotinus (205-c. 270), Proclus (412- c. 490), or of Musulmans mystics such as Rabi'a (719-801), Al-hallaj (ob. 922), Al Ghazzali (1058-1111), Attar (c. 1140-1234), Sadi (1184-1263), Jalalu'd Din (1207-1272), Hafiz (c. 1300-1388), Jami (1414-1492), or of Kabalists such as Sefer-ha-Bahir, Nahmanides, Abraham Abulafia, Moses de Leon, Cordovero (n. 1532) etc we marvel that their languages are similar.

Plotinus said: ' God is not external to any one, but is present with all things, though they are ignorant that He is so'. (Mysticism, p. 99).

Jalalu'd Din describes in this way his unitive life with God:

"With Thy Sweet Soul, this soul of mine  
Hath mixed as Water doth with Wine,  
Who can the Wine and Water part,

Or me and Thee when we combine?  
 Thou art become my greater self;  
 Small bounds no more can me confine.  
 Thou hast on my being taken on,  
 And shall not I now take on Thine?  
 Me Thou for ever hast affirmed,  
 That I may ever know Thee mine... [\[58\]](#)

For Cordovero (a Kabbalist), God is the All, the Center from which everything emanates with a strict determinism, and in a perfect order. Man must conceive that there is only one God, without body, issuing from himself everything that exist. God is not an active agent submitted to the fluctuations of time which could be changed or become better. He is always the same before and after the existence of everything. He is eternal, immutable along all the modifications and renewals of beings. The pantheism of Cordovero is again more sensible in the following considerations. He explains that all that exists come from one essence: The spiritual is inseparable from the material, the high is in the low, and the low is in the high. Everything which exists has his reason of existing. Nothing can be separated from the En-Sof, because the all is a whole... [\[59\]](#)

Evelyn Underhill is right in saying that: "All records of mysticism in the West, then, are also the records of supreme human activity. Not only of 'wrestlers in the spirit" but also of great organizers, such as St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross ; of missionaries preaching life to the spiritually dead, such as St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius Loyola, Eckhart, Suso, Tauler, Fox ; of philanthropists, such as St. Catherine of Genoa or St. Vincent de Paul ; poets and prophets, such as Mechthild of Magdeburg, Jacopone da Todi and Blake ; finally, of some immensely virile souls, whose participation in the Absolute Life has seemed to force on them a national destiny. Of this St. Bernard, St. Catherine of Siena, and St Joan of Arc are the supreme examples..." [\[60\]](#)

Starbuck said: "The individual learns to transfer himself from a center of self-activity into an organ of revelation of universal being, and to live a life of affection for and one-ness with, the larger life outside." [\[61\]](#)

It is very amazing to see that Christian Mystics have their own literature. And Mystic literature is voluminous, because many Christian Mystics such as St. Angustine, St. Thomas Aquinas were very learned men. I present now only some famous mystical books:

[Anonymous works](#): The Cloud of Unknowing. Edited, from B. M. Harl, 674, by E. Underhill, London, 1912.

[The Mirror of Simple Souls](#). Edited [with some omissions] by Clare Kirschberger. (Orchard Books) London, 1928).

[Theologia Germanica](#). Trans. from Pfeiffer's edition; edited by Susanna Winkworth, with a preface by Charles Kingsley. 4th Edition. (Golden Treasury Series.) London, 1907.

[Thomas a Kempis](#). Trans. of the Imitation of Christ. Revised translation by Dr. C. Bigg. (Library of Devotion.) London, 1901.

[Trans. Oeuvres de Sainte Therese](#), traduites par les Carmelites du Premier Monastere de Paris, 6

tomes. Paris, 1907-10.

The Interior Castle Translated from the autograph of St Teresa by the Benedictines of Stanbrook Abbey. London, 1912.

John of the Cross, Saint. Trans. The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Trans. by David Lewis. New edition. London, 1906.

The Dark Night of the Soul. Trans. by D. Lewis. London. 1916,

The Flame of Living Love. by D. Lewis. London, 1911.

A spiritual Canticle of the Soul. Trans, by D. Lewis. London, 1911. etc

We know that the inspiration of these books is completely different from the Holy Bible. While the Bible is basically dualistic (God, the Transcendental Creator, the "wholly other", over against his creation") the Christian literature is monistically inclined (the essential unity of Man with God, or of all being, as such, with God.)

As for me, we cannot have two kinds of Inspirations or of Revelations radically different from each other. One must be false, one must be true. There is no middle ground.

As we have known the Monistic Theory of Christian Mystics, we can now go back to the Gospels to discover what they thought about the fate of man.

1. The Gospels called Jesus Christ, Son of God (Mat. 4, 3. I John, 3, 8), but called also saintly men, Sons of God (Rom. 8, 14. Rom. 8, 19).

2. Jesus teaches us how to pray to Our Father (Mat. 6, 9-15). In this prayer, he called us his brothers, because he addressed God as Our Father, meaning that God is the universal Father of him and of us. He never said that he had God's nature, but said my Father is greater than me. (John, 15, 28).

3. He called all men, gods. "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods. If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest: because I said, I am the Son of God?" (John, 10, 34-36).

4. He declared that we can do greater works than him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do... (John, 14: 12).

5. He considers our neighbors, God. He declared: "For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in. Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me... Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."(Mat. 25: 35-40).

6. He said that man never can be separated from him: "I am the wine, ye are the branches: He that abide in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." (John, 15, 5).

7. St. Paul declared that man has the Spirit of God in himself. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1, Cor. 3:16).

8. In that case, the Kingdom of God is within us.(Luke, 17:21)

9. And true religion is, then, the transformation of the soul. The Proverbs said: "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice." (Proverbs, 21, 3).

10. The wish of Jesus Christ is that man be united with God (Jn, 17: 21-25).

11. The final fate of man is that the righteous man can sit on the throne of God. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set with my Father in his throne." (Rev. 3: 21)

In this case, man is rather highly evaluated by the Gospels, and is not wholly sinful and corrupt, and the will of man is not necessarily in bondage.

That is to say that the Gospels don't talk about the Emanation Theory, and if it can teach some kind of Mysticism, this Mysticism is far different from that taught by Christian Mystics. John Dillenberger, author of Protestant Christianity, considered the Mystical movement in the Church as one of the forces leading to the dissolution of the Church. He wrote: "Common to the Christian mystics was the conviction that God could be directly experienced, though, in essence, he remained incomprehensible. Most of the mystic's time and energy were spent in preparation and discipline, with the aim that God might enter his soul and lift him to ecstatic heights. Such experiences made life livable since they introduced one into the very presence of God himself. Sometimes the experience was that of the presence of Christ, at other times of God apart from Christ. On the one hand, St. Bernard spoke with great warmth of the presence of the exalted Christ, nearer to himself than anything else, because Christ permeated and filled his being. On the other hand, Tauler's sermons describe God's direct presence almost without reference to the mediation of Christ.

Although the Church insisted that God was known and mediated through the sacramental system, mysticism was not initially considered a serious threat. Mystics were incorporated into the fold and they comprised one component, though a subordinate one, of the medieval synthesis. Even Dionysius the Areopagite, influenced more by Greek, than by Christian ideas, had been incorporated into the Christian framework because of his supposed connection with St. Paul. He was extensively quoted by Aquinas, the foremost theologian of the classical Middle ages. In any case, mystics were not sufficiently numerous to become a major problem. Only when the individual mystics were supplemented by communities of a mystical orientation, did the difficulty appear. Eckhart and Tauler in Strasburg, Ruysbroek and A Kempis in Netherlands, and Rolle and Julian of Norwich in England were powerful figures. But without mass support the effectiveness even of powerful individuals is limited...But groups of a mystical bent who emphasized the directness of man's access to God did arise, such as the Brethren of the Common Life in Holland and the Friends of God in the Rhine Valley...

Neither the individual mystic nor the mystical group wanted to undermine the witness of the Church. Communities developed in part as a reaction to formalization of life in the Church and directed their energies to revitalizing church life. But in point of fact, they helped to undermine the church whose life they intended to restore. Without wanting to do so, the new associations and communities did compete with the church. This was inevitable, for the emphasis upon the direct personal experience of God contradicted the notion that God was known and mediated exclusively or primarily through the church as the sacramental agent." [\[62\]](#)

In conclusion, I will borrow some words of Evelyn Underhill. "Come with us," they (mystics) say to the bewildered and entangled self, craving for finality and peace, "and we will show you a way out that shall not only be an issue from your prison, but also a pathway to your Home. True, you are immersed, fold upon fold, in the World of Becoming; worse, you are besieged on all sides by the persistent illusions of sense. But you too are a child of the Absolute. You bear within you the earnest of your inheritance. At the

apex of your spirit there is a little door, so high up that only by hard climbing can you reach it. There the Object of your craving stands and knocks; thence came those persistent messages - faint echoes from the Truth eternally hammering at your gates- which disturbed the comfortable life of sense. Come up then by this pathway, to those higher levels of reality to which, in virtue of the eternal spark in you, you belong. Leave your ignoble ease, your clever prattle, your absurd attempts to solve the apparent contradictions of a Whole too great for your useful little mind to grasp. Trust your deep instincts: use your latent powers. Appropriate that divine, creative life which is the very substance of your being. Remake yourself in its interest, if you would know its beauty and its truth. You can only behold that which you are. Only the Real can know the Reality." [63]

[1] Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, Charleston, a. M. 5632, 1871, p. 667.

[2] *The Church Teaches*, by Jesuit Fathers of St. Mary's College. St. Marys. Kansas, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc. Rochford, Illinois 61105, 1955, pp. 149, 150).

[3] *The Church Teaches*, by Jesuit Fathers of St. Mary College. St. Mary Kansas, Tan Books And Publishers, Inc. Rockfort, Illinois 61105, 1955. pp. 152-153.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 143.

[5] *Ibid.* p. 150.

[6] *Ibid.* p. 143.

[7] *Ibid.* pp. 135-136.

[8] *Ibid.* p. 139.

[9] *Ibid.* p. 91.

[10] *Ibid.* p. 80.

[11] *Ibid.* p. 11.

[12] *Sagesse chinoise et philosophie chrétienne*, p. 161.

[13] *Listening to the Saints*, pp. 31-32.

[14] *Listening to the Saints*, p. 35.

[15] *Everlyn Underhill, Mysticism*, p. 15.

[16] *La Montée du Carmel, Les oeuvres spirituelles du Bienheureux Père Jean de la Croix*, Desclee and Brower, p. 133-134.

(Il faut savoir que Dieu demeure en toutes les âmes, fut-ce celle du plus grand pécheur du monde et y est present en substance. Et cette manière d'union est toujours entre Dieu et toutes les créatures, selon laquelle il les conserve en leurs êtres, de sorte que si elle venait à leur manquer, elles s'anéantiraient et ne seraient plus. Ainsi quand nous parlerons de l'union de l'âme avec Dieu, ce ne sera pas de cette union substantielle de Dieu qui est toujours en toutes les créatures, mais de l'union et de la transformation de l'âme en Dieu qui n'est pas toujours faite mais qui se fait seulement quand il y a ressemblance, comme l'autre s'appelle l'union essentielle ou substantielle. Celle-là est naturelle, celle-ci surnaturelle, qui est quand les deux volontés, à savoir celle de l'âme et celle de Dieu, sont conformes en un n'y ayant aucune chose en l'une qui répugne à l'autre. Partant quand l'âme ôtera entièrement de soi ce qui répugne et n'est pas conforme à la volonté divine, elle demeurera

transformée en Dieu par amour.)

- [17] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, A Meridian Book, New American Library, New York and Scarborough, Ontario, 1974, p.113.
- [18] Ibid. p. 101.
- [19] Ibid. p. 129.
- [20] Ibid. p. 97.
- [21] Ibid. p. 98.
- [22] Ibid..p. 97.
- [23] Ibid. p. 100.
- [24] Ibid. p. 99.
- [25] Ibid. p. 99.
- [26] Ibid. p. 100.
- [27] Ibid. p. 37.
- [28] Ibid. p. 64.
- [29] Ibid. p. 132.
- [30] Ibid. pp. 99-100.
- [31] Ibid. p. 108.
- [32] Ibid. pp. 102-103.
- [33] Ibid. p. 109.
- [34] *Listening to the Saints*, p. 109.
- [35] Ibid. p. 110.
- [36] *Listening to the Saints*, p. 110.
- [37] *Mysticism*, p. 104.
- [38] *Mysticism*, p. 98.
- [39] Ibid. p. 131.
- [40] Ibid. p. 41.
- [41] Ibid.p. 115.
- [42] Ibid. p. 116.
- [43] Ibid. p. 141.
- [44] Ibid. p. 99.
- [45] Ibid. p. 304.
- [46] Ibid. p. 304.

- [\[47\]](#) Ibid. p. 304.
- [\[48\]](#) Ibid. p. 319.
- [\[49\]](#) Ibid. p. 305.
- [\[50\]](#) Ibid. p. 304.
- [\[51\]](#) Ibid. p. 302.
- [\[52\]](#) Ibid. p. 417.
- [\[53\]](#) Ibid. p. 419-420.
- [\[54\]](#) Ibid. p. 420.
- [\[55\]](#) Ibid. p. 420.
- [\[56\]](#) The Church Teaches, p. 147.
- [\[57\]](#) Ibid. p. 105.
- [\[58\]](#) Ibid. p. 426.
- [\[59\]](#) Henri Serouya, La Kaballe, Grasset, pp. 406-407.
- [\[60\]](#) Ibid. p. 173.
- [\[61\]](#) Ibid. p. 170.
- [\[62\]](#) John Dillenberger, Claude Welch, Protestant Christianity, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1954, pp. 5-6.
- [\[63\]](#) Mysticism. p. 43.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 7

### Sufism and the Monistic Theory

Let us now approach Sufism, the Islamic mysticism, under its two main aspects, the monistic theory, or the doctrine of the Unity of Being, and mysticism. It serves to demonstrate that Truth is one, and is shared by saints and sages from all creeds, all nations and all ages.

#### Definitions of Sufism

Religiously, Sufism means, mainly, an interiorization of Islam. It is the inner quest for God, or the inner apprehension of the Divine. Thus Sufism is defined as Islamic mysticism. As we know, mysticism, in its widest sense, may be defined as the consciousness of the One Reality, be it called Allah, Wisdom, Light, Life, Love or Being or even Nothing. It can be termed as "the great spiritual current which goes through all religions". Thus, the final aim of Sufism is to transcend the human condition, to attain the divine status and to be united with God even in this world. In the words of Bayazid Bastami; "A Sufi belongs to the sect of God." [\[1\]](#)

Because the Sufis abandoned external forms and rituals and sang the praise of universal truth which is within the reach of everybody, regardless of creed, color, or nationality, Sufism became a religion which was both international and universal. According to Rumi and, naturally, to all Sufis, the outward rituals in churches, mosques, temples and pagodas are void of any reality, and are the cause of all prejudices, hatred and strife. Sufis tried to attack the hypocritical pretension of the bigoted religionists and to introduce people into the realms of "inner thoughts and values".

They repeatedly asked: "Is God the object of formal worship, or of love? Is the purpose of religion to unite, to comfort, to improve and to bring all races and peoples of the world together in love and brotherhood, or to divide, to tyrannize, to shed the blood of the innocent in futile wars, to inflict tortures to people, to send people to the stake, to mesmerize, to commit all kinds of crimes in the name of God and to exploit our fellowmen?"

To the Sufis, all talk, turmoil, rite, ritual, convention, custom, noise, and desire is outside the unity with God; remove the veil of dualism and one finds joy, silence, beauty, calm and the rest. When self, as well as material world had been cast aside, the perfect man would unite with God.

Sufism is a mystical path: The end is God; the beginning is man in his terrestrial state; the path is inward; the means which link man to God are the spiritual virtues, which alone can make possible the realization of God and which alone can prepare man to become worthy of the exalted station of becoming the total theophany of God's Names and Qualities.

Philosophically, Sufism propounded the Unity of Being. We will develop this theory later on. Now, we can say, roughly, that according to the Sufis, the world is not created by God, but it rather proceeds from God by a process of successive emanation. The world is then the theophany of God. But in time, it will be

re-absorbed in God by a process of successive reintegration...

God is everywhere, under the veils of terrestrial and celestial things. While the Islamic orthodoxy represented Allah as having created the world once for all, and then having removed himself to heaven, leaving his creatures to work out their own salvation or condemnation, according to the light given them by the prophets, and taught that God and man were separated by an infinite chasm, the Sufis represented Him as the Sublime Being, immanent and ever working in His creatures, the sum of all existence, the fullness of life, whereby all things move and exist, not only predestining but originating all actions, dwelling in and terminating with each individual soul.

The Sufi believed that he would see his God face to face in everything, and in seeing Him, would become one with Him. In other words, God is immanent in everything.

Therefore, God is not far from man. On the contrary, He is nearer to man than his jugular vein. This view is based on the following Quranic verse: "We indeed created man; and We know what his soul whispers within him, and We are nearer to him than the jugular vein." (Quran 50:16)

Dhul Nun, a Sufi poet, wrote:

"I turn to Thee in my request,  
And seek in Thee my final rest;  
To Thee alone my loud lament is brought,  
Thou dwellest in my secret thought".

This view entails, naturally, the doctrine of the incarnation of God in man (hulul), as sustained by many great Islamic mystics such as Ibni Arabi (born in Spain in A.D. 1165) and Al-Hallaj (d. in 992).

According to the Sufis, good and evil are inevitably and intimately linked: One must have knowledge of evil in order to perceive the existence of goodness. They looked therefore to a higher good, the Absolute, uncontaminated by association with evil. To be one with ultimate good is to divest oneself of all evil, of all malicious earthly and materialistic influence, and above all, of one's selfish tendencies. It is in self that utter evil resides. We will see that the aim of all Sufis is Fana, or self-negation and re-absorption in God. The mystic path as it exists in Sufism is then one in which man dies to his carnal nature in order to be reborn in divinis and hence to become united with the Truth. The full grown Sufis is thus conscious of being, like other men, a prisoner in the world of forms, but unlike them he, is also conscious of being free, with a freedom which incomparably outweighs his imprisonment. He may therefore be said to have two centers of consciousness, one human and one Divine, and he may speak now from one, and now from the other, which accounts for certain apparent contradictions.

Culturally, Sufism is a message of brotherhood, harmony and hope for mankind. The Sufis, in the words of Hakim Sanai, are looking for the ocean of love and they do not bother with the rivers and canals of conflict and prejudice. Sanai, also said: "Humanity is asleep, concerned only with what is useless, living in a wrong world... Man is wrapping his net around himself. A Sufi bursts his cage asunder."

Morally, Sufism is freedom, generosity, and absence of self-constraint. When Abu Said, one of the leaders of the Sufis, was asked to define the Sufi doctrine, he replied: "It is to lay aside what you have in your head such as pride, prejudice, desire, hostility, greed, arrogance, and hatred; to give away what you have in your hand; and to flinch not from whatever befalls you. The veil between God and thee is neither earth nor heaven, nor the throne nor the footstools; thy selfhood and hate are thy veil, and when thou removest these and replace them by love, thou hast attained unto God."

Thus, to some, the Sufis are dreamers, rebels, and meddlers who interfere with the rituals of the church and the business of the state. To others, it connotes humanitarianism, tolerance, harmony, contempt of the superficial rituals, love of mankind, and the attempt to achieve spiritual fellowship. According to Professor Nasrollah S. Eatemi, Sufi "movement was expressed in outward form as a protest against the formalism of orthodoxy in Islam, and gradually developed into a rebellion of a sick, materialist society. Sufism was an antithesis of arrogance, intolerance, demagogism, hypocrisy and inhumanity. The Sufis' purpose was to create a renaissance of man's spirit, through which he might see how egoism, greed, pride, and strife are folly and that the universe is spiritual, and that men are the sons of God." Indries Shah wrote:

The Sufi law of life requires:

Kindness to the young

Generosity to the poor

Good counsel to friends

Forbearance with enemies

Indifference to fools

Respect to the learned. [2]

In sum, "Sufism is one such path, placed by God within the bosom of Islam in order to provide the possibility of spiritual realization for the millions of men who over the ages have followed and continue to follow the religion of the Quran. In its essence it joins the paths of spiritual realization found in other traditions while in its formal aspect it shares the genius and the particular features of Islam. It is the path within Islam that leads from the particular to the Universal, from multiplicity to Unity, from form to the supra-formal Essence. Its function is to enable man to realize Divine Unity (al-tawhid), the truth which has always been and will always be."

"The keynote of Sufism," according to Reynod Nicholson, "is disinterested, selfless devotion, in a word, love. The whole of Sufism is a protest against the unnatural divorce between God and man."

The Sufi teaches this simple truth that the basis of all faith or imam is unity, for as Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari writes in his *Gulshan-i-raz*:

See but One, say but One, know but One,

In this are summed up the roots and branches of faith. [3]

## The Unity of Being

Sufism professes the Unity of Being. This monistic theory is linked with the statement of belief, 'There is no God but God', and the Quranic verse, 'Say, God is One'(112:1). Strictly speaking, the world is not a creation ex nihilo by God, but rather a theophany, an emanation from God.

"In Sufism, there is the fundamental concept of God as not only All Mighty and All Good, but as the sole source of Being and Beauty and, indeed, the one Beauty and the one Being, in whom is submerged whatever becomes apparent, and, by whose light, whatever is apparent is made manifest."

Seyyed Hosseinnasn, in his *Sufi Essays*, asserts: "The metaphysical aspect of the (Sufi) doctrine delineates firstly the nature of Reality, the Oneness of the Divine Essence which alone 'is' in the absolute sense and prior to which there is nothing; then the theophany of the Essence through the Divine Names

and Qualities and through the determination of the different states of being; and finally the nature of man as the total theophany (tajalli) of the Names and Qualities. The doctrine of unity or tawhid forms the axis of all Sufi metaphysics and it is in fact the misunderstanding of this cardinal doctrine that has caused so many orientalists to accuse Sufism of pantheism. Sufi doctrine does not assert that God is the world but that the world to the degree that it is real cannot be completely other than God. [4]

The early Sufis were ascetics and quietists rather than mystics. However, in the ninth century they developed an ecumenical doctrine linked with the ideas of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Neoplatonism and Islam, an ecumenical doctrine which showed striking similarities even with Taoism and Confucianism, as we will demonstrate it later on.

Sufism thus showed that it regarded all religions as more or less "perfect shadowing forth of the great central truth which it seeks fully to comprehend and consequently it recognizes all of them as good in proportion to the measure of truth which they contain." The practical aim was to escape from the subjective self, the empirical self and, until this lesson was learned, no advances toward Truth could be made. Even today, Sufis regard God as identical with pure Being. For them, everything is the theophany of God, the manifestation, the expression of God; everything represents God, though for laymen, everything is rather a veil of God. A Sufi may be described as one who conceives of religion as an experience of eternity - one who holds that the soul, even in this life, can unite itself with the Divine. He calls himself Ahl al-Haq, the man of the Truth.

In Ibn Arabi (born in Spain in A.D. 1165), we find an elaboration of the doctrine of Monism. The fundamental principle of his system is the Unity of Being: "There is no real difference between the Essence and its attributes or, in other words, between God and the Universe."

This view was shared by other Sufi mystics. Let us quote Dhul Nun (d. 861), another Sufi mystic:

O God, I never hearken to the voices of the beasts or the rustle of the trees, the splashing of waters or of the songs of the birds, the whistling of the wind or the rumble of thunder, but I sense in them a testimony to thy unity [Wahdanyya], and a proof of thy Incomparableness; that thou art the all-prevailing, the all-knowing, the all-wise, the all just, the all true, and in Thee neither overthought nor ignorance nor folly nor injustice nor lying.

O God I acknowledge Thee in the proof of Thy handiwork and in evidence of Thy acts... [5]

Sufis often refer to the saying 'God spreads the scrolls upon the heavens until man learns to read them. Once he can read them, he can roll up the scrolls and put them away.' The cosmos, known to the mystics as veil, as allusion, and as separation, is referred to in the Quranic verse, 'We shall show them our symbols in the horizons and in themselves, until it be made known to them that it is the Truth' (41:53)

The cosmos has two aspects. Known through the Tradition 'God created seventy thousand veils of Light and Darkness', the first is expressed in the statement that the universe is not God. The universe is relative, transient, changing; therefore it is otherness, separateness, a veil which separates us from God. In its other aspect, the universe is none other than God, because it is the universe which reveals the Divinity.

Therefore, the cosmos both hides and reveals, veils and makes manifest. To the Sufi, the world is transparent, because he sees the transcendent significance of physical things. For the Sufi, the journey to God begins with an awakening to the concept that the phenomenal world is a veil which conceals the Divine. We begin the quest by removing the veil, only to become aware that the veil and the Divine are

one and the same thing. The veil is the theophany itself: the manifestation of the Divine through Its Names and Qualities. When we see the veil, we are seeing nothing but the Divine.

The act of creation is rather an act of emanation, of Self-expression. But why should an Absolute and Infinite Reality express Itself? Sufism answers: 'For Knowledge of Self.' Each form re-expressed, recalled, remembered, is so that It may come to know Self.

Since the Divine is Infinite, Knowledge of Self is part of Its Infiniteness. Being Infinite and Absolute, containing the totality of possibilities, It must include the possibility of negating Self and bringing the relative into being. Therefore the world exists because God is Infinite.

In this connection it is not irrelevant to mention that one of the sayings of the Prophet that is most often quoted by the Sufis is the following 'Holy Tradition' (hadith qudusi), so called because in it God speaks directly: 'I was a Hidden Treasure and I wished to be known, and so I created the world.'

The Godhead in its unmanifest quality is above every quality we could ascribe to It. This is the Divine Essence about which one can say nothing, for any description would only serve to limit or bind It. Divine Essence manifests Itself, however, in the direction of Creation through stages, the first of which is the Archetypes, the possibilities contained within the Absolute.

Divine emanation is a twofold process: intelligible and sensible. The first emanation brings the Archetypes into intelligible existence. Known as the Divine Names and Qualities, these Archetypes are the possibilities contained within the Absolute. This stage of emanation is conceived of as the One (Ahadiyyah) moving towards Oneness (Wahidiyyah); the Archetypes are noumena, forms which are outwardly and actually intelligible, but inwardly and potentially sensible.

The second stage of emanation occurs when the shadows of the Archetypes reach the world of symbols, and the shadows of the world of symbols reach the phenomenal world. The phenomenal world is a manifestation of these higher worlds and reflects the splendor of multiplicity.

The phenomenon is a form which is outwardly and actually sensible: It can be grasped by the five outer senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Outward forms act as sensible containers for the Archetypes, which are in turn intelligible containers for aspects of the Absolute.

The Absolute manifests Itself in the phenomenal world as if from the Center to the periphery. The whole universe then can be schematized by a set of concentric circles. The Center represents the Godhead; and the successive circles respectively stand the World of Archetypes, the World of Symbols, and finally the world of phenomena. This schema can also be used to figure Man or the microcosm. Thus the Center, represents the Divine Essence, and the concentric circles represent successively the Spirit, the Soul and the Body .

This schema is very useful, because it speaks to our visual sense. Thus when we say that we should move inward to find God, we see it immediately. We realize also that moving outwardly is moving toward materiality. The material state is outside; the spiritual state is inside. The theomorphic kernel of man is at the center of man's being. Thus the profound and real nature of man lies beneath the layers of dross that the passage of the ages and the gradual removal of man from his original perfection have imposed upon that Divine Center.

This schema help us understand why Abu Yazid Bastami has said: "When God recognized my sincerity, the first grace that He accorded me was that he removed the chaff of the self from before me."

[6]

This schema shows us that we should destroy the outer crust of our being, to reveal to us our own divine center. Also with the help of this schema, we can make the cosmos and all that it contains transparent so that the infinite content becomes revealed through the finite form.

In this manner we can achieve the goal of the mystical quest, a goal which is perennially sought since, as already explained, it lies within the depth of human existence itself.

To him, whose soul attains the beatific vision,  
The universe is the book of 'The Truth Most High'.  
Accidents are its vowels, and substance its consonants,  
And grades of creatures its verses and pauses.

(Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari) [7]

In sum, the mystical path is the journey of the soul from the outward to the inward, from the periphery to the Center, from the form to the meaning. And because of the intimate relation the soul possesses with the cosmos, this journey is at once a penetration to the center of the soul and a migration to the abode beyond the cosmos. In both places, which are in reality but a single locus, resides the Divine Presence, the Presence which is at once completely our-Self and totally other than our self. [8]

## THE SUFI'S CONCEPTION OF MAN

The Sufi's conception of man is based on these two Quranic verses:

"Surely We created man of the best stature (ahsan taqwim)

Then we reduced him to the lowest of the low (asfal safilin)

(Quran XCV,4-5)

Thus the innermost or the true nature of man is divine, while the outer layer of man is the terrestrial crust or the human appearance. The theomorphic innermost nature of man is his permanent reality, his divine origin, unchanged through ages. The terrestrial crust, or the outer human appearance, contains transient and passing elements and is characterized by wretchedness and misery due to the state of separatedness from his spiritual origin.

The outer human layer encompasses the mutable sphere of the psyche, such as thoughts, emotions and ego-consciousness. It is the bounded ego, the personality, i.e. the mask of the true Self. It is enmeshed in the time-space cosmic pattern and under the pressure of material existence, under the bondage and the limitations of matter.

The inner divine layer is beyond, behind and above all the apparent changes, endowed with all powers and faculties, freedom of choice, and potentialities to help man achieve his own final goal of Bliss, Perfection and Immortality.

Thus man carries both the image of perfection and the experiential certainty of separation within himself, and these elements remain as permanent aspects and conditions of the human state above and beyond all historical changes and transformations.

In other words, there are two poles in man. On one pole, there is his theomorphic nature, his essential world; on the other pole there is his terrestrial crust, his phenomenal world, which covers and hides his spiritual core. We can say that in man, the Human serves as a veil which conceals the Divine. We will see that for Sufis, the journey to God begins with the removal of this human veil.

This view can explain the human paradox: Living in the bondage of the finite and of the limited, man is always seeking to transcend this world of finitude and transiency, and to find the Infinite Reality which can deliver him from the realm of mortality and of servitude. Man cannot remain man without seeking the Infinite and without wanting to transcend himself. To be human means to want to transcend the merely human.

Man seeks his psychic and spiritual needs outwardly precisely because he does not know who he is. Sufism reminds man to seek all that he needs inwardly within himself, to tear his roots from the outer world, and plunge them into the Divine Nature, which resides at the center of his heart. Sufism removes man from his lowly state of asfal saphilin in order to reinstate him in his primordial perfection of ahsan taqwim wherein he finds within himself all that he had sought outwardly, for being united with God he is separate from nothing. [9]

Ordinary man is forever moving away from the center of his being towards the periphery, dispersing himself in the multiplicity of this world like waves that break up into a thousand drops against the rocks of the sea-shore. This outward-going tendency must be checked and reversed so that man may live inwardly, with his reactions and tendencies moving towards the center rather than towards the rim; for at the Center resides the One, the Pure and Ineffable Being which is the source of all beatitude and goodness, whereas at the periphery is non-existence, which only appears to be real because of man's illusory perception and lack of discrimination. [10]

The mystic path as it exists in Sufism is one in which man dies to his carnal nature in order to be reborn in divinis and hence to become united with the Truth. [11]

## THE UNIVERSAL PROTOTYPE

To attain the divine status is to realize the Universal Prototype. The Universal Prototype is the prototypical human form. It is God's own image. The Universal Prototype should unite the inward, eternal aspect of reality with the onward, phenomenal aspect. The Universal Prototype comprehends all individualities and unites all opposites in the infinite nature of Self. All Divine Qualities are united and displayed. At this moment the multiplicity of the soul (the sensory and the psychic forces) disappears and the vision of Unity fills the emptied soul. This is when one sees God in Oneness. The ultimate meaning of the Unity of Being is 'to see things as they really are': to realize that all is reflected in the mirror of one's own being. It is the dissolution of the profane consciousness of man who sees all things as independent of God: to realize that one was never separate from God; that God in His Oneness is both immanent and transcendent. This universal prototype is realized by Muhammad, the Prophet, according to Sufis. But we can say that the founder of every religion is the Universal Prototype, the Universal Logos. This Universal Prototype is also realized by all mystical saints of all religions in the world.

The Prophet is an individual who, in form, manifests all the possibilities of humanity. By marrying and having children, he expresses his human nature. Through his receiving the revelation, he is the receptacle of Divine Nature. The Prophet, referring to this aspect of himself, has said, 'I am Ahmad without the m [Ahad means Unity]; I am an 'arab without the r [rabb means Lord]; who had seen me hath seen the Truth'.

The possibility of becoming the Universal Prototype exists potentially for all Muslims. The difference between one who is awakened and one who remains asleep, and the difference in the levels attained by the awakened, depends upon what Sufis call preparedness.

## SUFI'S MYSTIC QUEST

Each Sufi seeks to become the Universal Prototype. In other words, each Sufi seeks to become united with God, even in this life. He does not live by himself, but God lives in Him. This final station can be described by the Sacred Tradition in which God says, 'My servant never ceases drawing nigh unto Me, and when my servant does so, I become the Hearing by which he hears, the Seeing by which he sees, the Hand by which he seizes and the Foot by which he walks.' The Sufi 'witnesses' when in full consciousness of the Divine Presence.

One can live a divine life, when one ceases to think that a separate life from God is possible, that one can find any reality outside God; when one can gather all multiplicity into unity; when one realizes that God is the coincidence of opposites: transcendence and immanence, inward and outward, essence and phenomena, Divine and veils, divine and humane, all coalesce in an infinite harmonious Wholeness. All these ideas stem from Quranic verses:

'Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth' (XXIV,35)

'There is no God but He; everything is perishing except His Face'(XXVIII,88). 'He is the first, the last and the outward and the inward'(LVII,3)

'I have breathed unto him (man) of my spirit' (XV,30)

'Verily, We have created man, and We know what his soul suggests to him, for We are higher unto him than the neck artery (or jugular vein) (L,15)

'Wherever ye turn, there is the Face of Allah' (II, 109)

'He to whom Allah giveth no light hath no light at all' (XXIV, 40)

It is natural to see why the early Sufis considered the Quran not only as the Word of God, but also as the primary means of drawing man near to Him.

According to Hallaj, God, who, in essence, is love, created Man after His image to the end that His creature, loving Him alone, may suffer a spiritual transformation, find the divine image in himself, and thus attain to union with the divine will and nature. His doctrine of hulul, or of incarnation really infers that all human being is potentially a God incarnate, and can become a God incarnate, if he can realize his divine and real Self. And if 'all manifestation should return whence it has come', according to the Monistic theory, all man, as manifestation of God, as aspect of God, should return to God; being non-existent, for actually only God exists, man can exist only through God's existence. Sufism, if well understood, preaches the greatness of man: Sufi saints see that God incarnates himself in man, but does not share the Christian point of view that only Jesus Christ is God incarnate. The Quran also considered Jesus Christ only as a messenger of God, and not as the only begotten Son of God.

Say, 'He is God alone! God the Eternal! He begets not and is not begotten! Nor is there like unto Him any one!' (CXII)

They misbelieve who say, 'Verily, God is the Messiah, the son of Mary;' but the Messiah said, 'O children of Israel! worship God, my Lord and your Lord' (V,72 or V,77)

## CONCLUSION

In the Legacy of Islam, we read: '...The typical saint is no longer one who has sought God with prayer and aspiration and found Him, after sore travail, in the transfiguration of dying to self through and inexplicable act of grace depending on nothing but the personal will of the Creator; he is rather the complete theosophist and hierophant from whom no mystery is hidden, the perfect man who identifies

himself with God or the Logos.

I was on that day when the Names were not,  
 Nor any sign of existence endowed with name.  
 By me Names and Named were brought to view  
 On the day when there were not 'I' and 'we'.

...It may be well to state briefly the philosophical theory which underlies it.

'The Essence of God is all that really exists; His attributes are distinguished from Him in thought, but in reality are not other than He. The aggregate of divine attributes, which we call the universe, is the ever-changing kaleidoscope wherein He displays Himself, and is real in so far as He is reflected in it. Phenomena per se are not-being; they acquire a contingent existence from the efflux of Absolute Being by which they are irradiated. The position and function of man in the scheme of things' become clear. 'In him the spiritual and physical worlds meet, and he stands at the center of the universe of which he is the soul. But on his phenomenal side he is 'black with the darkness of not-being'; his bodily affections hold him in bondage, so that he thinks he is separate from God. That illusion, though supported by sense and reason, contradicts the first principle of the Sufi philosophy, which teaches that all existence and all action is the manifestation of divine energy...'

Sufism is one such path, placed by God within the bosom of Islam, to help Islamic people transcend the finite and reach the Infinite. In its essence, it joins the path of spiritual realization found in other traditions, while in its formal aspect it shares the genius and the particular features of Islam. It is the path within Islam that leads from the particular to the Universal, from multiplicity to Unity, from form to the Supra-formal Essence. Its function is to enable man to realize Divine Unity. The mystic path as it exists in Sufism is one in which man dies to his carnal and psychic nature to be reborn in divinis and hence to become united with the Truth, videlicet with God. To use the technical words, in Abu Yazid of Bistam's parlance, the passing away of the self is called fana, and the unitive life in God is called baqa. The Sufi mystical quest begins with man, in his terrestrial state and ends in the bosom of God.

Khwajah Abdullah Ansari wrote:

The heart enquired of the soul  
 What is the beginning of this business?  
 What its end, and what its fruit?  
 The soul answered:  
 The beginning of it is  
 The annihilation of self  
 Its end, faithfulness,  
 And its fruit, Immortality. [\[12\]](#)

To understand Sufism, one should be familiar with the Theory of Emanation, sustained by Al-Ghazzali, with the 'Transcendent Unity of Being and its Theophany through the contingent existence of all things in the Universe, with the doctrine of the Universal or Perfect Man who is centrally and axially located, so that he reflects the Divine Names and Qualities in a total and conscious manner, and, finally, with the Mystical Quest and Mystical Life practiced and professed by all Sufi Saints which recalls us that

man was made for immortality and that his intelligence was created to grasp the Absolute.

The keynote of Sufism, according to Reynold Nicholson, "is disinterested selfless devotion, in a word, love. The whole of Sufism is a protest against the unnatural divorce between God and man."

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[1] Sufi Studies East & West, Ed. by Pr. L. F. Rushbrook Williams, E. P. Dutton & Co Inc. 1973, N. Y. p. 47.

[2] Sufi Studies East and West, Edited by Pr. L. F. Rushbrook Williams, E.P.Dutton & Co Inc. 1973, New York p. 46.

[3] Mystic Rose Garden, pp. 84, 85.

[4] Sufi Essays, Seyyed Hosseinnasn, p. 45.

[5] Sufi Studies East & West, Ed. by Pr. L. F. Rushbrook Williams, E. P. Dutton & Co Inc. 1973, N. Y. p. 51.

[6] Sufi essays, Seyyed Hosseinnasn, p. 34.

[7] Sufi essays, Seyyed Hosseinnasn, p. 29.

[8] Sufi Essays, Seyyed Hosseinnasn, p. 29.

[9] Sufi essays, Seyyed Hosseinnasn, p. 33.

[10] Ibidem, p. 49.

[11] Sufi Essays, Seyyed Hosseinnasm, p. 34.

[12] Sufi Essays, Seyyed Hosseinnasn, p. 34.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 8

### Plotinus and the Monistic Theory

Plotinus (v. 205-270 A.D) was a philosopher and a religious genius who transformed a revival of Platonism in the Roman Empire into what modern scholars called Neoplatonism and exercised great influence on the thoughts of the Islamic world and on European thought until the late 17th century. The real founder of Neoplatonism (250-529) was Ammonius Saccas (175-242), the teacher of Plotinus.



Plotinus

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines Neoplatonism as: "A philosophical and religious system developed at Alexandria in the third century A.D., based on the doctrines of Plato and other Greek philosophers, and combined with elements of Oriental mysticism and some Judaic and Christian concepts."

In brief, Plotinus taught that the cosmos is made of emanations from the One, and that man's goal is to return to the One by mystical experience through which he transcends the limitations of matter and the intervening mental emanations - the world-soul, the archetypes. [\[1\]](#)

#### Ammonius Saccas

Plotinus was not a Christian, but his influence on Christian mystics was enormous; he compares human beings to the choir standing around a choir master but with their attention distracted by things

going on about them, so they fail to sing in tune or in time. He held that creation was a series of steps leading away from the One (or God); he called those steps emanations. (The Kabbalists later borrowed his ideas, as William Blake was to borrow from the Kabbalah). This is definitely a non-Christian view, for Plotinus' evil is a negative thing, depending upon how many steps you have taken away from the One; it is like someone walking away from a lighted house at night, moving further into the darkness of the garden. But why should people walk away, unless tempted by the Devil? Because, says Plotinus, we are empty-headed, and easily distracted. The philosopher is a man who determinedly ignores distractions and multiplicity, and tries to see back towards the One. "Such", he concludes, "is the life of Gods and of Godlike men; a liberation from all earthly bonds, a life that takes no pleasure in earthy things, a flight of the alone to the Alone." [2]

At the center of all reality in the universe, in Plotinus' system of thought, set forth in the Enneads, is the Godhead, the One, The Absolute Good, the Source, which transcends thought and concrete being and utterance, an undivided and undifferentiated Unity. From this ultimate One, by an overflow from the superabundant Godhead, a succession of emanations radiate out in stages of decreasing splendor and reality. First in Order is the Nous, Mind and Spirit, which radiates from the One as light emanates from a luminous body. This is the Over-Mind of the Universe, the World of Ideas, Patterns or Forms, of which all minds, and everything real and intelligible, partake. The Third Order of Plotinus' Trinity, and the second emanation is the Over-Soul, which is the principle of life, of activity and process. It is the life of all life and enfolds all souls. It floods out and makes the concrete world. Matter by itself is unreal. It is the limit or barrier against which the overflowing reality of soul is broken and splashes into multiplicity and differentiation. Soul is amphibious and may live downward in the lower world or live upward in the World Yonder.

For Plotinus there is "a way down", by emanation, and "a way up", or return to Source. The Soul must first of all come to itself, withdraw from desires, objects of sense, and contemplate the true patterns of things, and rise to the height of thinking God's thoughts, and so attain the realm of Spirit-Nous. The last stage of the journey to the Fatherland, the Divine Center, or Source, can be reached only by a leap of ecstatic mystical experience, which Plotinus called "the flight of the alone to the Alone." [3]

This theory is similar to the Kabbalah. According to this document, the development of the Infinite to the finite carries in itself the degradation of the perfect to the imperfect...In that case, the development of things progresses from the Center to the periphery, and in successive orders. These orders are disposed in concentric circles. Each order is at the same time, the shell, the rind, the matter of the order immediately superior to it, and the spirit for the order immediately inferior to it... So for the mystic Jews, God is considered as the Center. The development of Sephiroth and their actions are in concentric circles: The inferior envelops the superiors and serves as its protecting ring. The whole created universe, including the Sephiroth, is then only the rind of God, exactly as the peel of an onion is the garment of the bulb, or as the shell of the nut is the garment of the grain... And one day will come, when the multiple will return to the One, when everything will plunge again in the primeval fullness. "One day, the Saint will take off all the rind, and will reappear under the aspect of a substantial core." [4]

The founder of the Neoplatonic school in Alexandria, as we have said, is supposed to have been Ammonius Saccas. But the Enneads of his pupil Plotinus are the primary and classical document of Neoplatonism. The doctrine of Plotinus is mysticism, and, like all mysticism, it consists of two main divisions. **The first or theoretical part deals with the high origin of the human soul and shows how it has**

departed from its first estate. In the second part the way is pointed out by which the soul may again return to the Eternal and Supreme. Since the souls in their longings reach forth beyond all sensible things, beyond the world of ideas even, it follows that the highest being must be something super-rational. The system thus embraces three heads:- (1) The primeval Being, (2) The ideal world of the soul, (3) the phenomenal world.

The Primeval Being, the One is opposed to the many; the Infinite is opposed to the finite. It is the source of all life, and therefore the absolute causality and the only real existence. The original Being first of all, throws out the Nous, the Spirit, which is a perfect image of the One and the archetype of all existing things. It is at once being and thought, ideal world and idea. As image, the Nous corresponds perfectly to the One, but, as derived it is entirely different. What Plotinus understands by the Nous, is the highest sphere accessible to the human mind, and along with that, pure thought itself. The Nous is then the system of ideas of the intelligible world.

The image and product of the motionless Nous is the soul, which is, like the Nous, immaterial. The soul is then the image or product of the Nous, and by its motion begets corporeal matter. It stands, therefore, between the Nous and the phenomenal world, is permeated and illuminated by the former, but is also in contact with the latter. The Nous is indivisible; the soul may preserve its unity and remains in the Nous, but at the same time it has the power of uniting with the corporeal world, and thus being disintegrated. It therefore occupies an intermediate position. As a single soul (world-soul) it belongs in essence and destination to the intelligible world; but it also embraces innumerable individual souls; and these can either submit to be ruled by the Nous, or turn aside to the sensual and lose themselves in the finite.

The human souls which have descended into corporeality are those which have allowed themselves to be ensnared by sensuality and overpowered by lust. They now seek to cut themselves loose from their true being; and striving after independence, they assume a false existence. They must turn back from this; and since they have not lost their freedom, a conversion is still possible.

Here, then, we enter upon practical philosophy. Along the same road by which it descended, the soul must retrace its steps back to the supreme Good. it must first of all return to itself. It is what we call true conversion...By means of ascetic observances the man becomes once more a spiritual and enduring being, free from all sins... It is not enough to be sinless, one must become "God". This is reached through contemplation of the primeval Being, the One - in other words, though ecstatic approach, the soul may see God, the fountain of life, the source of Being, the origin of all good, the root of the soul. [\[5\]](#)

So, for Plotinus, we must know the One. And to know it means to become one with it, which the soul can accomplish only by becoming as simple or as "alone" as the One. In the moment of such a union the soul has become God, or, rather, is God; the soul has reascended to its original source. Among the terms Plotinus uses to describe this condition are "ecstasy", "simplicity", "self-surrender," "touching," and "flight of the alone to the Alone".

Plotinus died at the age of sixty-six, after a long illness. So modest was he that it is said he "blushed to think he had a body". He reached Samadhi (highest ecstasy or "union with God" the Divine Ego) several times during his life.

Porphyry (232-304) was his disciple and biographer. Porphyry describes him as a man of saintly character and a very attractive personality. One spoke also of him as "the most divine Plotinus".



Porphyry (232-304)

The importance of Plotinus in the history of thought can hardly be exaggerated. Among the philosophers of mysticism he holds an undisputed pre-eminence since no other writer unites, in the same measure, metaphysical genius with intimate personal experience.

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- [1] Robert's Ellwood, Jr., *Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973, p. 53.
- [2] Colin Wilson, *The Occult*, Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, New York, 1931, pp. 229-230.
- [3] Vergilius Ferm, *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, The Philosophical Library, New York, 1945, p. 525.
- [4] De la sorte, le développement de l'infini vers le fini porte en soi des dégradations de parfait vers l'imparfait... En ce sens, le développement des choses se fait du Centre à la périphérie, et par suite, aux ordres successifs; ces ordres s'échelonnent comme des cercles concentriques. Chaque ordre est à la fois "l'enveloppe, l'écorce, la matière de l'ordre qui lui est immédiatement supérieur, et l'esprit pour l'ordre qui lui est immédiatement inférieur"... Ainsi, pour les mystiques Juifs, Dieu est considéré comme le centre. Le développement des Sephiroth et de leur action, implique des cercles concentriques: l'inférieur enveloppe le supérieur et lui sert d'écorce protectrice. L'univers crée tout entier, y compris les Sephiroth, n'est donc que l'écorce du En-sof, comme les pelures de l'oignon sont les vêtements du bulbe ou comme la coquille de la noix et le reste sont le vêtement de la graine... Mais un jour viendra, ...où cette limite cessera d'être, où le multiple retournera à l'Un, où tout se replongera dans la même plénitude première... Un jour, le Saint dépouillera ses écorces et ne réapparaîtra que sous l'aspect d'un noyau substantiel." -- Henri Serouya, *La Kabbale*, Grasset, 1957, pp. 271-273.
- [5] *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1929, Fourteenth Edition, Vol. 16, art. Neoplatonism, pp. 218-218.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 9

### Hermes Trismegistus and the Monistic Theory

What sort of man was this Hermes Trismegistus thought to be? Was he a god or a man? If some of the Hermetic writers had been asked this question, he would, I think, have answered in some such way as this: "Hermes was a man like you and me - a man who lived in Egypt a very long time ago, in the time of King Ammon . But he was a man who attained to gnosis (that is to say, knowledge of God, but a kind of "knowledge" that involves union with God); and he was the first and greatest teacher of gnosis. He died as other men die; and after death he became a god, just as you and I, if we attain to gnosis, will become gods after our death." [\[1\]](#)



Some believe that he is only a legendary man, preceding even the first 'great initiate' of recorded history, Pythagoras. "It is true that the legendary Egyptian founder of magic, Hermes Trismegistus ('Thrice Greatest Hermes', 'Hermes the Thrice-Greatest') is supposed to have preceded him (Pythagoras); but it is doubtful whether Hermes actually existed (the Egyptians identified him with the God Thoth, who gave men the art of writing) and the documents relating to him belong to the post-Christian era. Pythagoras was born about 570 B.C.- a remarkable era, for it was at about this time that the Buddha was born in India, and Confucius and Lao-Tzu in China. [\[2\]](#)

Vergilius says that 'Hermes Trismegistus was an Egyptian by race... He flourished before the time of Pharaoh, as many chronographi think. Some, among whom is Cicero, suppose that he is the person whom the Egyptians called Thoth... He must, therefore, have lived before Pharaoh, and consequently, before Moses also.

'They say that this Hermes left his own country, and traveled all over the world...and that he tried to

teach men to revere and worship one God alone... and he lived a very wise and pious life, occupied in intellectual contemplation, and giving no heed to the gross things of the material world; and that, having returned to his own country, he wrote at that time many books of philosophy and theology. Among these writings, there are two of special importance: the one is called Asclepius, and the other, Poimandres.' [3]

Most people believe that he was the Egyptian God, Thoth - the equivalent of Hermes in Greek, and is the God of Wisdom or the God of Gnosis, giving to whom who possess it, the true knowledge of himself, and of God, permitting him to be regenerated, and to be united with God. Thoth was "the scribe of the gods," "Lord of divine words" and to Hermes was attributed the authorship of all the strictly sacred books generally called by Greek authors Hermetic, Hermetic writings, or Hermetica. Hermes-Thoth was one of the gods to whom men turned for a divinely revealed wisdom.

The works ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus were primarily on astrology; to these were later added treatises on medicine, alchemy (the Emerald tablet, a favorite source for medieval alchemists) and magic. The underlying concept of astrology - that the cosmos constituted a unity and that all parts of it were interdependent- was basic also to other occult sciences...The aim of Hermetism, like that of Gnosticism (a contemporary religious-philosophical movement) was the deification of man through the knowledge (gnosis) of the one transcendental God, the world, and men.

The theological writings are represented by the 17 treatises of the Corpus Hermeticum, by extensive fragments in the writings of Stobaeus, and by a Latin translation of the Asclepius, and of the Poimandres. [4]

The Hermetic writings, in fact, present a fusion of Eastern religious elements with Platonic, Stoic and Neo-Pythagorean philosophies.

I present here a summary of the Poimandres, of the Asclepius (some excerpts of it) and a study of the Emerald Tablet.

### [The Poimandres](#)

The Poimandres records what The Spirit has taught Hermes, before his illumination. It teaches that man must conquer his passions.

### [The Asclepius](#)

It contains the teachings that Hermes gave to his disciple, Asclepius. It teaches that man must know his real Self, and how to be united with God. An illuminated man sees that God is in his heart, that he has come from the Godhead by EMANATION, and contains in himself the force that governs this world, that he must be united with God and with all the elements composing this world. He knows also that everything, by a different way, will be united with God. [5]

### [Excerpts from Asclepius](#)

Trism.- How quickly, Asclepius, you have lost your hold on the true doctrine! Have I not told you this before, that ALL THINGS ARE ONE, AND THE ONE IS ALL THINGS, seeing that all things were in the Creator before he created them all? And rightly has it been said of him that he is all things; for all things are part of him. Throughout our discussion then, be careful to remember him, the One who is all things - him who is the creator of all things. [6]

...This whole, then, which is made up of all things, or is all things, consists, as you have heard me say before, of soul and corporeal substance. Soul and corporeal substance together are embraced by nature,

and are by nature's working kept in movement; and by this movement, the manifold qualities of all things that take shape are made to differ among themselves, in such sort that there come into existence individual things of infinitely numerous forms, by reason of the differences of their qualities, and yet all individuals are united to the whole; so that we see that the whole is one, and of the one are all things. The elements through which all matter has been indued with form are four in number, - fire, water, earth and air; but matter is one, soul is one, and God is one. [7]

...For inasmuch as all things hang on the One, and flow from the One, we think indeed that they are many when we look at them apart, but when we regard them as united, we hold them to be one.

This sensible Kosmos, then, is the recipient of all the sensible forms or qualities of bodies; and all bodies can receive life only from God. For God is all things; from him are all things; and all things are dependent on his will, and on his inimitable wisdom. And this whole sum of things is good and beautiful, and is apprehensible by sense and thought to God alone. Without God nothing has been or is or will be; from God and in God and through God are all things - all the various and multiform qualities, the vast and measureless magnitudes, and the forms of every aspect. [8]

For I deem it impossible that he who is the maker of the universe in all its greatness, the Father and Master of all things, can be named by a single name, though it be made up of ever so many others; I hold that he is nameless, or rather, that all names are names of him. For he in his unity is all things; so that we must either call all things by his names, or call him by the names of all things. [9]

The divine forces are, so to speak, radiations emitted by God; the forces that work birth and growth are radiations emitted by the Kosmos; the arts and crafts are radiations emitted by man... There is nothing more divine than mind, nothing more potent in its operation, nothing more apt to unite men to gods, and gods to men. Mind is 'the good daemon'; blessed is the soul that is filled with mind, and ill-fated is the soul that is devoid of it. [10]

By these excerpts, I have demonstrated that Hermes Trismegistus is conforming to the Monistic Theory, the essence of which is that all phenomena come by emanations, from the One, and if so, we are part of the One. In that case, our self must turn from the unreal world of sense in which it is normally immersed, first to apprehend, then to unite itself with Absolute Reality, that is the One. In other words, we are to see the human mind advance from the mere perception of phenomena, through the intuition -with occasional contact- of the Absolute, under its aspect of Divine Transcendence, to the entire realization of, and union with, Absolute Life under its aspect of Divine Immanence. Therefore, the Monistic Theory is always linked with Mysticism, and the completed mystical life, then, is more than intuitional: It is theopathic. In the old, frank language of the mystics, it is the deified life.

### The Emerald Tablet

The Emerald Tablet is a very succinct document, and is very hard to understand. It contains 12 verses. First, I give the readers, a translation of it, from a French document.

1. It is true, without lie, very reliable.
2. As above, so below, as below, so above, to realize the miracles of One thing.
3. And as everything was and has come from the One, so everything is born in this One from adaptation.
4. The sun is its father, the moon, its mother, the wind has carried it in its bosom, and the earth is its

wet-nurse.

5. The father of all, the "Thelem" is here. Its strength is entire if it is converted into Earth.
6. You will separate the Earth from the Fire, the Subtle from the Dense, softly with great dexterity.
7. It ascends from the Earth to the sky, and over again, it descends to Earth and it receives strength from things superior and inferior.
8. You will have by this way all the glory of this world and all darkness will be removed from you.
9. It is the strength reinforced of all strength, because it will defeat everything subtle and will penetrate everything solid.
10. So the world has been created.
11. And from that will be and will come out innumerable adaptations, the means of which is here.
12. Therefore, I am called Hermes Trismegistus, having the three parts of the philosophy of this world.

[\[11\]](#)

### Here is an English version of The Emerald Tablet

1. It is true, without falsehood, and most real;
2. That which is above is like that which is below, to perpetrate the miracles of One thing.
3. And as all things have been derived from One, by the thought of One, so all things are born from this thing, by adaptation.
4. The Sun is its Father, the Moon is its Mother. Wind has carried it in its belly, the Earth is its nurse.
5. Here is the father of every perfection in the world. His strength and power are absolute when changed into earth.
6. Thou wilt separate the earth from fire, the subtle from the gross, gently and with care.
7. It ascends from earth to heaven, and descends again to earth to receive the power of the superior and the inferior thing.
8. By this means, thou will have the glory of the world. And because of this, all obscurity will flee from thee.
9. Within this is the power, most powerful of all powers power. For it will overcome all subtle things, and penetrate every solid thing.
10. Thus the world was created.
11. From this will be, and will emerge, admirable adaptations of which the means are here.
12. And for this reason, I am called Hermes Trismegistus, having the three parts of the philosophy of the world. What I have said of the Sun's operations is accomplished. [\[12\]](#)

### Essay of interpretation of the Emerald tablet, based on the Monistic Theory

1. It is true, without falsehood, and most real that:
2. This world is created on the same model. The above is like the below, and vice-versa to illustrate this mystery that all is one.

3. This world has been created from one same Substance, from one same Cause.
4. The One begets the world, with the collaboration of the whole environment.
5. The One can be called "Thelem".
6. To improve himself, man must know how to distill the Subtle from the Dense, how to become pure.
7. One must take profit from the two sides of the generating force of this world, that is the Extrovertive side and the Introvertive side.
8. Knowing how to improve himself, one can conquer glory.
9. The result will be the going back to the One, to the Source of the Life .
10. In sum, this world has been created
11. By emanations, and by adaptation from One Substance.
12. Understanding this, is to understand the sky, man and the earth.

Albert Pike comments on Tablet of Emerald as follows:

'Nothing surpasses and nothing equals, as a Summary of all the doctrines of the Old World, those brief words engraved by Hermes on a stone, and known under the name of "The Tablet of Emerald: "The Unity of Being and the Unity of the Harmonies, ascending and descending, the progressive and proportional scale of the Word; the immutable law of the Equilibrium, and the proportioned progress of the universal analogies; the relation of the Idea to the Word, giving the measure of the relation between the Creator and the Created, the necessary mathematics of the Infinite, proved by the measures of a single corner of the Finite; - all this is expressed by this single proposition of the Great Egyptian Hierophant:

"What is Superior is as that which is Inferior, and what is Below is as that which is Above, to form the Marvels of the Unity." [\[13\]](#)

From this short synopsis we can learn:

1. Hermes Trismegistus is declared to be the first man attaining to Gnosis, even before Pythagoras.
2. A Gnostic should know that he has God in himself, that he is of the same nature with God.
3. He must know that he emanates from this Original Stuff.
4. He must conform himself to Him who will receive everything back to Him.
5. He must know that all men are divine, that the world is divine.

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[\[1\]](#) Hermetica, Vol. 1: Introduction, Text, and Translation, Edited and translated by Walter Scott, Shambhala, Boston, 1985, Introduction, p. 6.

[\[2\]](#) The Occult, Colin Wilson, 1973, Vintage Books Edition, p. 192.

[\[3\]](#) Hermetica, Edited and translated by Walter Scott, 1982, Shambhala, Boston, 1985, p. 33.

[\[4\]](#) Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1929, Article Hermes Trismegistus, p. 505, and Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979 Article Hermetic writings p. 1049.

[5] En attendant, l'initié trouve Dieu en soi-même. Il sait qu'il est émané de cette Unité absolue; qu'il porte en soi une parcelle de cette force qui régit les mondes. Il sait que son devoir est de se rendre le plus possible conforme à ce Dieu qui doit l'accueillir et s'unir par avance à lui, avec toutes les êtres dont la palpitation commune est comme un vaste coeur tout plein de sa présence... Pour l'Egyptien, tous les êtres, par divers chemins, tendent vers un même but: devenir Osiris, c'est-à-dire un Dieu, une parcelle consciente et divine du Tout divin.

Henri Durville, La Science secrète, p. 179.

Dictionnaire des Religions, E. Royston Pike, Presses Universitaires de France, 1954. Article Hermetisme p. 148.

[6] Hermetica, Asclepius I, Edited and translated by Walter Scott, Shambhala, Boston 1985, p. 289.

[7] Ib, p. 291.

[8] Ibid. p. 327.

[9] Ib. Asclepius III, p. 333.

[10] Corpus Hermeticum, Libellus X, p. 203.

[11] Table d'Emeraude.

1. Il est vrai, sans mensonge, très véritable.
2. Ce qui est en bas est comme ce qui est en haut, ce qui est en haut est comme ce qui est en bas pour faire des miracles d'une seule chose.
3. Et comme toutes choses ont été et sont venues d'Un, ainsi toutes choses sont nées dans cette Chose Unique par adaptation.
4. Le soleil en est le père, la lune en est la mère, le vent l'a porté dans son ventre, la terre est sa nourrice.
5. Le père de Tout, le Theleme est ici. Sa force est entière si elle est convertie en Terre.
6. Tu sépareras la Terre du Feu, le subtil de l'épais, doucement avec grande industrie.
7. Il monte de la Terre au Ciel et derechef, il descend en Terre et il reçoit la force des choses supérieures et inférieures.
8. Tu auras par ce moyen toute la gloire du monde et toute obscurité s'éloignera de toi.
9. C'est la force forte de toute force, car elle vaincra toute chose subtile et pénétrera toute chose solide.
10. Ainsi le monde a été créé.
11. De ceci seront et sortiront d'innombrables adaptations desquelles le moyen est ici.
12. C'est pourquoi, j'ai été appelé Hermes Trismegiste ayant les trois parties de la philosophie du monde.

Marianne Verneuil, Dictionnaire pratique des Sciences Occultes, Les Documents d'Art Monaco, 1950, p. 383-384.

[12] Zolar, The Encyclopedia of Ancient and Forbidden Knowledge, Nash Publishing, Los Angeles, 1970, p. 162.

[\[13\]](#) [Morals and Dogma of Freemasonry](#), Albert Pike, Charleston, A. M. 5632, 1871, p. 324.

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## Chapter 10

### Freemasonry and the Monistic Theory

Freemasonry is a Secret Society. No one knows for sure when it makes its appearance in the West, but agrees that the modern history of Freemasonry begins on June 24, 1717, when the Grand Lodge of England, an association of lodges, was inaugurated. Grand Lodges were subsequently founded in other countries accepting Freemasonry. Anyhow, it evolves from the guilds of stonemasons and cathedral builders of the Middle Ages. Freemasonry is spread by the advance of the British Empire, and remains most popular in the British Island and in other countries originally within the Empire. Of the world estimated 5,900,000 Freemasons, 4,000,000 lives in the United States, and 1,000,000 live in the British Isles. There are now in the United States and Canada a total of 57 Grand Lodges.



Freemasonry has almost from its inception, encountered considerable opposition from organized religion, especially from the Roman Catholic Church and from various states. It is banned in the USSR, Hungary, Poland, Spain, Portugal, China, Indonesia, The United Arab Republic etc

Some of the greatest and most prominent men in the world have been Masons. Among these are Giuseppe Garibaldi, Louis Kossuth, The Marquis de Lafayette, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington.

Freemasonry contains many of the elements of a religion; its teachings enjoin morality, charity, and obedience to the laws of the land. For admission, the applicant is required to be an adult male, believing in the existence of a Supreme Being and in the immortality of the soul. In most lodges in most countries, Freemasons are divided into three major degrees - entered apprentice, fellow of the craft, and master mason... [\[1\]](#)

Freemasonry is the subjugation, said Albert Pike, of the Human that is in man by the Divine; the Conquest of the Appetites and Passions by the Moral Sense and the Reason; a continual effort, struggle, and warfare of the Spiritual against the Material and Sensual... Every Degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, from the first to the thirty-second, teaches by its ceremonial as well as by its instruction, that the noblest purpose of life and the highest duty of a man are to strive incessantly and vigorously to win the mastery of everything, of that which in him is spiritual and divine, over that which is material and sensual; so that in him also, as in the Universe which God governs, Harmony and Beauty may be the result of a just

equilibrium. [2]

Masonry is a search after Light. That search leads us directly back, as you see, to the Kabalah. In that ancient and little understood medley of absurdity and philosophy, the Initiate will find the source of many doctrines; and may in time come to understand the Hermetic philosophers, the Alchemists, all the Anti-papal thinkers of the Middle Ages, and Emmanuel Swedenborg. [3]

It is for each individual Mason to discover the secret of Masonry, by reflection upon its symbols and a wise consideration and analysis of what is said and done in the work. Masonry does not inculcate her truths. She states them, once and briefly; or hints them, perhaps, darkly; or interposes a cloud between them and eyes that would be dazzled by them. "Seek, and ye shall find," knowledge and the truth.

The practical object of Masonry is the physical and moral amelioration and the intellectual and spiritual improvement of individuals and society...

It is the universal, eternal, immutable religion, such as God planted in the heart of universal humanity. No creed has ever been long-lived that was not built on this foundation. It is the base, and they are the superstructure. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." "is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"...

The whole world is but one republic, of which each nation is a family, and every individual a child. Masonry, not in anywise derogating from the differing duties which the diversity of states requires, tends to create a new people, which composed of men of many nations and tongues, shall all be bound together by the bonds of science, morality and virtue... [4]

For the public, Freemasonry teaches an universal brotherhood.

Looking at it closely, we find its teachings rather complicated. There is a mixture of Rosicrucians, of Kabalah, of Alchemy, and of Astrology. It conveys the truth to its followers by means of symbols, but few can understand them. Their true explication is reserved for the Adepts, the Princes of Masonry. As an outsider to the Society, I try to understand it through the Monistic Theory:

The Mackey's Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry explains the Theory of Emanation or the Monistic Theory as follows:

The Theory of Emanation has flourished in many Eastern Religions, especially in Brahmanism and in Parseeism. Afterward, Kabalah and Gnosticism have also accepted it. Philo and Plato have taught it.

This theory sustains that everything emanates from the Absolute. Therefore, in Brahmanism the Cosmic Soul, from which everything emerges, is equated with Brahma or God.

Gnostics sustain that everything come from a Spiritual Reality. Everything derives from it, from the high to the low, and the final salvation is that in the final state, everything will return to the purity of the Creator.

Philo teaches that the Absolute, or The Original Light has brought forth its rays to illuminate all the souls, in that case everything comes from the One. The Emanation Theory has been also accepted by Freemasonry, and all its grades often mentioned this theory common to The Kabalah, to Philo and to The Gnostics.

Albert Pike frequently mentions this Theory in his book. He said, for instance: "The source of our

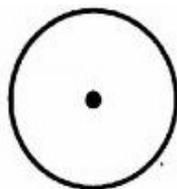
knowledge of the Kabbalistic doctrines, are the books of Jezirah and Sohar, the former drawn up in the second century, and the latter a little later; but containing materials much older than themselves. In their most characteristic elements, they go back to the time of the exile. In them, as in the teachings of Zoroaster, EVERYTHING THAT EXISTS EMANATED FROM A SOURCE OF INFINITE LIGHT. Before everything, existed the ANCIENTS OF DAYS, THE KING OF LIGHT; a title often given to the Creator in the Zend-Avesta and the code of Sabaeans. With the idea so expressed is connected the pantheism of India. The King of Light, The Ancient, is ALL THAT IS. He is not only the real cause of all Existences; he is Infinite (AINSOPH). He is HIMSELF; there is nothing in Him that we can call Thou.

In the Indian doctrine, not only is the Supreme Being the real cause of all, but he is the only real existence; all the rest is illusion. In the Kabalah, as in the Persian and Gnostic doctrines, He is the Supreme Being unknown to all, the "Unknown Father." The world is his revelation, and subsists only in Him. His attributes are reproduced there, with different modifications, and in different degrees, so that the Universe is His Holy Splendor: it is but His Mantle; but it must be revered in silence. ALL BEINGS HAVE EMANATED FROM THE SUPREME BEING; the nearer a being is to Him, the more perfect it is; the more remote in the scale, the less its purity. [5]

In another place, he writes about Gnosticism as follows: "Emanation from the Deity of all spiritual beings, progressive degeneration of these beings from emanation to emanation, redemption and return of all to the purity of the Creator; and after the re-establishment of the primitive harmony of all, a fortunate and truly divine condition of all, in the bosom of God; such were the fundamental teachings of Gnosticism..."

Behold, it is said, the light, which emanates from an immense center of Light, that spreads everywhere its benevolent rays; so do the spirits of Light emanate from the Divine Light. Behold, all the springs which nourish, embellish, fertilize and purify the Earth; they emanate from one and the same ocean; so from the bosom of the Divinity emanate so many streams, which form and fill all the universe of intelligence. Behold numbers, which all emanate from one primitive number, all resemble it, all are composed of its essence, and still vary infinitely; and utterances, decomposable into so many syllables and elements, all contained in the primitive Word, and still infinitely various; so the world of Intelligence emanated from a Primitive Intelligence, and they all resemble it, and yet display an infinite variety of existences." [6]

The One and the Multiple can be represented by: The Center and The Circle, the Center being The One, the Universal Cause; The Circle outside being the Multiple, the Effects. [7]



Or by the Ouroboros, biting its tail, encircling the Greek word: EN TO PAN meaning that ALL IS ONE. The Ouroboros biting its tail, represents the Eternity. [8]



The Ouroboros Serpent

The conception: FROM THE ONE, EVERYTHING EMITS is represented by this symbol:

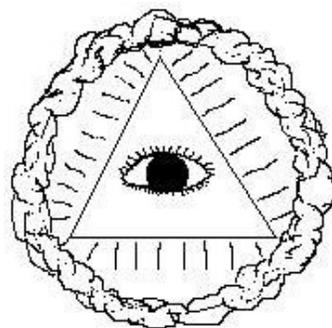
a) Two interlaced Triangles representing two poles Yin and Yang, containing in themselves the Ineffable Name, written in the Enoch Alphabet: [\[9\]](#)



b) Or by a triangle having in its center an Eye, or the Hebrew name of Jehovah, Yod, He, Vau, He.



From it, we see many rays coming out. This convey the idea of Emanation. On the periphery, we see a circle of Clouds, meaning all beings. The whole picture is the scheme of The Being with all its multiple manifestations.



c) Or by "The hexagon formed by six triangles, whose apices converge to a point...This is a symbol of the universal creation, the six points crossing the central point; thus assimilating the hexagon to the older symbol of the point within a circle... [\[10\]](#)

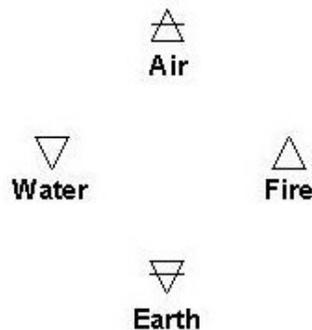
The process of Emanation: One into Two, Two into Four is similar to that of the Yi Jing.

The Two or the Yin and the Yang is represented or by Two Columns in Salomon's temple: Booz and Jakin; The Yin is The B (Booz), the Yang is the J (Jakin).

Or by 2 triangles diametrically opposed: One turning upward representing the Fire or the Yang, One turning downward representing the Water or the In.

These two triangles are frequently represented interlaced, meaning that all the changes in this world is due to their united forces.

The Four Elements: Earth, Water, Fire, Air is represented in this way:



We see that Air is Fire with an horizontal line, borrowed from Water, and Earth is Water with an horizontal line, borrowed from Fire. [\[11\]](#)

The idea that God resides in Man, and that the Initiate should radiates God around him is represented by a Pentagram, or a Blazing Star emitting rays around, and with a Majuscule G in it. The Pentagram represents a man, and the G is an abbreviation for God. [\[12\]](#)

As for the deification of man, or his union with God, Albert Pike, thus spoke: "When man's consciousness of his own intellectuality was mature, and he became convinced that the internal faculty of thought was something more subtle than even the most subtle elements, he transferred that new conception to the object of his worship, and deified a mental principle instead of a physical one. He in every case makes God after his own image; for do what we will, the highest efforts of human thought can conceive nothing higher than the supremacy of intellect; and so he ever comes back to some familiar type of exalted humanity. He at first deifies nature, and afterward himself.

The eternal aspiration of the religious sentiment in man is to become united with God... [\[13\]](#)

In this short study of Freemasonry, I try to demonstrate that it upholds the Theory of Emanation, and because of it, has many connections with all the Middle Age thinkers, such as, with Rosicrucians, with Kabalists, with Alchemists, with Philo, with Plato, with Pythagoras etc

Its tends to reach Harmony and Beauty which will results in a just equilibrium. It sustains the "Restitutio at integrum" of everything or Apocatastasis, which means that all things, after a cycle of ages, would return to their original condition, to their primitive purity.

[\[1\]](#) Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979, Tome IV, Article Freemasonry, p. 302.

Britannica Junior, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. Chicago. London. Toronto, Vol. VI, Article Freemasonry. pp. 201-202

Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1929, Vol. 9, Article Freemasonry, pp. 732 -739.

Religious and Spiritual Groups in modern America, Robert S. Ellwood, Jr. Prentice-hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973, p. 62-64.

[\[2\]](#) Albert Pike, Morals and Dogma of the Freemasonry, pp. 854-855.

- [3] Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Freemasonry*, p. 741.
- [4] Alber Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, 4 pp. 218-219.
- [5] Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Freemasonry*, pp. 266-267.
- [6] Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Freemasonry*, pp.248-249.
- [7] Oswald Wirth, *L'Apprenti, le Symbolisme*, 1962, p. 192.
- [8] The ancient symbol of Eternity was a serpent in the form of a circle, the tail being placed in the mouth. The simple circle, the figure which has neither beginning nor end, but returns continually into itself, was also a symbol of eternity.  
Mackey's *Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*. p. 340, vol. I, article Eternity.  
Oswald Wirth, *L'Apprenti, le Symbolisme*, 1962, p. 192.
- [9] Mackey's *Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, article Ineffable Name.
- [10] Mackey's *Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, Article Hexagon.
- [11] Oswald Wirth, *L'Apprenti*, p. 209. *Le Compagnon*, p. 146 and p. 154.
- [12] La lettre G, then has in Freemasonry the same force and signification that the letter Yod had among the Cabalists... In Freemasonry, it is given as the initial of the word God.  
Mackey's *Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, at the letter G.  
...L'Etoile flamboyante est l'emblème du génie qui élève aux grandes choses. C'est l'image du feu sacré qui embrasse l'âme de tout homme qui, résolument, sans vanité, sans basse ambition, voue sa vie à la gloire et au bonheur de l'humanité.  
Initiatiquement, l'étoile flamboyante est l'image de l'homme évolué, doué de pouvoirs psychiques, différent en cela, comme par le travail de son intelligence, des hommes qui n'ayant pas reçu le don divin, sont figurés par le Pentagramme non illuminé. Mais l'initié a développé ses forces; il en a acquis de nouvelles en puisant dans le réservoir éternel qui est ouvert à tous ceux qui savent en trouver le chemin; aussi, maintenant que ses forces se sont décuplées dans cette fréquentation presque divine, il rayonne sur ceux qui l'entourent, il l'attire vers sa lumière nocturne servant de guide aux voyageurs harrassés par la fatigue et la peur...  
Henri Durville, *La Science secrète*, p. 415.
- [13] Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma*, p. 652.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 11

### Esoteric Alchemy and the Monistic Theory

Alchemy is of a twofold nature: an outward, or exoteric, and a hidden, or esoteric. Exoteric alchemy attempts to prepare a substance, the Philosophers' Stone, or simply the Stone, endowed with the power of transmuting the base materials, lead, tin, copper, iron into gold. The Stone was also known as the Elixir or Tincture, and was credited, not only with the power of transmutation, but also with that of prolonging human life indefinitely.

Esoteric alchemy, or mystical alchemy, aims at the transformation of sinful man (Lead) into a perfect being (Gold) through prayer, submission to the will of God, and through union with God (Philosophers' Stone). In this sense, Alchemy is defined by Wilmshurst as "the exact science of the Regeneration of the human soul from its sense-immersed state into the perfection and nobility of that divine condition in which it was originally created". [\[1\]](#)

We will not make an exhaustive study of Alchemy. We are not concerned with the acquisition of the material gold through alchemical process nor we are interested in presenting the history of Alchemy as well as the life of famous Alchemists such as: Hermes Trismegistus (date unknown - pre-Christian), Gerbert afterwards Pope Sylvester II (999-1003), Michael Scott (1194-1250), Albert the Great (1193-1280), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Raymond Lully (1235-1315), Roger Bacon (1214-1294), Nicholas Flamel (1330-1418), Basil Valentine (the end of the 15th century), Paracelsus (1493-1541) Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) etc We will study Alchemy only as the endorser of the Monistic Theory, and as a proponent of the mystical union with God. The Alchemical Quest of the Philosopher's Stone and the views of Alchemists concerning the Universe and Men also are of special concern.



## The Emerald Table (Tabula Smaragdina) of Hermes Trismegistus as the Alchemists' Magna Charta of the Monistic Theory

### TEXT:

1. True it is, without falsehood, certain and most true.

What is below is like what is above, and what is above is like what is below, for accomplishing the marvels of the One Thing.

2. And as all things were from one Thing, by the mediation of one thing, so all things were born from this one Thing, by adaptation.

3. Its father is the Sun, its mother is the Moon. The Wind carried it in the womb; its nurse is the Earth.

4. It is the father of all the Perfection of the whole world.

5. Its power is integral, if it be turned into Earth.

6. Separate the Earth from the Fire, the Subtle from the Gross, smoothly and with judgment.

7. It ascends from the Earth into the Heaven, and again descends into the Earth and unites in itself the powers of things superior and things inferior. Thus, you will receive the brightness of the whole world and all obscurity will fly far from you.

8. It is the strong fortitude of all fortitude, for it will overcome every subtle thing and penetrate every solid.

9. Thus was the world created.

10. Hence, there will be marvelous adaptations of which the manner is this.

11. For this reason, I am called Hermes Trismegistus, because I hold three parts of the wisdom of the world.

12. That which I had to say about the operation of the Sun is completed. [2]

### Commentaries

There are many versions of the Emerald Tablet: Phoenician, Latin, Arabic. It is then natural to find divergence between these versions: For instance, the sentence: "What is below is like what is above, and what is above is like what is below, for accomplishing the marvels of one Thing" can also be rendered as follows: "The highest comes from the lowest, and the lowest from the highest". (Arabic version). [3]

The former version (Latin) emphasizes on the law of analogy; the later version (the Arabic) stresses on the interconnections and the interdependence between things in the world.

The ninth sentence, in the Latin version runs: "Thus is the world created". It is rendered in the Arabic version as follows: "Thus the little world is created according to the prototype of the great world." "The little world", perfect image of the "great world" is man, when he has realized his original nature, which was "made in the image of God." [4]

The tenth sentence is rendered differently: "From this and in this way, marvelous applications are made". In the Arabic text: "This way is traversed by the sages" [5] Or: "Thus, in this very manner, wondrous aggregations come about." [6] We can see, anyhow, that the Emerald Table is the advocate of the Monistic Theory:

In the first sentence, Hermes declares emphatically that the world is an Organic Whole, in which every part is interconnected, interdependent.

In the second sentence, Hermes asserts that everything proceeds from the One by Adaptation, i.e. by all the mechanisms of changes.

In the third sentence, it is asserted that the One is immanent in everything in the world, such as sun, moon, wind, earth...

In the fourth sentence, it is suggested that only this immanence of the One can explain all the marvelous phenomena of the world.

From the fifth to the seventh sentences, The Emerald Table brings out the significance of the movement up-and-down, down-and-up. This cyclical movement is termed as Involution and Evolution, or Egress and Regress, Expansion and Contraction etc. In reading these sentences, we can visualize that the same Spirit of the Universe is All-pervasive: It can be embodied, but also can be liberated from the fetters of elemental and phenomenal world.

The Alchemist, in possession of these keys, will soon realize that the Divine Spirit is always present in his own soul. This Spirit can be captive for a while, can be immersed in the world of bodily sensations, and of material phenomena, but can also be divested from all formal "coagulation" and soars back to the divine sphere, its original status. Endowed with such a knowledge, "you will acquire the glory of the whole world", namely by your union with the Spirit, which is the source of all light, "and all darkness will leave you". This means that ignorance, deception, uncertainty, doubt and foolishness will be removed from consciousness. [7]

The eighth sentence again asserts that the One is the all-pervasive power that penetrates everything fine and gross, subtle and solid. As this all-pervasive power has created everything in the macrocosm, this same power will create everything in the microcosm, namely in Man.

This is the meaning of sentences ninth and tenth.

The eleventh sentence runs: "For this reason, I am called Hermes Trismegistus, for I possess the

three parts of wisdom of the whole world. Trismegistus means "thrice-great" or "thrice powerful". The "three parts of wisdom" correspond to the three great divisions of the universe, namely, the spiritual, psychic and corporeal realms, whose symbols are heaven, air, and earth. [8]

If we are not lured by the inferior aspect of Alchemy, which aims to transmute vile metals into gold, we can use the Emerald Table as guide to the superior phase of Alchemy, the transmutation of the Soul into the Divine Spirit. It teaches that everything in the universe is interconnected as parts of a Whole, that all the manifold forms in which matter occurs have but a single origin: a Universal Soul permeates both macrocosm and microcosm, and this unity in diversity implies the possibility of transmutation. Thus this Universal Soul is immanent in us. Its quest is the aim of our transcendental Alchemy; to purify and to prepare our soul are preliminary phases in our Alchemical process; and the final union of our soul with the Divine Spirit, with the Universal Soul which is also the Philosopher's Stone which transmutes our human soul into the Divine One, will be the completion of the Great Work.

In this way, the Emerald Tablet will be for us a "Pegasus to supramundane travel".

### The main tenets of Alchemy

#### The One:

To the Alchemists, all the phenomena of the world are differentiation and combinations of a single prime energy, inaccessible to ordinary sense. For them, if Creation develops itself from the One to the multiplicity, Alchemy proceeds from the multiplicity to the One. The differentiation of a Prime-Source substance into a phenomenal world is an operation of Alchemy in the Macrocosm; the conversion of all psychic phenomena into the Divine Spirit immanent in man is the Alchemy in the Microcosm. These two kinds of Alchemy operate in reverse directions: the former proceeds by analysis and multiplication; the later functions by synthesis and reduction to Unity. Therefore, a true Alchemist envisions the world as a Whole, as a unity under the veil of multiplicity: he devotes his life to the quest of the One. What is the One? As followers of Hermes Trismegistus, of Aristotle, the Alchemists believed that everything derived from only one Stuff. This indefinable, ineffable, all-pervasive Stuff is called by various names which can be classified under these following rubrics:

#### Religious names:

God, Allah, Tao, Spirit, Great Master, Spiritus Mundi, Soul of the World, Trinity, Christ.

#### Philosophical names:

The Quinta Essentia, Chaos, the Inchoate, the One, Quintessence, the Universal Matter, the Stuff of the Universe, the Prime or Primitive Matter, Prima Materia, the Universal Matter, the Basic Stuff, the First and the Last, Alcahest, the Ouroboros, Azoth, the Active Principle of All Substance, the Absolute etc

#### Pharmaceutical and medical names:

Elixir of Life, Elixir Vitae, Magisterium Medicine, Great Elixir of Quintessence, Universal Panacea, etc

#### Alchemical names:

Philosopher's Stone, Stone of Egypt, Stone, the Sublimate, Aurum Potabile, Mercurius Animatus, Green Lion, Dragon, Menstruum, Serpent, Acid Water, Vinegar, Philosophical Sulfur and Mercury, Universal Solvent, Philosophic Mercury, Cervus Fugitivus, Alchemical Essence of all things, Powder of Projection etc

Thus, the Alchemists equate the One with God and with The Philosopher's Stone. It is worth noting

that in most Alchemical writings, the Alchemists avoid speaking of God, as a personal God. One tendency is use alchemical or philosophical names of the One, instead of its religious names.

The slogan of "All is One" is emphasized by the Greek word: EN TO PAN and by the symbol of the Ouroboros, the Serpent biting its tail. The Ouroboros stands for the great cosmic cycle where the ending equates the beginning; the beginning equates the ending, so that  $\omega = \alpha$ .

The same idea is rendered by AZOTH which consists of the First and the Last letters of the Greek alphabet; of Latin alphabet, A and Z; and of the Hebrew alphabet, A and T, or Aleph and Tau.

The Stone, also, is one and manifold: in analysis, it is a powder, which is incorporated in all things; before analysis and in synthesis, it is a Stone. Thus the Philosopher's Stone has two aspects: it is immanent and at the same time transcendent to the world. Thus, the Stone is far and near, manifest and hidden. For the sage, it is his inner Spirit, but for the fool, it is the cervus fugitivus which can never be conquered.

Gerhard Dorn, in the Sixteenth Century, tells us:

"The Coelum (The Stone) therefore is a heavenly substance and a universal form, containing in itself all forms, distinct from one another but proceeding from one single universal form..." [\[9\]](#)

In Elias Ashmole's Theatricum Chemicum, p. 336, The Stone is described as:

"One thing was first employed,  
Which shall not be destroyed:  
It compasseth the world so round,  
A matter easy to be found:  
And yet most hard to come by,  
A secret of secret pardye,  
That is most vile and least set by,  
But it's my Love and Darling,  
Conceived with all living thing,  
And travels to the world's endings."

A child begetting his own Father, and bearing his Mother, killing himself to give life and light to all other,

"Is that I meane,  
Most mild and most extreme.  
Did not the world that dwelt in me,  
Take form and walk forth visibly;  
And did not I then dwell in It,  
That dwelt in me for to unite  
Three Powers in one seat to sit." [\[10\]](#)

These descriptions of the Stone do not mean indeed a true Stone, but allude to the Immanent God in us, without whose power no transmutation is possible.

The Stone has also as synonym, Alkahest. According to some authors, it is derived from the German All-Geist, Universal Spirit, or from All-Ist. It is All-Nothing is more explicit than these descriptions... [\[11\]](#)

In some books, we can find the Stone termed as green lion, mercury, mercurius animatus, serpent, dragon, acid water, vinegar etc. [\[12\]](#)

These appellations aimed only to throw confusion in the mind of the readers, lest they know about the true nature of the Stone. Hitchcock equates the Stone with our conscience. [\[13\]](#)

This is a marvelous work. The conscience is in fact the voice of God which declares His presence in the innermost of our soul. To live a life in accordance with the injunctions of our conscience will lead us to a spiritual perfection.

Joachin Frizius, whom some think identical with Fludd (1574-1637), wrote that the Stone stands for the Trinity indwelling in man. [\[14\]](#)

On that cornerstone is built the macrocosm as well as the microcosm. [\[15\]](#)

Therefore the quest for the Stone must be inward.

"Again, wrote Arthur Edward Waite, the genuine Alchemists were not in pursuit of worldly wealth or honors. Their real object was the perfection, or at least, the improvement of men. According to this theory, such perfection lies in a certain unity, a living sense of the unity of the human with the divine nature, the attainment of which, I can liken to nothing so well as to the experience known in religion as the NEW BIRTH. The desired perfection or unity, is a state of the soul, a condition of Being, and not a mere condition of Knowing. This condition of Being is a development of the nature of men from within, the result of the process by which whatever is evil in our nature is cast out or suppressed, under the name of superfluidities, and the good thereby allowed opportunities for free activity. As this result is scarcely accessible to the unassisted natural man, and requires the concurrence of divine power, it is called Donum Dei." [\[16\]](#)

In the main, the quest for the Philosopher's Stone, the quest for the DIVINE, which despite of its all-pervasiveness and transcendence, is nevertheless IMMANENT in Man, should be done by Introversion, Meditation and Concentration. Alchemists said that for so doing, we should have VITRIOL available. And for them, V.I.T.R.I.O.L stands for: "Visita interiora terrae rectificando invenies occultum lapidem". "Visit the interior of the earth and by purification you will find the secret Stone", a sentence obtained from the word Vitriol by Notarikon. The interior of the earth means of course the interior of the soul. And by the purification of our soul from earthly desires and attachments, we can see God. This reminds us of similar ideas expressed in the New Testament. In Luke, 17:21, we read: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you", and in Matthew 5,8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

### The Two: the Living Male and Female.

The One, assimilated with the indifferentiated Godhead or Kether is always represented as Androgyne. To manifest itself into the phenomenal world, it should first divide itself into two opposite energies, termed as Yin and Yang, Masculine and Feminine, Creative Principle and Formative Principle, the Positive and the Negative. The Purusa and the Shakti of the Indian Philosophy, the Yang and the Yin of the Yi Jing, the Binah and the Hockmah of the Kabbalah, become the Sun and the Moon, the Sulphur and the Mercury, the Spirit and the Soul in the Alchemy.

The Spirit stands for the Eternal, the Immutable; the Soul stands for the Ephemeral, the Transient and the Mortal, the Ever-Changing.

Contrary to the orthodox teachings of the institutional Church which hold that the Soul is immortal, the Alchemists regard it as perishable and transitory. For them, only the Spirit is immortal. They based their belief upon the Bible: In Ezechiel, 18:4, we read: "The soul that sinned, it shall die", and in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "and the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it." [17]

Therefore, by its proper action, the Soul can never be saved. Its condition, as human being, is necessarily mortal. The Tree of Life has been kept away from him, "lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever" (Genesis, 3:22).

The human soul can only be regenerated, if it is illuminated by the divine rays of the Immanent Spirit. Through faith and proximity to the immanent God, the consciousness of man may be transmuted from base animal desires into a pure, golden, and godly consciousness, illuminated and redeemed, and the manifesting God within that one increased from a tiny spark to a great and glorious Being, and the base metals of mental ignorance can, through proper endeavor and training, through the touch of the Eternal Light, can also be transmuted into transcendent genius and wisdom...The Soul and the Spirit cannot exist separately, cannot work separately. They should be merged into a new entity. This final status is termed as Hieros Gomos, Sacred Marriage, Mysterium Conjunctionis (the mystery of conjunction), the mystical union with God. In symbolism, it is represented by Mercury = the conjunction of the Sun (Spirit) and the Moon (Soul).

#### The Three: The Sulphur-Mercury-Salt theory: The Spirit-Soul-Body theory.

Later, in the history of Alchemy, The Mercury-Sulphur theory was extended by the addition of a third elementary principle, Salt. If Sulphur stands for Fire, Mercury, Water, Salt will represent the Earth. Albert Pike assimilates Sulphur with the elementary form of fire, Mercury with the Air and Water, and Salt with the Earth. [18]

Interestingly enough, the Alchemists professed the tripartite conception of Man; Spirit (Sulphur), Soul (Mercury), and Body (Salt). This view about man was in flagrant contradiction with the current teachings of the Church which always defined man as composed only of Soul and Body. While Paul professed also a tripartite conception of man: Spirit, Soul and Body in 1 Thessalonians, 5:23, the Latran IV Council (1215) and the Vatican I Council (1870) promulgate the dogma on Man as composed of Soul and Body and anathematized all the partisans of the tripartite conception.

So, for the Alchemists, "body" is the outward manifestation and form; "soul" is the inward individual spirit; and "spirit" is the universal Soul" in all men. [19]

In the book of Lambspring, there is a symbolical illustration, representing the Trinity of Body, Soul and Spirit, in which the Sea is the Body; the two Fishes are Soul and Spirit. [20]

By the inclusion of the Divine Spirit as an essential element in Man, once again, Alchemy posits that God is in everything; that He is One Universal Spirit, manifested through an infinity of forms. God, therefore is the spiritual seed planted in the dark earth (material universe). [21]

#### The Four: The Four Elements.

As we have said before, the Four Elements is one of the main tenets of the Monistic Theory. It is, then,

natural that the Four Elements are professed by the Alchemists.

The meanings of the Four Elements are manifold: Under the names of Fire, Air, Water, Earth, the Four Elements can signify:

1)- The 4 basic elements composing the material world. Philoleos even defined the elements in term of geometrical figures: earth was made up by a cube, fire by a tetrahedron, air by the octahedron, water by the icosahedron (geometrical figures of 6,4,8,12 faces respectively). [\[22\]](#)

2)- The 4 aspects of the four status of the One (The Cosmic Stuff). According to Aristotle, the basis of the material world was a prime or primitive matter, which had, however, only a potential existence until impressed by 'forms'. By form, he did not mean shape only by all that conferred upon a body, its specific properties. In its simplest manifestation, form gave rise to the four elements: fire, air, water and earth, which are distinguished from one another by their 'qualities'. The four primary qualities are the fluid (or moist), the dry, the hot and the cold, and each element possesses two of them. Hot and cold, however, and fluid and dry are contraries, and cannot be coupled; hence the four possible combinations of them in pairs are:

Hot and dry, assigned to Fire,

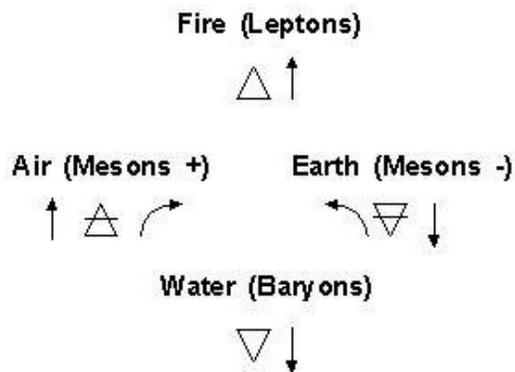
Hot and fluid (or moist) assigned to Air,

Cold and fluid, assigned to Water,

Cold and dry, assigned to Earth.

In each element, one quality predominates over the other; in Earth, dryness; in Water, cold; in Air, fluidity; and in Fire, heat. None of the four elements is unchangeable; they may pass into one another through the medium of that quality which they possess in common; thus Fire can become Air, through the medium of heat; Air can become Water through the medium of fluidity; and so on. Two elements taken together, may become a third by removing one quality from each, subject to this limitation that this process must not leave two identical or contrary qualities; thus Fire and Water, by parting with the dry and cold qualities, could give rise to Earth. In all these changes, it is 'form' that alters; the prime matter of which the element are made, never changes, however diverse and numerous changes of form may be. [\[23\]](#)

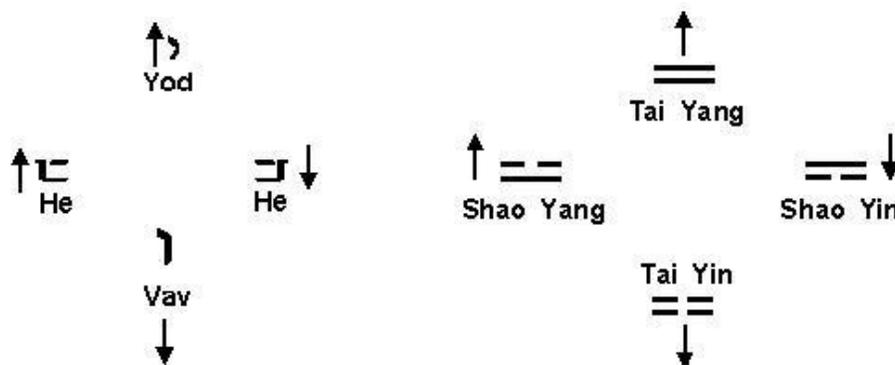
It is very important to bear in mind, that the Alchemists asserted that the four elements composed the world of phenomena, ever-changing by the various combinations of these four elements, which, in turn, are also nothing else than transient aspects of the One. If we do not consider Fire, Air, Water, and Earth as true Fire, Air, Water and Earth, but only as suggestions to four basic components of the phenomenal world characterized by their specific densities and their tendencies (Up or Down), we can assimilate Fire to Leptons, Water to Baryons, Air to Mesons + (with clockwise spin), and Earth with Mesons - (anti-clockwise spin), we can have this figure:



It is worth noting that Ancient people used these terms only to convey their ideas, so they are free to use Fire and Water as two extremes, seeing that Fire is associated with spectacular upward movement, and Water with its downward flow and that they are opposites. It is natural that they consider Air and Earth as middle terms. Besides, it is also understandable that Indians and Tibetans prefer the following vertical order:

Air  
Fire  
Water  
Earth

The ideas conveyed in this figure can be compared with the following diagrams, one taken from Jewish mysticism, another taken from the Yi-Jing:



We can grasp now the main bases of Alchemists' thinking:

- 1). The idea of the unitary process in nature, of some ultimate substance out of which all things sprang and are built up.
- 2). The idea of the interplay of opposites or polar forces which are held together by the overriding unity, as the force driving the universe onwards.
- 3). All sensible phenomena, all composites are manifold aggregations of the four elements.
- 4). As all these aggregations are transitory, all composites are then also subject to dissolution, to corruption, and hence perishable.
- 5). As our body is composed of the four elements, it should be perishable.
- 6). Furthermore, even the four elements are not everlasting elements, but they are continuously

transforming themselves into one another.

7). Everything is then transient, and ever-changing. The only thing /unchanged is the One, also called the Philosopher's Stone.

8). Therefore, theoretically, and practically, based metals, such as Lead, can be transmuted into Gold by nature and by man.

9). The world created by the aggregation of the four elements is called the world of multiplicity, the corruptible elementary world. The four elements are termed 'corruptible elementary elements'.

10). In their quest of immortality, alchemists endeavored to seek the incorruptible element which transcends the world of multiplicity, but at the same time is immanent in it. This element is the Prima Materia as we have seen, or the Quintessence which we will deal with, later on.

11). The art of Alchemy is aimed to disentangle the human soul from the perishable world of appearances, to raise it above "The Cross of Elements", or "Cosmic Tendencies"; then above the interplay of opposing forces, and finally to unite it with the Eternal Spirit.

12). The main claim of Alchemy is that the human soul can be transmuted into the Divine Spirit, by the loving touch of the latter, acting as Philosopher's Stone.

Alchemy is thus a cross-road where religion, philosophy, and science meet together.

It gives us marvelous insights into these fields.

Arthur Walley's translation of the book of the travel of the Taoist's Ch'ang Chung includes one little poem showing an identity of philosophical thought with the Western alchemical world:

"A temporary compound of the Four Elements,  
The body at last must suffer decay.  
The soul composed of one spiritual essence,  
Is free to move wherever it will." [\[24\]](#)

Paul had similar views of the body, when he said: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:50).

Buddhist philosophers first admitted with Vasubandhu, Patriarch of the Abhidharma school, (4th century A. D.) that the world composed of the aggregates of elements was unreal. They made a further step, and admitted with Harivarman, Patriarch of the Satyasidhi School (5th century A. D.) that even the elements are unreal.

By the early nineteenth century, the atomic theory had been developed, and chemists were certain that it was quite impossible to manufacture gold under any circumstances. The change of one substance into another, they knew, was only the result of change in the way atoms were grouped.

"Grape juice contains sugar. Sugar molecules are made up of 45 atoms. These include 12 Carbon atoms, 22 Hydrogen atoms, and 11 Oxygen atoms. If the grape juice is allowed to stand, microscopic little plants, called yeast, break up these sugar molecules and change them into molecules of Alcohol and Carbon Dioxide. The Alcohol molecules are made up of 9 atoms each; these include 2 Carbon atoms, 6 Hydrogen atoms, and 1 Oxygen atom. The Carbon Dioxide molecules are made up of 3 atoms each; these include 1 Carbon atom and 2 Oxygen atoms. The atoms themselves aren't changed. The Carbon atoms in Alcohol are exactly the same as the Carbon atom in sugar. The same is true of the Hydrogen atoms and

the Oxygen atoms. It is only the arrangement that is changed. But that is enough to make all the difference between grape and wine.

"The changes that we observe are like changes in patterns made up of colored threads. By using red, green, blue, and yellow threads, we can make any number of different patterns, but the red threads in one pattern will be just like the red threads in any other. We can't change the color of the red threads just by weaving them into a new pattern.

"In the same way, no matter how you change atomic combinations, you can't change one kind of atom into another.

"When an alchemist tried to change Mercury or Lead into Gold, that is exactly what he was trying to do, he was trying to change Mercury or Lead atoms into Gold atoms, and this was beyond his power.

"The chemists of the nineteenth century felt sure that transmutation was beyond anybody's power. Atoms were changeless, they thought. They could be neither split nor altered. Transmutation, they decide, must remain an impractical dream of the alchemists." [\[25\]](#)

But transmutation became a fact in the 20th century: Atoms are not anymore indestructible. But their nuclei can be not only chipped away, but also split or even smashed.

Uranium 238, for instance, by emitting one Alpha particle, or a Beta particle, can give birth successively to Protactinium, Thorium, Actinium, Radium, Francium, Radon, Astatine, Polonium, Bismuth and Lead.

Nitrogen-14, when hit by cosmic rays, can be broken down and give birth to Carbon-14.

Man-made transmutation was accomplished in 1919, by Rutherford, and in 1925 by Blackett, using Alpha particles as bullets: Then Nitrogen-14 is changed into Oxygen-17 and Hydrogen-1. In 1932, in Rutherford Laboratory, Lithium-7 bombarded with protons as bullets, changed itself into 2 atoms of Helium-4.

Since then, many Transuranians were man-made:

By 1944, 95 Americium and 96 Curium have been formed.

In 1949, 97 Berkelium and 98 Californium were made.

In 1954, 99 Einsteinium, and 100 Fermium have been manufactured.

In 1955, 101 Mendelevium was manufactured.

In 1957, 102 Nobelium was synthesized .

In 1961, 103 Laurencium was formed...

We should include in our list: 43 Technetium manufactured in 1937, and Promethium 61, in 1942.

Uranium 235, the nuclei of which, hit by proton bullets, to cause chain-reactions, are broken up in a few millionths of a second. And before very long, you would expect the Uranium to melt, boil, and vaporize away. This led to the explosion of the first atomic bomb on July 16, 1945, in Alamogordo, New Mexico, and of two others launched over the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, in August 1945.

Instead of the fission of the atoms of Uranium 235, now scientists can use temperatures of million of degrees to cause thermo-nuclear reactions. At such unbelievable temperatures, the electrons could be stripped away from the nuclei, the nuclei would be smashed together and nuclear reactions would result. Under the explosion of Uranium 235 as trigger, the heavy Hydrogen isotopes - Deuterium and Tritium- are

combined with Lithium to form Helium, liberating enormous quantities of energy. This led to the creation of the H-bomb, or fusion-bomb.

Besides, in 1905, Einstein devised a complete new way of looking at the universe. In his Theory of Relativity, Einstein was able to show that matter and energy are really different forms of the same thing. Matter can be "destroyed" after all, but when it happens a certain amount of energy is "created". [\[26\]](#)

To sum up, sciences can't contradict Alchemy...

### The Five: The Fifth Element or the Quintessence.

We have just shown that the Four elements are only the corruptible Elements. In that case, it is very important to find out the Incorruptible One. This incorruptible element is termed as Quintessence, or Fifth Element. By describing it as eternal and incorruptible, we assimilate already the Quintessence with the Prima Materia, and we also find this equation in almost all the Alchemy Books. We read for instance in Alchemists through the Ages: "The Prima Materia has been defined as the fifth Element, or Quintessence, The Material Alpha and Omega, The Soul of the Elements, Living Mercury, Regenerative Mercury, a Metallic Soul etc. It is designated by such allegorical names as the Bird of Hermes, the Virgin's Son, The Son of the Sun and Moon, the Virgin's Head, Azoth etc. [\[27\]](#)

In that case, we can attribute to the Quintessence all the puzzling names given to the Prima Materia through the Ages, such as: Lapis Philosophicus (Philosopher's Stone), Aqua Vitae (Water of Life), Venenum (Poison), Spiritus (Spirit), Medicina (Medicine), Coelum (Sky), Nubes (Clouds), Ros (Dew), Umbra (Shadow), Stella Signata (Marked Star), Lucifer, Luna (Moon), Aqua Ardens (Fiery Water), Sponsa (Bethrothed), Conius (Wife), Mater, Mother (Eve), Virgo (Virgin), Lac Virginis (Virgin's Milk), Menstruum, Materia Hermaphrodita (Catholica Solis et Lunae (Catholic Hermaphrodite Matter of Sun and Moon) etc. [\[28\]](#)

Cockren places the alchemical quintessence in the following equation: Astral Light = Imponderable Ether = Quintessence = Electricity = Vedic Prana. [\[29\]](#)

Thomas Vaughan equates the Quintessence with the Living Spirit of God. [\[30\]](#)

Philosophically, we can say that the Quintessence is the Essence, while the Four Elements are Manifestations. The former is the Noumenon, the latter are the Phenomena.

Thus while the Prima Materia has no connection with space and time, The Quintessence has the connotation of immanence.

Therefore, if we put the Four Elements on the cardinal points of the circle, of the wheel of space-time, the Quintessence will occupy the hub of it.

Titus Burckhart wrote: "Alchemically speaking, the hub of the wheel is the Quintessence. By this, it meant either the spiritual pole of the Four Elements or their common substantial ground, Ether, in which they are all indivisibly contained. In order once again to attain to this center, the disequilibrium of the differentiated elements must be repaired: water must become fiery, fire liquid, earth weightless and air solid. Here however, one leaves the plane of the physical appearances and enters the realm of spiritual Alchemy." [\[31\]](#)

In representing the Quintessence, the Living Spirit of God in the Center, surrounded by the Four Elements, placed in the four cardinal points of the Circumference, we will have a new world-picture, in

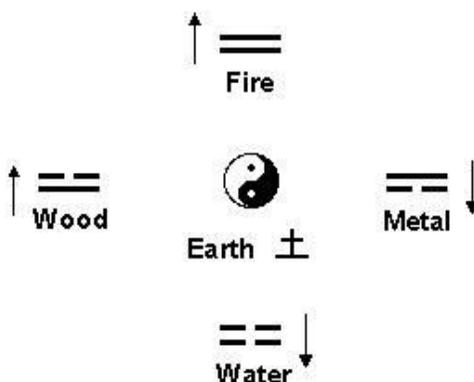
which the Center is not occupied by the Earth, nor by the Sun, but by God himself. Thus, our world view is not GEOCENTRIC, nor HELIOCENTRIC, but rather THEOCENTRIC. The All-Embracing Godhead is viewed as the radiating Center of all manifestations. The Cosmic Wheel is conceived as the Wheel of Change, the Wheel of Samsara, while the Center is looked upon as the Eternal Center, the Nirvana, transcending space and time...

Once again, the divine immanence is stressed: wherever is Phenomenon, there Essence is. God is, then, not only present in our self, but also in everything in the surrounding world, because all sensible things are characterized by their phenomenal aspects...

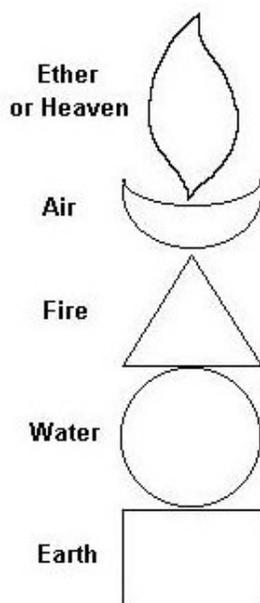
Then, the search for the Stone - The Quintessence - must be done inside man. "Hoec enim res a te extractabitur; cujus etiam minera tu existis" (this thing is extracted from you, for you are its mine). In fact, powers and life of the soul, and of nature, derive from the action of this world-spirit, this one essence underlying all the varied powers of nature, this One Thing from which "all things were produced... by adaptation, and which is the cause of all perfection throughout the whole world."

We can say with certainty that man has sprung from God, and has fallen away from Him, through self-love. Within man, however, is the seed of divine grace, whereby, if he will follow the narrow road of self-renunciation, he may be regenerated, born anew, becoming transformed into the likeness of God, and ultimately indissolubly united to God in love. Alchemy, through its charade, does not convey other teachings...

The Alchemist theory of Five Elements had its counterpart in the Yi Jing, in which the Quintessence is represented by the symbol Tai Ji (Thái Cực), ☯ or by the letter Tu (Thổ) 土, meaning the Universal Ground of everything, placed in the Center, while the double pair of opposite elements are put at the four cardinal points of the external circumference. We have the following figure:



Indian and Tibetan people built their temples according to the Five Elements pattern, as follows:



Here the quintessence, in the Center, occupies the highest place of the figure. Thus, the Eternal Center of the universe will be the Most High in the temples. Similarly, the same pattern is repeated in man.

While the Four Elements and their aggregates belong to the sensible realm, and can be caught by senses, the Quintessence or Akasa, according to Indians, or Ether according to modern sciences, is infinite in extent, continuous and eternal. It cannot be apprehended by the senses. It is also described by certain authorities as all-pervasive, occupying the same place that is occupied by the various forms of matter, and devoid of the property of impenetrability, characterizing the elements. It does not convey matter, but also sound and light. Deussen quotes from the Upanishad a passage which convey an idea of Akasa as the Primal Element from which the others were evolved.

"From the Atman (the Universal Soul or Brahma) arose Akasa, from the Akasa the wind (Air); from the wind, fire; from fire, water; from water, earth. When this earth shall pass away, the reverse order of changes will take place: earth to water; water to fire; fire to air; air to Akasa; Akasa to Brahman." [\[32\]](#)

### The Process of Transmutation.

As we have said, there were two kinds of Alchemy: Exoteric Alchemy, and Esoteric Alchemy. The Exoteric Alchemy was aimed to produce silver and gold from base metals such as tin and lead. The Esoteric Alchemy was aimed to transmute the Human Soul into the Divine Spirit to re-form the Androgenous Primordial Godhead. These two Alchemies were intimately entwined: The Esoteric Alchemy often was described under the disguise of the Exoteric one.

Anyhow, in our study, Exoteric Alchemy is of no concern. Nevertheless, we acknowledge some of its spectacular accomplishments, which were commemorated by medallions, among them:

The medal struck from alchemical gold before His Serene Highness Charles Philip, Count Palatine of the Rhineland on December, 31, 1716. [\[33\]](#)

The Medallion struck in commemoration of transmutation performed in the presence of Emperor Leopold I (The Alchemic Gold had the specific gravity of 12.67, while the natural gold has the specific gravity 19.3. (1675) (gold obtained from tin by Wenzel Seyler). [\[34\]](#)

Ducats in 1644, 1646, 1647 were coined by the King Christian IV of Denmark, to commemorate the

transmutation done by Kasper Harbach. [\[35\]](#)

A medal struck by the King Charles XII of Sweden in 1705 to commemorate the transmutation of gold from lead by O. A. Von Paykhull. [\[36\]](#)

Medals with the inscriptions: Aurum Arte Factum, struck by the Master of the Lyons Mint, and deposited in the Museum of Versailles, to commemorate the gold obtained by Delisle from iron. [\[37\]](#)

Medal struck by the Emperor Ferdinand III, in January 1648, in commemoration of the transmutation of mercury into gold done by Richthausen. [\[38\]](#)

Medal struck in 1660, with the inscription: Aures progenies plumbo prognata parente (a golden daughter born of a leaden parent), on the occasion of the transmutation done by the Emperor Ferdinand III himself, with some of Richthausen powder. [\[39\]](#)

We can find, now, a specimen described as alchemical gold from the Department of Coins and Medals, in the British Museum.

In spite of these facts, we still opt for the Esoteric Alchemy. We maintain that, at least, for many Alchemists, "Alchemy was concerned with man's soul, its object was the perfection, not of material substances, but of man in a spiritual sense. Those who hold this view, identify Alchemy with, or at least regard it as a branch of Mysticism, from which it is supposed to differ merely by the employment of a special language; and they hold that the writings of the Alchemists must not be understood literally as dealing with chemical operations, with furnaces, retorts, alembics, pelicans and the like, with salt, sulfur, mercury, gold, and other material substances, but must be understood as grand allegories dealing with spiritual truths.

"According to this view, the figure of the transmutation of the "base" metals into gold, symbolized the salvation of man - the transmutation of his soul into spiritual gold - which was to be obtained by the elimination of evil and the development of good by the grace of God, and the realization of which salvation or spiritual transmutation may be described as the New Birth, or that condition of being known as union with the Divine." [\[40\]](#)

In other words, "the genuine Alchemists were not in pursuit of worldly wealth or honors. Their real object was the perfection or, at least, the improvement of man." [\[41\]](#)

"When the individual man, by a natural and appropriate process, devoid of haste and violence, is brought into unity with himself by the harmonious action of intelligence and will, he is on the threshold of comprehending that transcendent Unity which is the perfection of the totality of Nature, for what is called the "absolute", "the absolute perfection", and the "perfection of Nature" are one and the same." [\[42\]](#)

Religiously speaking, Alchemy aims toward the union of the Soul with God or with the Spirit of God.

Philosophically speaking, Alchemy aims toward the Reintegration of Polarity: Positive and Negative, Soul and Spirit to effect the Coincidentia Oppositorum (the coincidence of opposites), to return to a primordial state of non-differentiation, to transcend the phenomenal world, to transcend the opposites (the world of relativity), to reconquer the completeness that precedes all creations, to arrest the process of manifestation, the process of disintegration, to proceed against the current of phenomenal productivity and, once again, to find the primordial motionless Unity.

Symbolically speaking, Alchemy aims toward the conjugation of the King (Spirit) and the Queen

(Soul), described as the conjugal union or as a hierosgamos.

Alchemically speaking, Alchemy aimed at conjugating the Son and the Moon (Spirit and Soul) into Mercury (the Androgyne Godhead); at transmuting Lead (the human Soul) into pure Gold (The Divine Spirit) through the power of the Philosophers' Stone (The Divine presence within man).



Mercurius as "uniting symbol"

Put in plain words, Alchemy aimed at the **DIVINATION OF MAN** which was considered as the mortal sin of blasphemy, and a possible sentence of capital punishment by the medieval Church. We understand now why the medieval Alchemists should use an extravagant language, to protect themselves and to mislead Inquisitors, and unworthy men.

When we present Alchemy as such, we will find similarity of views between East and West. We read in Mircea Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, "Now, the ideal of the Buddhist Tantrika is to transform himself into a "Being of Diamond" - in which, on the one hand, he is at one with the ideal of the Indian Alchemist, and on the other hand, renews the famous equation  $Atman = Brahman$ . For Tantric metaphysics, both Hindu and Buddhist, the Absolute Reality, the Urgrund, contains in itself all dualities and polarities, but reunited, reintegrated, in a state of absolute Unity (Advaya). The creation, and the becoming that arose from it, represent the shattering of the Primordial Unity and the separation of the two principles (Siva-Sakti etc.)- in consequence, man experiences a state of duality (object-subject, etc.)- and this is suffering, illusion, "bondage". The purpose of tantric sadhana is the reunion of the polar principles within the disciple's own body." [43]

As we have known, Alchemy endeavors to search for the Philosopher's Stone. We have shown that the Philosopher's Stone is equated to God, to the Prima Materia and to the Quintessence. We have demonstrated that the Stone, the Quintessence, the Prima Materia or God is all-pervasive. It is then logical to say that the best way to find the Stone, or God, is to find it or Him in our self.

This is, also, in accordance with the Monistic doctrine of the identity of opposites that the "noblest and most precious" is hidden precisely in the "basest and most common". The Alchemists of the West did exactly the same when they affirmed that the materia prima, identical with the lapis philosophorum, was present everywhere and under the basest form, vili figura. [44]

The Centrum Naturae Concentratum, ascribed to Alipili declares that "The highest wisdom consists in this, for man to know himself, because in him, God has placed his eternal word, by which all things were made and upheld, to be his Light and Life, by which he is capable of knowing all things, in time and eternity... Therefore, let the high inquirers and searchers into the deep mysteries of nature, learn first what they have in themselves, before they seek in foreign matters without them, and by the divine power within them let them first heal themselves and transmute their own souls; then they may go on prosperously and

seek with good success the mysteries and wonders of God in all natural things. [\[45\]](#)

The feeling of the Presence of God within us is the prerequisite condition for the transmutation of our Soul - transmutation from its human condition to its ultimate Divine condition. Without this direct Divine touch, no human soul - as base as Lead - can ever be transmuted into the Divine Spirit - the true and perfect Gold. That is why the presence of God in the adept is considered as the Philosophers' Stone...

To suggest the concept of "the Godhead within", the English poet Robert Browning, wrote a classically beautiful and instructive passage in which Paracelsus, a seeker of truth, and an medial alchemist (1493-1591), says:

Truth is within our self; it takes no rise  
 From outward things, whatever you may believe.  
 There is an inmost Center in us all,  
 Where truth abides in fullness; and around  
 Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,  
 This perfect, clear perception - which is truth.  
 A baffling and perverting carnal mesh  
 Binds it, and makes all error: and TO KNOW,  
 Rather consists in opening out a way  
 Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,  
 Than in effecting entry for light  
 Supposed to be without. [\[46\]](#)

In sum, the immanent at the same time transcendental God - The Philosopher's Stone - is sought by many and found by few. It is beheld from afar and found near; for it exists in everything, in every place, and at all times. It has the powers of all creatures; its action is found in all elements, and the qualities of all things are therein even in the highest perfection... it heals all dead and living bodies without other medicine... converts all metallic bodies into gold, and there is nothing like unto it under Heaven. [\[47\]](#)

Hitchcock assimilated the Philosopher's Stone, "the mystical and mysterious instrument of preparation in the work of Alchemy, with THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE. By means of this instrument, quickened into vital activity under a sense of the presence of God, the matter of the Stone, namely, Man, is in the first place, purged and purified, to make possible the internal realization of Truth." [\[48\]](#)

By their profession of the "God within", the medieval alchemists joined all the mystics East and West.

In the Imitation of Jesus Christ, chapter VI, verse 4, we read: "Always having God within oneself, and not being attached to anything external, is the state of the INTERIOR MAN."

St Teresa of Avila said: "It is a great grace from God, when he helps us find Him in our self." [\[49\]](#)

"Ascend to God, said Albertus Magnus, is enter in our self. Who enters in oneself and penetrates to the innermost of his soul, transcends himself and truly attains God." [\[50\]](#)

Having thus found the true Lapis Philosophorum - the God within - the Spiritual Alchemy begins to make sense...

Instead of laboratories and complex apparatus as required by the Exoteric Alchemy, the VESSEL, the only Vessel, the VAS INSIGNE ELECTIONIS, required by the Spiritual Alchemy, is MAN himself. The Alchemist considers Man as the only "all-containing subject, to be investigated for the eventual discovery of all. The modern adepts describe the life of man as a pure, naked, and unmingled Fire of illimitable capability. Man, therefore, is the true laboratory of the hermetic art; his life is the subject, the grand distillery, the thing distilling, and the thing distilled; and self-knowledge is at the root of all alchemical tradition". [\[51\]](#)

As for the ingredients used for the transmutation of base metals into gold, the exoteric alchemist resorted not only to "specimens of all metals then known, but also to pyrite, malachite, lapis-lazuli, gypsum, haematite, turquoise, galena, stibnite, alun, green vitriol, natron, borax, common salt, lime, potash, cinnabar, white lead, red lead, litharge, ferric oxide, verdigris, vinegar, and perhaps caustic soda and glycerol, sulfuric and nitric acid..." [\[52\]](#)

The ingredients used by the Spiritual Alchemists are much simpler: the ingredients are even found as existing already in the living Athanor, namely the Human Body: these are the Soul and the Spirit interacting between one another in the presence of the Divine Catalyst, the Philosopher's Stone, namely the Godhead itself.

According to Atalanta Fugies, Father Time is also an important ingredient. [\[53\]](#)

Besides, in the first page of Lully's Hermes Bird, the author gives us 10 conditions of success: Conyng (Effort), experience (Experience), pracktike (Practice), prudent (Prudence), pacience (Patience), gras (Grace), nature (Nature), reson (Reason), speculative (Speculation), holi lifing (Holy Life). [\[54\]](#)

More and more, we are convinced that the true aim of all the true Alchemists was to show us the Mystical Way of Life, using Alchemical language and symbols.

We had already the Lapis Philosophorum, the Athanor, and all the ingredients required for the Magnum Opus (Great Work); now we should learn how to proceed.

The exoteric alchemists spoke lengthily about the processes. According to some, there are seven processes, namely: Calcination, Sublimation, Solution, Putrefaction, Distillation, Coagulation, and Tincture. To others, there are 12 steps in the Great Work, corresponding to the 12 signs of the Zodiac: (See Dictionaire Mytho-Hermetique)

1. **Calcination** Aries, the Ram.
2. **Congelation** Taurus, the Bull.
3. **Fixation** Gemini, the Twins
4. **Dissolution** Cancer, the Crab
5. **Digestion** Leo, the Lion
6. **Distillation** Virgo, the Virgin
7. **Sublimation** Libra, the Scales
8. **Separation** Scorpio, the Scorpion
9. **Incineration** Sagittarius, the Sagittarius
10. **Fermentation** Capricorn, the Goat

- 11. **Multiplication** Aquarius, the Water-Carrier
- 12. **Projection** Pisces, The Fishes



Some gave us the ladder of the planets as follows:

<b>Moon</b>	☾	<b>Sun</b>	☉
<b>Mercury</b>	☿	<b>Mercury</b>	☿
<b>Venus</b>	♀	<b>Venus</b>	♀
<b>Mars</b>	♂	<b>Mars</b>	♂
<b>Jupiter</b>	♃	<b>Jupiter</b>	♃
<b>Saturn</b>	♄	<b>Saturn</b>	♄

We prefer this order:

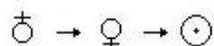
	☿		
	<b>Mercury</b>		
<b>Moon</b>	☾	<b>Sun</b>	☉
<b>Jupiter</b>	♃	<b>Venus</b>	♀
<b>Saturn</b>	♄	<b>Mars</b>	♂

Using the ladder of planets so conceived, we can explain very easily the main steps of the Great Work:

If we know that the Cross + in these symbols represent the Cross of the Elements, we can say that in this natural state before the beginning of the Great Work, the Soul is immersed in the phenomenal world, in the world of bodily sensations, in the world of corruption and the world of transiency 5. It should know how to disentangle itself from the magnetic attraction of the world of opposites, from its earthy desires for wealth and honors, and thus follows the advice of the Gospel: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Mat. 6. 19). More and more, it should know how to dominate the world of sensations and of appearances, how to use the material world, at the same time is detached from its influence. The progressive liberation of the soul from its bondage until its last freedom is depicted by these symbols:

$$5 \rightarrow + \rightarrow \text{D}$$

As for the Spirit, it also must free itself from the bondage of the body and of the external world. Instead of being dispersed in menial earthly activities, the Spirit must concentrate itself to recover its divine status:



The human Soul, and the Divine Spirit, after being so purified and so concentrated, can be now joined themselves and merge into the Ultimate Godhead. This final state is represented by Mercury, the Androgyne Deity: ♁

Thus the soul not only must die to the external world, but also die to itself, to be transformed into the Primeval Godhead. This is the consummation of the Great Work that the Kabbalists called as Kether. The Soul, then has accomplished the long journey from the circumference of the world of changes, of opposites, and of corruption, to rejoin the Eternal Center, where God resides in all his essential glory...

In so doing, the SOLVE and COAGULA slogan is realized: First the soul must be dissolved to be freed from all earthly impurities and afterward, the Soul and the Spirit must be combined to form a living Lapis Philosophorum. In so doing, not only the Divine Spirit, the Spiritual Gold can be obtained from the Human Soul, the Human Lead, but also the ultimate status of the Androgyne Godhead can be realized, which state is depicted as Mercury, the Androgyne Hermes-Trismegistus: (hinh 34)

Hitchcock and Arthur Edward Waite commented on these steps of Alchemy as those of spiritual Regeneration. "This gift of God, the Alchemists investigated as a work of Nature within Nature. The repentance which in religion is said to begin conversion, is the 'philosophical contrition' of hermetic allegory. It is the first step of man towards the discovery of his whole being. They also called it the black state of the matter, in which was carried on the work of dissolution, calcination, separation, etc, after which results purification, the white state, which contains the red, as the black contained the white. The evolution of the glorious and radiant red state resulted in the fixation or perfection of the matter, and then, the soul was supposed to have entered into its true rest in God."

## Conclusion

If we study Alchemy as the Art of changing Lead or other base metals into Gold, we will be lost in the labyrinth of symbols, of apparatuses, and of extravagant processes. We can lose our fortune easily, and we will live a very hard life. As for the result, it will be as chimerical as if we catch the moon in the water. But if we consider Alchemy as a guide in our quest for the inner God, and in our endeavor to perfect our self, to live a mystical, holy life, a resplendent life resulting from the union of our Soul with the Immanent God, everything become crystal-clear, natural and within our scope and range.

It is, then, natural to see that the author of the "Suggestive Inquiry" exalted the seekers of the Philosophical Stone into the hierophants of the mystery of God, and endowed them with the *altitudo divitiarum sapientiae et scientiae Dei* (the height of the divine wisdom and sciences). According to this author, the alchemists had crossed the threshold of eternity; they had solved the absolute; they had seen Diana unveiled; they had raised the cincture of Isis, and had devoured her supernatural beauty- that is, they had accomplished the manifestation of the incarnate spirit of man, and had invested it with deific glory. They did not grope after physical secrets; they did not investigate, with Paracelsus, the property of ordure and other matter in putrefaction; they did not work with mercury and sulfur; they did not distill wine; they did not decoct egg-shells. They were Soul seekers, and they had found the Soul; they were artificers, and they adorned the Soul; they were Alchemists, and had transmuted It. [\[55\]](#)

This is indeed a sublime view on Alchemy.

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- [4] Ibidem, p. 201.
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- [6] Ibidem, p. 200.
- [7] Ibidem, p. 200.
- [8] Ibidem, p. 201.
- [9] C. A. Burland, The Art of the Alchemists, Macmillan, New York, 1968, p. 172.
- [10] Ibidem, pp. 172-173.
- [11] E. J. Holmyard, Alchemy, Penguin Books, 1968, p. 223.
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- [29] A.C. Burland, *The Arts of the Alchemists*, The Macmillan Company, New York, p. 184.
- [30] Arthur Edward Waite ed., *The Works of Thomas Vaughan*, University Books, New Hyde Park, New York, 1968, p. 230.
- [31] Titus Burckhard, *Alchemy*, Penguin Books Inc., p. 96.
- [32] John Maxon Stillman, *The Story of Alchemy and Early Chemistry*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1960, p. 110. -- Deussen, P., *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, Leipzig, 1906-1920, 2 volumes in 1 & 3, p. 597.
- [33] C.A. Burland, *The Art of the Alchemists*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1968, plate on the page opposite to p. 201.
- [34] Reinhard Federmann, *The Royal Art of Alchemy*, Chilton Book Co, Philadelphia-New York-London, 1949, plate in pages between 152 and 153.
- [35] E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy*, Penguin Books, 1966. p. 128.
- [36] *Ibidem*, p. 133.
- [37] *Ibidem*, p. 133.
- [38] *Ibidem*, 129.
- [39] *Ibidem*, 129.
- [40] H. Stanley Redgrove, *Alchemy, Ancient and Modern*, University Books Inc. New Hyde Park, N. Y. 11040, 1969, p. 2-3.
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- [42] *Ibidem*, 11.
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- [44] *Ibidem*, p. 261, note 204.
- [45] Arthur Edward Waite, *Alchemists Through The Ages*, Rudolf Steiner Publications, 151 North Moison Road, Blauvelt, New York 10913, U.S.A. 1970, p. 22.
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[\[50\]](#) Ibidem, p. 183.

[\[51\]](#) Arthur Edward Waite, Alchemists through the Ages, Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1970, p. 14.

[\[52\]](#) E. J. Holmyard, Alchemy, p. 9.

[\[53\]](#) Lapidus, In Pursuit of Gold, New York, Samuel Weiser, 1976, Illustration 19, between pages 96-97.

[\[54\]](#) C. A. Burland, The Arts of the Alchemists, The Macmillan Co, New York, 1967, p. opposite to page 168.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 12

### Rosicrucians and the Monistic Theory

When considering the history of the Rosicrucians, one must bear in mind that members of the body were, and are, pledged to secrecy, and that the paucity of their records is the proof of their sincerity and devotion. But it is permissible to give some data of the history of the Society since its foundation about the year 1420.



It is said to have been founded by Christian Rosenkreutz (Rosy Cross 1378-1484) about 1420, though, by some authorities, he is considered as a legendary figure. He is supposed to have received his wisdom and philosophy from ancient sources in the various places he visited: Palestine, Damascus, Egypt and Spain.

Now Rosicrucians considered themselves as descending from an Ancient Egyptian mystery school whose first Master was the Pharaoh Akhnaton, and that a great number of the most enlightened minds of history have been counted among its members.

The Rosicrucians are now found in Europe, England, Scotland, South Africa, Australia, America, New Zealand, South America, India and elsewhere, and its secrets are very well kept.

What is, then, the etymology of Rosenkreuze? Some think that they derive from the Latin words Ros, dew, and Crux, cross. The argument in its favor may be fairly represented by the following quotation:-" Of all natural bodies, dew was deemed the most powerful dissolvent of gold; and the cross in chemical language, was equivalent to light; because the figure of the cross exhibits at the same time the three letters of which the word Lux, or Light is compounded. Now lux is called...the seed or menstruum of the red dragon, or in other words, that gross and corporeal light, which, when properly digested and modified, produced gold. Hence it follows, if this etymology be admitted, that a Rosicrucian (sic) philosopher is one by the intervention and assistance of the dew, seeks for light, or in other words, the substance called the Philosopher's Stone." [\[1\]](#)

But other people have different opinions. For them, it is the reunion of the Rose and the Cross. Eliphas Levi provides the following commentary on the Rosicrucian symbol:

"The Rose, which from time immemorial has been the symbol of beauty and life, of love and pleasure, expressed in a mystical manner all the protestations of the Renaissance. It was the flesh revolting against

the oppression of the spirit, it was Nature declaring herself to be, like grace, the daughter of God, it was love refusing to be stifled by the celibate, it was life refusing to be no longer barren, it was humanity aspiring to a natural religion, full of love and reason, founded on the revelation of the harmonies of existence of which the Rose was for initiates the living and blooming symbol. The Rose, in fact, is a pentacle; its form is circular, the leaves of the corolla are heart-shaped and are supported harmoniously by one another; its color presents the most delicate shades of primitive hues; its calyx is purple and gold... the conquest of the Rose was the problem offered by initiation to science, which religion toiled to prepare and establish the universal, exclusive, and definitive triumph of the Cross.

"The reunion of the Rose and the Cross, such was the problem proposed by supreme initiation, and, in effect, occult philosophy, being the universal synthesis, should take into account all the phenomena of Being." [2]

In 1614, the town of Cassel in Germany was surprised by the appearance, from where no one knew, of a pamphlet entitled, The Fame of the Fraternity of the Meritorious Order of the Rosy Cross Addressed to the Learned in General and the Governors of Europe, usually called for short (it being written in Latin) the Fama Fraternitatis or Fama. It proposed that men of learning should band together to undertake a reformation of science comparable to that which religion had recently undergone, and that this should be done with the assistance of a hitherto hidden brotherhood of light - the Rosicrucians.

The Fama mentioned also about Christian Rosencreutz (Rosy Cross), his life and his death.

A year later another pamphlet, Confession of the Rosicrucian Fraternity, offered initiation to secret applicants. The Fama and Confessio soon came to be regarded by most as either hoaxes or fantasies. [3]

The movement attracted those of Kabbalistic tendencies, and concerned itself with Astrology, Alchemy and, to some extent, with the principles of Free Masonry. Its teachings combine elements of occultism reminiscent of a variety of religious beliefs and practices.

The two most substantial groups of Rosicrucians in the United States, are the Rosicrucian Fellowship, with its international headquarters at Mt. Ecclesia, Oceanside, California, and the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (AMORC) in San Jose, Rosicrucian Park. The latter is the best-known group. The older of the two groups, and the most influenced by Theosophy, is however, the Rosicrucian Fellowship, founded in 1917, by Carl Louis van Grasshoff, who used the pen name Max Heindel. This branch describes the Rosicrucian Philosophy as "a mystical philosophy, founded upon Christian principles and based upon the reality of Christ, and the work he came to earth to do". It believes in a sixth sense latent in man which, when developed, enables one to investigate the realm of the super-physical where dwell the dead. Its basic doctrine is common to Theosophy: World evolution, reincarnation, secret initiation, invisible helpers, and elder brothers. There is special emphasis on healing and on astrology. One who is admitted into the Fellowship gives up tobacco, liquor and meat... [4]

The AMORC, is far larger. It claims not to be a "religion", but a "worldwide fraternal organization" on the Masonic model which teaches philosophy and practices designed to enable the individual to use ordinary latent faculties for the sake of improving his abilities and leading a more satisfying life...

The literature of Rosicrucianism speaks of the golden secret, which is that man has two natures, a "duality of self." Besides the physical body, there is a "greater inner self" . This secret is the key to the Rosicrucian understanding of the question of death and the development of psychic powers, including the projection of consciousness out of the body. These techniques and the philosophy which go with them are

obtained in lessons sent out from the headquarters in San Jose, which the individual may study at home or with a local lodge. [5]

It tries to develop the intuitive knowledge, that is, a part of a Universal Cosmic Intelligence which pervades the entire universe and every cell of our being, and that we can command it to serve us, that we can draw upon it as we will... Psychologists today say that man uses only a fraction of the inherent power with which he is imbued as a human being. The secret brotherhoods have known for centuries how to command and use much more of this power to round up and enjoy an enriched life. Hundreds of the so-called mysteries are understandable and workable laws of the universe to those who master this esoteric (inner) knowledge... The oldest of these humanitarian societies, worldwide in extent and not a religion, is the Rosicrucians. It offers you this knowledge, as old as time, for the fullness of life, free of any religious intolerance or political or other prejudices or biases. [6]

As in the earliest time, the Rosicrucians not only studied, but went about ministering to those in distress... They believe that this world and indeed the whole universe is permeated with the essence of the Creator, that every rock is instinct with life, that every plant and every tree is imbued with a sense derived from the Master Mind that caused it to exist, and that each living thing moves, acts and thinks in accordance with the supreme design by which all things were made, by which all things exist, and by which they will continue to function till the end of time. At no period did the Rosicrucians declare the transmutation of metals to be a part of their practice, nor did they ever promise indefinite prolongation of life by mysterious drugs, but they did speak of these in parables with the full and complete knowledge that all things are possible, and that with the forces of nature under their control, they could do even these. They were content to act and to trust to the future, when the mind of men having been cleansed, the redemption and absorption should be accomplished. [7]

Rosicrucians declared that they follow the tradition of Neo-Platonic philosophy. "The traditions of the Neo-Platonic philosophy, with its elaborate theurgical system, said Arthur Edward Waite, were to some extent perpetuated through the whole period of the Middle-Ages, for beside the orthodox theology of the great Latin Church, and amidst the clamor of scholastic philosophy, we find the secret theosophy of the magician, the Kabbalist, and the alchemical adept borrowing, directly or indirectly from this prolific fountain of exalted mysticism... At this time, Germany was a stronghold of mysticism, which according to Ueberweg, was at first chiefly developed in sermons by monks of the Dominican Order; its aim was to advance Christianity by edifying speculation, and to render it comprehensible by the transcendent use of the reason. "The author and perfecter of this entire development was Master Eckart, "who taught that the creature apart from the Absolute, that is, from God, was nothing that "time, space, and the plurality which depends on them', are also nothing in themselves, and that "the duty of man as a moral being is to rise beyond this nothingness of the creature, and by direct intuition to place himself in immediate union with the Absolute." [8]

We know also that Rosicrucians embraced all the Hermeticist Sciences, such as Neo-Platonism, Kaballah, Alchemy, Free Masonry, Theosophy, and that all these cults professed the Monistic Theory. In that case, even if we find nothing or almost nothing pertaining to the Monistic Theory, in the writings of some modern Rosicrucians, we must infer that in the repertory of their lodges, we can find these documents.

When studying the Rosicrucians, I am convinced that they like to be pioneers in the domain of

teaching. If in the Middle Ages, many of them were learned in Alchemy, now they like to teach people how to develop their latent potentialities, and to achieve psychic development.

We know also that the Monistic Theory was always considered as a heresy by the Roman Catholic Church. The proof of that is the case of Meister Johannes Eckhart. Eckhart, a Dominican monk, spent his life (1260-1327) preaching The Monistic Theory or The Emanation Theory, the essence of which is: The divine essence imbues all beings; each human soul contains, then, a divine spark: by the knowledge and by the mystical experience, it can be united to the Godhead, which is the goal toward which it tends. His mysticism was considered as an emanationist pantheism, and in 1329 some of his doctrines were condemned by the Pope. [\[9\]](#)

Therefore, in the Middle Ages, many societies became secret, so that they could keep intact this monistic tradition of humanity.

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[\[3\]](#) Robert S. Ellwood, Jr. Religious and Spiritual Groups in Modern America, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973, pp. 60-61.

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## Chapter 13

### Theosophy and the Monistic Theory

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York City in 1875 by [Mme. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky](#) (1831-1891), Colonel H. S. Olcott (1832-1907), William Q. Judge (1851-1896) and others. The movement aims for a synthesis of religion, science, philosophy and psychology. "The most important of our objects," said Mme. Blavatsky, "is to revive the work of Ammonius Saccas- the founder of the Neoplatonic School of 1,700 years ago. [\[1\]](#)



The work of that School, she stated, was "to reconcile all religions, sects and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities." The aim of Ammonius was "to induce Gentiles and Christians, Jews and Idolaters, to lay aside their contentions and strife, remembering only that they were all in possession of the same truth under various vestments... [\[2\]](#)



H.P. Blavatsky (1877)



H.P. Blavatsky (1889)

Ammonius and his disciples called their work the Eclectic Theosophical School, the word "theosophy"- which means godlike or divine wisdom- being first used by them.

"The Theosophical Society maintains that it has three primary objectives which are: 1) to form a nucleus of the brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color; 2) to encourage the study of comparative religions through philosophy and science; 3) to investigate the unexplained laws of nature, and the powers latent in man... The Society has no dogmas or creed, is entirely non-sectarian and includes in its membership adherents of all faiths and of none, exacting from each member only his tolerance for the beliefs of others that he would wish them to exhibit toward his own". [3]

According to J. H. Fussell, the teachings of Theosophy are "at the same time religious, philosophic and scientific, postulating ONE ETERNAL, IMMUTABLE, ALL-PERVADING PRINCIPLE, THE ROOT OF ALL MANIFESTATIONS. From that one existent comes forth periodically the whole universe, manifesting the two aspects of spirit and matter, life and form, positive and negative, the two poles between which the universe is woven. Those two aspects are inseparably united; therefore all matter is ensouled by life, while all life seeks expression through forms. All life being fundamentally one with the life of the Supreme Existence which contains in germs all the characteristics of its source, evolution is only the unfolding of those divine potentialities brought about by the conditions afforded in the various kingdoms of nature. The visible universe is only a small part of this field of evolution. [4]

Theosophy does not hesitate to declare that:

God and man are the two phases of the ONE ETERNAL LIFE AND CONSCIOUSNESS THAT CONSTITUTES OUR UNIVERSE! The idea of Immanence of God is that He is the universe; although He is also more than it is; that the solar system is an emanation of the Supreme Being as clouds are an emanation of the sea. This conception makes man a part of God, having potentially within him all the attributes and powers of the Supreme Being. It is the idea that nothing exists except God, and that

humanity is one portion of Him - one phase of His being. [5]

In common with Christian Science, Unity, and other pantheistic theologies, Theosophy conceives of God in strictly impersonal terms, while asserting that man is in a spiritual sense, part of God. L. W. Rogers put it this way, when he wrote:

In divine essence, latent power and potential spirituality, man is an image of God, because he is part of him. The same idea is more directly put in the Psalms, with the assertion "ye are Gods" (Ps. 82, 6; John 10, 34). If the idea of the immanence of God is sound, than man is a literal fragment of the consciousness of the Supreme Being, is an embryo-God, being destined to ultimately evolve his latent powers into perfect expression. The oneness of life was explicitly asserted by Jesus... It is an unqualified assertion that humanity is a part of God, as leaves are part of the tree, not something a tree has created, in the sense that a man creates a machine, but something that is an emanation of the tree, and is a living part of it. Thus only has God made man. Humanity is a growth, a development, an emanation, an evolutionary expression of the Supreme Being...The human soul is an individualized fragment of that divine life... is literally a spark of the divine life, and latent within it are the characteristics of that central light from which it originated. The theosophical conception of the soul is that it is literally an emanation from God, and since it is therefore of its own essence, it became clear why Theosophists assert that man is a God in the making.

[6]



Annie Besant

Concerning man, [Annie Besant](#) (1847-1933) who took over the reins of leadership after the death of Madam Blavatsky, Judge and his successor, Catherine Tingley, once declared, "Man is a spiritual intelligence, a fragment of divinity clothed in matter". And Krisnamurti, the adopted son of Mrs. Annie Besant, once stated, "...you are God and you will only what God wills; but you must dig deep down into yourself to find the God within you, and listen to His voice, which is your voice..." Theosophy declared that "all men are innate divinity...so that in time all men become Christ."

Theosophy is opposed to not only the Biblical teaching of God's personality and nature, as well as the deity of His Son, but it also vigorously denies Christ's substitutionary sacrifice for all sins. The Theosophist wants no part of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus; in fact it is personally repugnant to him. He considers it "an ignoble belief" that we can fling our sins upon another.

Theosophy divides Jesus and Christ, making Jesus only the outer man, and Christ a divine consciousness immanent within Him, and within all men, to a greater or a lesser degree.

Theosophy teaches also the doctrine of Karma and Metempsychosis.

"The Secret Doctrine - name of a book written by Mme. Blavatsky, - teaches the fundamental identity of all Souls with the Universal Over Soul...and the obligatory pilgrimage for every Souls...through the Cycle of Incarnation (or Necessity) in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic Law, during the whole term...The pivotal doctrine of the Esoteric philosophy admits no privileges or special gifts in man, save those won by his own Ego through personal effort and merit throughout a long series of metempsychoses and reincarnations..."

Those who believe in Karma have to believe in destiny, which from birth to death, every man is weaving thread by thread around himself, as a spider does his cobweb... This Law, whether Conscious or Unconscious - predestines nothing and no one... Karma creates nothing, nor does it design. It is man who plans and creates causes, and Karmic law adjusts the effects; which adjustment is not an act but universal harmony, tending ever to resume its original position, like a bough, which, bent down too forcibly, rebounds with corresponding vigor...Karma has never sought to destroy intellectual and individual liberty... It has not involved its decrees in darkness purposely to perplex man, nor shall it punish him who dares to scrutinize its mysteries. On the contrary, he who unveils through study and meditation its intricate paths, and throws light on those dark ways, in the windings of which so many men perish owing to their ignorance of the labyrinth of life, is working for the good of his fellow-men... Believers in Karma cannot be regarded as Atheist or materialists - still less as fatalists... Karma is a highly philosophical truth, a most divine noble expression of the primitive intuition of man concerning Deity. It is a doctrine which explains the origin of Evil, and ennobles our conceptions of what divine immutable Justice ought to be, instead of degrading the unknown and unknowable Deity by making it the whimsical, cruel tyrant, which we call Providence...

Intimately, or rather indissolubly, connected with Karma, then, is the law of rebirth, or of the reincarnation of the same individuality in a long, almost interminable, series of personalities. The latter are like the various costumes and characters played by the same actor, with each of which the actor identifies himself and is identified by the public, for the space of a few hours...

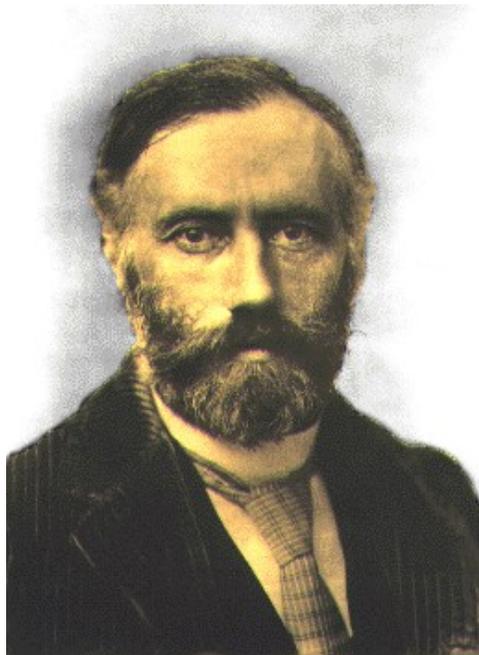
"Pilgrim" is the appellation given to our Monad... during its cycle of incarnations. It is the only immortal and eternal principle in us, being an indivisible part of the integral whole - the Universal Spirit, from which it emanates, and into which it is absorbed at the end of the cycle... Is this annihilation, as some think?...To see in Nirvana annihilation amounts to saying of a man plunged in a sound dreamless sleep... that he too, is annihilated... Re-absorption is by no means such a "dreamless sleep," but on the contrary, absolute existence, an unconditioned unity, or a state, to describe which human language is absolutely and hopelessly inadequate... [\[7\]](#)

The doctrine of Metempsychosis has been abundantly ridiculed by men of science and rejected by theologians, yet if it had been properly understood in its application to the indestructibility of matter and the immortality of spirit, it would have been perceived that it is a sublime conception... If the Pythagorean metempsychosis should be thoroughly explained and compared with the modern theory of evolution it would be found to supply every "missing link" in the chain of the latter... there was not a philosopher of any notoriety who did not hold to this doctrine of metempsychosis, as taught by the Brahmans, Buddhists, and later by the Pythagoreans.

The esoteric doctrine teaches, like Buddhism and Brahmanism, and even the Kabala, that the one infinite and unknown Essence exists from all eternity, and in regular and harmonious successions is either

passive or active. In the poetical phraseology of Manu these conditions are called the "day" and the "night" of Brahma. The latter is either "awake" or "asleep." ...Upon inaugurating an active period of expansion of this Divine essence, from within outwardly, occurs in obedience to eternal and immutable law, and the phenomenal or visible universe is the ultimate result of the long chain of cosmic forces thus progressively set in motion. In like manner, when the passive condition is resumed, a contraction of the Divine essence takes place, and the previous work of creation is gradually and progressively undone. The visible universe becomes disintegrated, its material dispersed; and "darkness," solitary and alone, broods once more over the face of the "deep". To use a metaphor which will convey the idea still more clearly, an outbreathing of the "unknown essence" produces the world; and an inhalation causes it to disappear. This process has been going from all eternity, and our present universe is but one of an infinite series which had no beginning and will have no end. [8]

Walter Martin, author of *The Kingdom of the Cults* affirms that Theosophy is Eastern in its origin; it is Hinduistic and Buddhistic in its theology, Gnostic in its vocabulary, and Christian only in its key terminology, which is specifically designed to imitate the true content of the Gospel...Theosophy is opposed to not only the true Biblical teaching of God personality and nature, as well as the deity of His Son, but it also vigorously denies Christ's substitutionary sacrifice for sin. [9]



William Q. Judge

William Q. Judge (1851-1896), a former president of the Theosophical Society in America, once said: "The educated and inquiring mind knows that dogmatic religion can only give an answer invented by man while it pretends to be from God." [10]

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[1] H. P. Blavatsky, "What are the Theosophist?" *The Theosophist*, October, 1789, p. 5.

[2] H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, Los angeles: Theosophy Co.,1930, pp. 3, 5.

[3] Schall-Herzog, pp. 408-409.

[4] *The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia*, Article on Theosophy, page 407. *The Kingdom of the Cult*. Walter R. Martin, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minesota, 55438, 1977, p. 222.

- [5] Elementary Theosophy, p. 22.
- [6] Elementary Theosophy, p. 23-25; 19. 20.
- [7] The Secret Doctrine, 1888, Theosophy Co. Los Angeles, I, 16-17, 48 fn 53-54, 238, 266, 477-478, 639, 643-644; II, 304-306.  
Reincarnation, Compiled and Edited by Joseph Head and S.L. Cranston, 1967, Causeway Books, pp. 157-158.
- [8] Isis unveiled, Los Angeles: Theosophy Co. 1931. I, vi, 8-9, 12; II 264-265.
- [9] Walter R. Martin, The Kingdom of the Cults, Bethany House Publishers, 1977, pp. 233 and 229.
- [10] Reincarnation, Compiled and Edited by Joseph Head and S. L. Cranston, Causeway Books, 1967, p. 159.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 14

### Brahmanism and the Monistic Theory (I)

#### From Veda to the Bhagavad Gita

Before studying the sacred books of India, let us say some words about Brahmanism or Hinduism.

Hinduism is one of the oldest religions of the world.

Beside Brahman, the supreme impersonal God, Indian people venerate Brahma, the Creator; Vishnu, the Conservator; and Shiva, the Destroyer of the world. Vishnu has ten avatars who come and save the world. Shiva has many wives. One of them is called Kali. They are worshipped as a Lingam (Male) and a Yoni (Female). Beside these Gods, Indian people worship many other. According to Swami Vivehananda, the Indian pantheon contains up to 330,000,000 gods.

Indian people don't eat beef. Cattle and cows, considered sacred, wander freely in large cities. Brahmanism is learned these days, by scholars in this world, not for its rituals but for its sacred books, and for the yogis.

#### SACRED BOOKS OF INDIA

We have:

**Vedas** consisting of four books: (15th century to 10th Century B.C.)

(1) Rig-Veda.

(2) Sama Veda.

(3) Yayur Veda.

White Yajur.

Black Yajur.

(4) Atharva Veda.

**Brahmana** (16 books) (10th century to 7th century)

**Aranyaka**.

**Upanishads** (7th to 5th B.C.) (108 books 13 of them are most important)

**Bhagavad-Gita**.

All of them are translated into English.

**The Vedas**.

**The Rig-Veda**.

(1) **The Rig-Veda** is the most important. It is divided into 10 books, and contains 20.000 verses. Most

of these verses are elegies and prayers to various divinities, such as:

Indra (Thunder-Rain god) (250 poems).

Agni (Fire god) (200 poems).

Vishnu, Surya, Pusan, Mithra (Sun god).

Usha (The Dawn)

Varuna (Sky god)

Soma (Intoxicating Beverage) (the whole book IX).

Besides, we can find in the Rig-Veda some famous poems about cosmogony: Rig Veda X, 129.- Rig-Veda X, 121.- Rig-Veda X, 82.- Rig-Veda X,80.

Rig-Veda tries to find out the Reality of this world, through all the statuses of god (polytheism, monotheism).

Through observation, we can find that in every natural phenomenon, there is some Force, bad or good, for man. First, they thought that this Force came from various deities such as Indra, Mithra, Varuna, Agni, Soma, Pudra et cetera.

Afterward, they thought that this Force came from the Creator (Prajapati, Bramanapasti, Visvakarman et cetera...)

Finally, they thought that this Force came from The Cosmic Stuff, the Ultimate Reality that engenders this world. They called this Ultimate Reality BRAHMAN, or THAT.

Only this Ultimate Reality is Eternal, having his own Self (sat), his own knowledge (cid), and happiness (ananda). All other phenomena are considered as belonging to the realm of names and forms, to the realm of Samsara, of Avidya, of Maya or of mortality, be it Brahma himself.

If we call our world as THIS (including everything phenomenal, transitory), the Ultimate Reality or the Eternal as THAT, THIS is then only appearance and not reality, it is not "thing in itself", and THAT only is the real "self" of everything. The "Tat Tvam Asi" "THAT art Thou" of the Chand. Up. has now its full meaning.

In this case, our body and the physical universe, are not the Atman, the Self, the true Reality. We must know that all worldly objects and relationships are of no value for their own sake (as" things in themselves"), but for the sake of Atman. This Atman is Brahman and warriors, is space, gods, and creatures, 'this Atman is the entire universe'. "Verily he who has seen, heard, comprehended and known the Self, by him is this entire universe known. (Brih. 2.4.5)

The Monistic Theory is bit by bit established, especially when in the Chand. Up. everything in this world is considered as made of clay, then the change is a matter of words alone. "Just as, my dear sir, from a lump of clay everything that consists of clay is known, the change is the matter of words alone, a mere name, it is in reality only clay,-thus, my dear sir, is the instruction." (Chand. Up. 6.1.2.)

Therefore, we find no plurality in this world,

In the spirit should this be perceived,

Here there is no plurality anywhere.

From death to death again he rushes blindly,

Who fancies that here are difference. (Brih. 4.4.19)

The cosmogonies in the Rig-Veda are complex.

(1) This world is built by gods (Rig Veda X,121.- Rig Veda VII, 8,6.- III, 32,80.- Rig Veda X, 81,2.- X,72,2.- X, 121,4) from existing elements.

(2) Or this world come from a specific element, such as:

Water (Rig Veda X,190)

Air (Rig Veda X, 168)

Or from the incommensurable (Aditi) (Rig Veda X, 72)

Or from the dismemberment of God (Rig Veda, X, 90)

We can see that after many gropings, the Veda reached its climax: The Monistic Theory.

According to the Rig-Veda, this world is governed by fixed and perennial laws, called Rita or Dharma. One should follow these laws. They can be called natural laws.

In the Rig-Veda, they mentioned Paradise and Hell (X,6,10.- IX,41,2. - 1.25.6.- X, 132, 4.- IV, 55.- IX, 73.8.- X,152.4)

Samsara and Karma are not yet clearly defined.

## (2) The Sama Veda.

The Sama Veda is a collection of songs, the verses of which are excerpted from the Rig-Veda. These songs are sung by priests when celebrating the office.

## (3) The Yajur Veda.

The Yajur Veda, black and white, contain prayers that are recited by deacons, such as prayers when the fire is set, or when Soma is prepared, or when holocausts are killed...

## (4) The Atharva Veda

This book contains magic formulas and talismans that cure diseases, or help fulfill human desires, such as formula to cure cough (Sacred Books of the East, Book II, p. 8.- Charles Braden, Les Livres Sacrés de l'humanité, p. 85), magic formula for hair growth (6, 136), magic formula to get a husband (2,3), magic formula to get a wife (6,82), magic formula to be loved by a man (7,38), or by a woman (6,8) et cetera...(Charles Braden, Les Livres Sacrés de l'humanité p. 86- Zimmer, les Philosophies de l'Inde, p. 120-121)

In The Process of Creation (The Clarion Call, Volume 1, No 3, Summer 88, p. 9), Steve Rosen observed: "The renowned astronomer, Dr. Carl. Sagan, admired the Vedic conception of creation. He noted that, of all religious thought, the ancient Vedic teachings about the origin of the universe "are the most acceptable in terms of modern sciences". Sagan explained that the Vedic science of creation is not very different from some of the modern scientific theories about universal origin for it suggests that creation and dissolution of the universe occur at regular intervals, lasting billions of years. Briefly stated, the Vedic principle of creation can be described as "emanationism," the concept that matter is not suddenly created out of nothing. Matter is one of the external energies of God".

Shri Aurobindo comments on the Veda as follows: "... These are profound insights of seers and saints, authors of the Vedas. Man lives in this earth, and knows only this world of deadly things. But besides this world, we still have the Cosmic Mind containing all the worlds of gods, enlightened by mysterious light. And under the surface of all the impressions received in our conscious life, there is also the Unconscious.

From the darkness of this unconscious life, spring forth the worlds that we see. Man always has tied connections with these worlds.

Man, if he like, can become illuminated and enter in these worlds, can be born in these worlds. Man can come in these illuminated worlds of Truth, can pass through the gate of Cosmic Consciousness, and enter in the Transcendence. All the gates of the sky will open to welcome all the soul on the way of development.

This transcendence can be done, because all men bear in themselves what they considered as external to them.

And, if gods can build a network of worlds outside, they can also organize in man an hierarchy of orders, spreading from mortality to immortality. The contrast between mortality and immortality that we can reach, is in fact the key to help us understand the idea and the action of the Veda. The Veda is the most ancient evangels to teach us about the immortality of man. Their hymns contain the ideas of saints who have discovered the way of immortality. Understood rightly, the Veda ceased to be a collection of hymns obscure, and barbarous, but became hymns extolling the highest aspiration of man. Their hymns are steps of an epic full of sentiments of the human soul progressing to immortality. At least, they are like that. We can also find contents on archaic science, on knowledge lost, on tradition about psychic and physical elements of the past. (Translated from the hymns of the Atris, Arya II, 45-47 and 97-112) (See J. Herbert, *La spiritualité hindoue*, p . 294).

Radhakrishnan, in the *Indian Philosophy I*, on his conclusion of the Veda, says:

"Because the Veda deals with Sacrifices, so the Brahmanas are written. Because the Veda have philosophical assumptions, so the Upanishads are written. Because the Veda talks about the God of the sky, Varuna, they inspired the author of the Bhagavad Gita about monotheism. Because the Veda mentioned about Rita, or natural laws, the notion of Karma is engendered. Because the Veda sustained that in the beginning there is the God Hiranyagarbha floating on the primeval water, the dualism of Samkhya is born (that means the notion of Purusa and Prakriti). Because it maintained that prayers, that Soma can help produce ecstasy, it has, later on, connection with the School of Yoga. (cf. *Indian Philosophy, I*, p. 116)

## BRAHMANAS

The Brahmanas deal mostly with liturgy, and are similar to the Yajur Veda, or the Sama Veda.

In the Rig Veda, the religion was still natural, warm and full of human sentiments, while in the Brahmana period (1000-700 BC) it became dry and arid, because it is locked in fixed liturgy. Here are some tenets of the Brahmanas: Vishnu and Shiva begin to appear (Kausitaki Brahmana VI, 1,9). Brahman is the Cosmic Principle (Satapatha Brahmana XI, 2). Prayers and liturgy become important and necessary. (Satapatha Brahmana III, 1,4,3 - Aiterya Br. II, 1,1) Priests become important and supernatural (Satapatha Br. II 2.2.6.- II 4.3.14). Veda became an inspired book (Aiterya Br. VII, 9)

The Brahmanas exhalt a human life in conformity to the moral law. No adultery (Sat. Brah. II, 5.2.20), no lies (Satapatha Br. 1.2.4) (cf. Rhadakhrisnan, *Indian Philosophy I*, P. 151).

The society in the Brahmanas period, is divided into castes (Atharva Veda V, 17.8.- Rig Veda VII, 103. 1.7. 8.- Sat. Brah. VIII, 1, 4, 10)

Social life is divided into four stages (Brih. Up. III, 5, 1.- Apastamba sutras II, 9,21,1.- Gautama Sutras III, 2.- Bodhanya II. 6.11.12.- Manu V, 137.- Vasistha VII, 2.- Atharva Veda V 17, 8.- Rig Veda VII, 103. 1.7

and 8.- X, 88, 19.- Sat. Brah. VIII, 1,4,10)

Man, good or bad, can be transmigrated to bear the fruits of their deeds in this world or in some other world. (Cf. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy I, p. 134). Samsara has not yet been clearly discussed (Cf. Indian Philosophy I, 135-136).

We can make a general remark about Brahmana, Yayur Veda, and Atharva Veda as follows: Brahmana and Yajur Veda even emphasizing on liturgy, Atharva Veda even emphasizing on magic formula, deals only with this problem: How to get good luck, and how to avoid bad luck, how man can find happiness and avoid misery.

To reach this goal, we should depend on other forces, on gods (prayers, sacrifices, magic, talismans), or we should depend on our own forces (magic, talismans). We should observe natural phenomena to find out rules that govern our deeds, or we should study ancient culture to find out appropriate behaviors. That is to say, we must find out natural laws (rita, dharma) to obey them. If we live accordingly to natural laws, we can find happiness, if we live otherwise, we will find misery.

## Upanishads

The Upanishads have up to 103 books, but only 13 are considered the principal ones.

Let us summarize these thirteen Upanishads:

### (1) Isa Upanishads.

It deals with the Inner Reality in man.

### (2) Kena Up.

Who is the Controller of the world? This is Atman and Brahman.

### (3) Katha Up.

The Real Self is immortal. It cannot be known by Intelligence, but by Intuition.

### (4) Prasna Up.

We find there six question on how this world is created, on the personality of man, and on the ground of man.

### (5) Mundaka Up.

It stresses two kinds of knowledge: the high knowledge deals with the Substance, the low knowledge with Phenomena.

The culture of the soul is better than sacrifice, and external deeds.

### (6) Mandukya Up.

There are four different conditions in a man:

The waking condition.

The sleeping condition.

The sleeping condition without dreams.

The transcendental condition (Turita)

### (7) Taittitya Up.

There are five envelopes in a man:

Envelope of Food (Physical body-waking condition)

Envelope of Breath (Subtle body)

Envelope of mind (Soul - Sleeping condition with dreams)

Envelope of Intellect (ib.)

Envelope of bliss (causal body-Sleeping condition without dreams- Avidya)

Then, we come into the Atman, the core.

### (8) Aitareya Up.

Discussion on the after-life.

### (9) Chandogya Upanishad.

In this Upanishad, we find:

The famous equation ATMAN = BRAHMAN.

The formula: TAT TVAM ASI (THAT ART THOU)

And the explanation of the syllable: OM or AUM.

AUM or Turiya can be broken into:

A (Waking condition)

U (dreaming condition)

M (without dreams condition)

OM or AUM is the essence of sound, and speech. Sound and Speech are the essence of man, and man is the essence of all beings. Om is the essence of man and of all beings.

### (10) Brihah Aranyaka Up.

It deals with the Real Self, or Atman, universal, undivided, common core of everything.

### (11) Kaushitaki Up.

Samsara and Moksa are discussed here.

### (12) Svetasvata Up.

It deals with the Ultimate Reality in men and in all beings.

### (13) Maitri Up.

Man's highest wish is that of knowing the Real Self.

Yoga is the way to lead us to the union with the Real Self.

### The Upanishads: Its main themes.

The main themes of the Upanishads are:

(A) The Real Self or Brahman.

(B) They give us two ways to find the Real Self.

(1) The external or experimental way.

(2) The internal or introspective way.

(C) They use many methods to describe Brahman.

(1) The affirmative method, calling Brahman the sun, the moon, the space, the air or gods presiding over all the natural phenomena.

(2) The negative method, always saying Neti, Neti, Brahman is not this, not that.

(3) The paradoxical method, saying that Brahman is great, is small; is far, is near; is active or is passive.

(4) The method of keeping quiet, because Brahman is ineffable.

(D) The Upanishads tend to describe Brahman as the Absolute Truth, from whom everything emanated. Brahman is self-effulgent.

Everything, in this world, issues from the Eternal, as threads from a spider, as plants from the earth, as hairs from the body, as sparks from a central fire. At the end of the evolution, everything will return to the bosom of the Eternal (Mundaka Up. 1.1.7). Atman is always present in man, as butter is always present in milk.(Amrtabindu Up. 20)

(E) Man has many layers, but in his inner core, there is Atman, the Eternal.

(F) Man is, in fact, composed of two men: One is limited, is subjected to birth and death, and to misery; Another is immense, immortal, and happy.

(G) Man has two kinds of knowledge: Intelligence and Intuition. Intelligence gives us material knowledge, while Intuition gives us transcendental knowledge.

(H) The Upanishads urge man to find out his Real Self. This is the summit of all knowledge, and to improve himself to realize the Real Self by means of Yoga.

(I) The Upanishads don't stress upon external ceremonies, and believe in the transmigration of the souls, and in Karma.

(K) The Upanishads teach us introspection.

"The senses turn outward," observe the Upanishads." Man, therefore, looks toward what is outside, and sees not the inward being. Rare is the wise man who...shuts his eyes to outward things and so beholds the glory of the Atman within." [\[1\]](#)

The Upanishads are then the essence of the Veda, and as they form the last part of the Veda, they are also called Vedanta. Vedanta is also the name of the philosophical school of Samkara: The Absolute Monism or Advaita.

The Upanishads are considered as an esoteric teaching. It should not be given to people that the mind be disturbed (Maitri Up. VI, 29. Svetasvatara Up. VI, 22.- Ait. Ar. 3.2.6.9.- Chand, Up. 3. 11.5.- Brih. 6.3.12.-Mund. 3.3.11).

The Upanishads gives to Indians a fundamental presupposition of all their thinking, it is the doctrine of universal immanence of an intelligent monism.

We find in Robert Ernest Hume a beautiful eulogy of the Upanishads. "They have also been taken up, said Robert Ernest Hume, by the theosophists, who recognize in them the source of deep mystic knowledge and look upon this group of texts 'as a word-scripture, that is to say, a scripture appealing to the lovers of religion and truth in all races and at all times, without distinction.' And occultists of many lands find in these treatises numerous hints of things hidden from ordinary sight and clues to progress on the pathway of spiritual attainment. "...And Western professional students of philosophy, as well as literary

historians, have felt and expressed the importance of the Upanishads. In the case of Arthur Schopenhauer, the chief of modern pantheists of the West, his philosophy is unmistakably transfused with the doctrines expounded in the Upanishads, a fact that might be surmised from his oft-quoted eulogy: 'It (i.e. Anquetil du Perron's Latin translation of a Persian rendering of the Upanishads) is the most rewarding and the most elevating reading which (with the exception of the original text there can possibly be in the world. It has been the solace of my life and will be of my death.' [2]

As a strenuous student of comparative religions since 45 years, I have read the Bible, The Koran, all the sacred books of Buddhism, of Confucianism, and of Taoism, I have seen that none of these books can be compared with the Upanishads, for its insight and introspection.

I don't accept the dualism of Samkhya (Purusa or Buddhi and Prakriti); neither do I accept the absolute dualism of Madhva, nor the conception of God of Ramanuja, but I accept the teaching of Sankara (c. AD 788-820), that is his Absolute Monism, because it has counterpart everywhere in the world. The teaching of Sankara, or the teaching of the Upanishads, can be resumed as follows:

"There is, says the Chand. Up. (7.25), a spiritual principle called Brahman, which creates the universe, pervades the universe, and is the universe:

That (i.e. the spiritual principle), indeed, is below. It is above. It is to the west. It is to the east. It is to the south. It is to the north. It, indeed, is the whole world.

The self or the soul (called Atman) also pervades the universe.

Next,, the instruction with regard to the Ego. I, indeed, am below. I am above. (etc.) Next, the instruction with regard to the soul. The Soul, indeed, is below. The Soul is above (etc.).

...The great teacher Sankara (c. 788-820) chose to have them meant that, the soul, the Atman, is identical with the all-pervasive spiritual principle, the Brahman, and that release is the experience of this identity. ...The Upanishads, he (Sankara) held, demonstrated that the pure self as pure being, pure intelligence, and pure bliss is itself the ultimate truth, and that the world and all else that is contingent is imperfect and false (Maya).

Moksa, or release, to the Vedanta "meant the dissociation of the self from the subjective psychosis and the world...The Vedanta...held that the world as such, has no real existence at all, but is only an illusory imagination which lasts till the moment when true knowledge is acquired".(From S.N. Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy)

To attain this knowledge, to separate the contingent from the eternal, to realize oneness with Brahman, no action or worship is necessary. Knowledge is what pierces the veil of ignorance that hides the truth. It is only necessary that a man lead a disciplined life, that he be no longer concerned with the things of this world, that he be able to discern what is transitory and what is permanent, that he be desirous and capable of peace, and that he exercise restraint and faith, and be capable of deep concentration... [3]

## Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is a small book of 18 chapters, excerpted from the epic Mahabharata of Vyasa, reporting the dialogue of the god Khrisna with the prince Arjuna. From the standpoint of religion, the Bhagavad Gita is less strict than the Upanishas. While the Upanishads sustains Absolute monism, the Bhagavad Gita proclaims that one can be saved:

By gnosis (The way of knowledge).

By ardent love (the way of devotion)

Or by unselfish action (The way of action)

The Bhagavad Gita accept all tendencies in Hinduism. It doesn't criticize ritualism, and sacrifice. It maintains that God can be impersonal or personal. It promotes both the Absolute Monism of Sankara, and the Dualism of Samkhya (Purusa and Prakriti).

Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his Autobiography, that "the Bhagavad Gita is the book par excellence for the knowledge of the Truth". [\[4\]](#)

A century ago, Thoreau could testify that his mind has been influenced by two books, Emerson's Essay on Nature and the Bhagavad Gita. [\[5\]](#)

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[\[1\]](#) Huston Smith, The Religions of Man, p. 16.

[\[2\]](#) The thirteen principal Upanishads, Robert Ernest Hume, Delhi, Oxford University Press, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, 1988, p. 3)

[\[3\]](#) The Encyclopedia Britannica, 1973-1974, VIII, 924.

[\[4\]](#) Huston Smith, The Religions of Man, 1958, Perennial Library, Harper & Row, publishers, New York, Evanston, London, p.57.

[\[5\]](#) Ib. 15.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 15

### Brahmanism and the Monistic Theory (II)

We can say immediately that the Monistic Theory is the basis of all the Indian Sacred Books: Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita. The main philosophical question that Indian seers pose is: Where does this universe come from? With what substance is it made? From whence does man come? How can he live? Who directs him? Et cetera.

Indian seers believe in Cosmic Unity. It means that everything in this world springs forth from one source, that is, the Supreme Being.

"In the beginning there was Existence, One only, without a second. Some say that in the beginning there was non-existence only, and that, out of that, the universe was born. But how could such a thing be? How could existence be born of non-existence? No, my son, in the beginning there was Existence alone - one only, without a second. He, the One, thought to himself: Let me be many, let me grow forth. Thus, out of himself he projected the universe; he entered in every being. All that is has itself in him alone. Of all thing he is the subtle essence. He is the truth. He is the Self. And that, Svetaketu, THAT ART THOU". [\[1\]](#)

Indian sages conceived that the soul of man, his Atman, is identical to Brahman. Brahman is the Universal Spirit, while Atman is the true Self of each individual. Atman and Brahman are identical. We can find our Atman in our innermost heart by stripping off everything external, that is to say, by introspection. We can find Brahman, the power which presents itself to us materialized in all existing things, which creates, sustains, preserves, and receives back into itself all worlds also by introspection, and generalization. We will find that, at last, Brahman is equal to the Atman, our most essential being, our individual self, the soul.

Thus, all the thoughts of the Upanishads move around these two fundamental ideas. These are (1) the Brahman, and (2) the Atman, The Brahman, conceived as the cosmic principle of the universe, the Atman as the psychical, the Self in our innermost heart. But the Brahman, in the last resort, is equal to the Atman. So the fundamental thought of the Upanishads may be expressed by this equation:

Brahman = Atman.

Or by this great saying:

"Tat Tvam Asi", "That Art Thou" (Chand. 6,7 f.)

and

aham brahma asmi, "I am Brahman" (Brih. 1.4.10).

These ideas are plainly expressed, such as found in the Chandogya Upanishad. (Chandogya Upanishad. 6.10 1, 2, 3), (Philosophical Language):

"These rivers, my dear, flow, the eastern toward the east, the western toward the west. They go just

from the ocean to the ocean. They become the ocean itself. As there they know not "I am this one", "I am that one", even so, indeed my dear, all creatures here, though they have come forth from Being, know not "we have come forth from Being." Whatever they are in this world, whether tiger, or lion, or wolf, or boar, or worm, or fly, or gnat, or mosquito, that they become.

That which is the finest essence - this whole world has that as its soul. That is Reality. that is Atman (soul). That Art Thou, Svetaketu. (Chandogya Upanishad,-6. 10. 1,2,3).or expressed in metaphor (Metaphorical Language):

As a spider ejects and retracts (the threads),  
 As the plants shoot forth on the earth,  
 As the hairs on the head and body of the living man,  
 So from the Imperishable, all that is here.  
 As the sparks from the well-kindled fire,  
 In nature akin to it, spring forth in their thousands;  
 So, my dear sir, from the Imperishable  
 Living beings of many kinds go forth,  
 And again return into him. [2]

Or expressed in Mythologies. (Mythological Language).

A late Rig Vedic hymn describes the creation of the world as a dismemberment of a cosmic man, Purusa, in a primeval sacrifice, and, from the parts of his body, were made the cosmos and the four classes of the society, the Brahmin, emanating from his mouth, the Ksatriya (kingly and warrior class) from his arms, the Vaisya (merchants) from his thighs, the Sudra (low caste) from his feet.(Rig Veda, X, 90) [3]

Instead of Purusha, The Rig Veda uses also the term Prajapati. [4]

The myth of the dismemberment of the Primeval Man into the world in India has its counterpart in many others countries, such as the myth of Bangu in China, of Ymir in ancient Scandinavia), of Yima in Iran, of Uranus in Greece, of Tiamat in Babylonia or of Mbombo of Center and Southern Africa et cetera.

Finally, it can be expressed symbolically in the forms of yantras or mandalas (Symbolical Language).

We find in these mandalas the point, or bindu, serving as a center, the triangle, the circle, and the square.

The bindu can be considered as "an ultimate figure beyond which energy cannot be condensed. It is an appropriate symbol of the first principle, the One. Therefore, the bindu is a 'Whole', or 'Full' (purna), the undifferentiated, all-embracing reservoir of the infinite. With these associations, the bindu symbol is viewed in cosmological term, as the creative matrix of the universe, the 'world-seed' (visva-bija), the point of origin and return of cosmological processes. Metaphysically, the bindu represent the unity of the static (male, Siva) and the kinetic (female, Sakti) cosmic principles, which expand to create the infinite universe of matter and spirit". [5]

Whereas the bindu is the gathering-up of forces, the circle represents the cyclical forces, the

contraction and expansion of astronomical revolution, and the round of cosmic rhythms. [6]

Most frequent are the diagrams formed by inter-penetration of two triangles, to form a star-hexagon: the upward pointing 'male' and the downward pointing 'female' generate the concept of the fusion of polarities, the male and female, spirit and matter, the static and the kinetic in a perfect state of unity. The numerical equivalent of this figure is 6. [7]

Similarly, the astakona (a figure with eight angles) results from the superposition of square on square; its allusion is to the number 8, a sign of infinity and associated with the eight directions of space and the endless cycle of time. [8]

"The square is the fundamental format of most yantras. It is the substratum, the receptacle and base of the manifest world. The square denotes the terrestrial world which must be transcended. Its prosaic regularity is contained by the compass points of the four cardinal directions, and its numerical equivalent is 4.

Four is a symbol of the world extended into four directions, uniting in its horizontal and vertical directions pairs of opposites, and representing the totality of space. The square is the form of order and perfection, the 'support' of the yantra figure". [9]

In sum, all Yantra or Mandala tend to suggest only one thing: the return to the center. 'Such a return shifts the center of the personality from a fragmented awareness of his ego-centric consciousness to cosmo-centric wholeness, and brings about the union of the individual and cosmic consciousness (Siva-Sakti). It means the death of the profane self, the perishable phenomenal ego, and a rebirth to an eternal deathless state of being'. [10]

In our body, we can find this center. It is located in the top of our head, in the place called the city of Brahman, or the heart, or the little house having the shape of a lotus. It is also commonly named as the Sahasrara Chakra, the seat of the Absolute (Siva-Sakti).

Now, we call it: The Third Ventricle.

"Within the city of Brahman, which is the body, there is the heart, and within the heart there is a little house. This house has a shape of a lotus, and within it dwells that which is to be sought after, and inquired about, and realized.

What, then, is that which dwells in this house, this lotus of the heart?

Even so large as the universe outside is the universe within the lotus of the heart. Within it are heaven and earth, the sun, the moon, the lightning and all the stars. Whatever is in macrocosm is in this microcosm.

Though old age comes to the body, the lotus of the heart does not grow old. It does not die with the death of the body. the lotus of the heart, where Brahman resides with all his glory - that, and not the body, is the true city of Brahman." [11]

The lotus of the heart, the bindu, can finally be equated with the sound-syllable Om, with its associations with the universe in all its manifestations. "In the Brhadaranyaka Up. (2,1.19) there is a metaphor of a spider sitting at the center of the web, issuing and reabsorbing its threads in concentric circles, all held at one point..."This apparently single metaphor also condenses the essence of the Indian thought: all existence is governed by a single principle, and the point of origin of the supreme

consciousness is simultaneously an infinite reservoir of collective energy, from which everything issues, and into which everything returns. This Center is the One, "the potential All-point" which not only serves as a bridge but is Cosmic Unity underlying the physical diversity of the world..." [12]

In sum, we see that Indian seers frequently use the symbol of the Center and concentric circles to represent the world.

"The bindu, sacred point of origin and return, with concentric circles symbolized the eternal cycles of cosmic evolution and involution. The goal of the adept is his own involution to the center, the ultimate point of psycho-cosmic integration, where he discovers his link with the Whole." [13]

Man, every man, is destined to become one with the Whole. This implies that we should evolve from the "unreal self" to the state of eternal union, or "true self". This can be done only in many lives. This is why Hinduism postulates the 'Transmigration' of the souls. Hinduism admits also that everything happened to us in our life depends on what we have done in this life or in our past life. This is called the law of Karma.

Thus, for a Hindu, the goal of life is to find truth, is the quest for the real, for the unity of the diversified world, in brief, for the key of the universe. Many of us know already these three verses of the Brih. Up. 1,3,28:

'From the unreal lead me to the real.  
From darkness lead me to the light.  
From death lead me to immortality.'

Everything is contained already in our body; the entire universe is already in this; we have not to find anywhere the topic of our study:

In your body is Mount Meru  
encircled by the seven continents;  
the rivers are there too,  
the seas, the mountains, the plains,  
and the gods of the fields.  
Prophets are to be seen in it, monks,  
places of pilgrimage  
and the deities presiding over them.  
The stars are there, and the planets,  
and the sun together with the moon;  
there too are the two cosmic forces:  
that which destroys, that which creates;  
and all the elements: ether,  
air and fire, water and earth.  
Yes, in your body are all things

that exist in the three worlds,  
 all performing their prescribed functions  
 around Mount Meru;  
 He alone who knows this  
 is held to be a true yogi. [\[14\]](#)

All this view reminds us these verses of Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

"Earth's crammed with heaven,  
 And every common bush afire with God,  
 But only he who sees takes off his shoes."

According to the Upanishads, the Real Self in man, is God; Atman is Brahman. Everything external is considered as not-self, or Maya, or Illusion, or Avidya, or Samsara, or Prakriti. This reminds us of the theory of Parmenides, of Plato, of Kant and of Schopenhauer. According to Parmenides, this entire universe of change is merely phenomenal. Plato considered it as a world of shadows. In the phraseology of Kant, they are not "things in themselves" but only apparitions. For the Hindus, the "I" is a delusion, the individual is merely phenomenal, and the only reality is the Infinite One - "That art Thou". For Schopenhauer, "Whoever is able to say this to himself, with regard to every being with whom he comes in contact," - "Whoever is clear-eyed and clear-souled enough to see that we are all members of one organism, all of us little currents in an ocean of will, - "he is certain of all virtue and blessedness, and is on the direct road to salvation". [\[15\]](#)

The Upanishads urged us toward self-fulfillment. It means that we should realize our Essence. Is it not the theory of entelechy that Aristotle professed?

So we must advance, penetrating deeper and deeper into the kernel of the living being, to the self of life, of mind and of knowledge.

In the kernel of our life, we will see our metaphysical I, our divine self, persisting in untarnished purity through all the aberrations of human nature, eternal blessed, - in a word, our Atman.

I would like to repeat after Troy Wilson Organ, author of The Hindu Quest for the Perfection of Man, that "there are no opinions required to be held in order to be a Hindu, unless it be the notion that Man-the-Less must become Man-the-More, that man is the deity -in-posse: "O man you are born for perfection" sang an ancient sage. [\[16\]](#)

And it also recalls me of this verse of the Svetasvatara Upanishad: "That Eternal which rests in the Self should be known. Truly there is nothing beyond this to be known." [\[17\]](#)

### Hinduism as Mysticism

We have said that everything in this world come from one Cosmic Stuff. Be it called as Supreme Being, or Ultimate Reality, or Brahman, we must know that this world is created by the Substance of this Ultimate Reality and not ex nihilo, not 'from nothing'. This is the doctrine of universal immanence of an intellectual monism. The Brihad Aranyaka Up. 2.5.5.15 said: "As all the spokes are held together in the

hug and felly of a wheel, just so in this Soul all things, all gods, all worlds, all breathing things, all shelves are held together". It also said: "As the spider might come out with his thread, as small sparks come forth from the fire, even so from this Soul come forth all vital energies (prana), all worlds, all gods, all beings". (Brihad Aranyaka Up.2.1.20). Monism is then the ruling conception of the world, for the world is identical with Atman. "Atman alone is the whole world." (Chand. 7.25.2). [\[18\]](#)

If the Eternal is a man, the world is then his members (Rig Veda X, 90). If the Eternal is a spider, the world will be the threads coming out of its body (Brihad Aranyaka Up. 2. 1. 20). If the Eternal is the earth, the world will be herbs arising from it (Mundaka Up. 1,7). The Eternal and the world are like salt and water. When salt is dissolved in the water, where is water, there is salt. (Chand. Up. 6,13; 1,3).

With these notions in mind, the mystics can have two ways of thinking:

(1) Or they consider Brahman as the whole world. "Brahma, indeed, is this immortal. Brahma before, Brahma behind, to right and to left. Stretched forth below and above, Brahma, indeed is this whole world" (Mundaka Up. 2. 11). "Om! This syllable is this whole world. Its further explanation is: The past, the present, the future - everything is just the word Om. And whatever else that transcends three-fold time - that, too, is just the word Om. For truly, everything here is Brahma. This self (Atman) is Brahma." (Mandukya Upa. 1. 1 - Taittiriya Up, 1.8.1). "As fire (Agni) he warms. He is the sun (Surya). He is the beautiful rain (Parjanya). He is the wind (Vayu). He is the earth, matter (rayi), God (deva). Being (sat) and non-Being (asat), and what is immortal. (Prasna Up. 2.5)." He entered in here, even to the fingernail-tip, as a razor in a razor case, or fire in a fire holder (i.e. the fire-wood) (Brih. Up. 1.4. 7)

(2) Or they consider Brahman, or Atman as the core, the kernel of everything. "This Soul of mine, within the heart is smaller than a grain of rice, or a barley-corn, or a mustard-seed or a grain of millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet; this Soul of mine within the heart is greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than these worlds." (Chand. Up. 3.14.3). "He is your soul, which is in all things... Explain to me him who is just the Brahma present and not beyond our ken, him who is the Soul in all things" (Brih. Up. 3.4.2). "He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, The Immortal (Brih. 3. 7. 7. See also Brih, 3. 7, Chand. Up. 6, 12, 3 and 6, 13, 3). "Verily, Kapya, he who knows that thread and the so-called Inner Controller knows Brahma, he knows the worlds, he knows the gods, he knows the Vedas, he knows created things, he knows the Soul, he knows everything,"(Brihad Aranyaka Up. 7,1). "He is the key to all knowledge. "(The thirteen principal Upanishads translated from the Sanskrit, by Robert Ernest Hume p. 30). "That supreme object is just this Brahma, this Atman, who is in the world, who is the Great Self, the ground of oneself. He is the highest object of knowledge." (Ib. p. 30). "That Art Thou" (Chand. Up. 6.8. 16)

"Reality is One. Diversity and manifestations are only an appearance." (The Thirteen Principal Upanishads translated from the Sanskrit, by Robert Ernest Hume, p. 36).

"There is on earth no diversity.

He gets death after death,

Who perceives here seeming diversity.

As a unity only is It to be looked upon

This indemonstrable enduring Being"

(Brih. 4.4. 19-20)

" The Inner Soul (Antaratman) of all things...

Who makes his one form manifold" (Katha 5,12)

According to the Kathaka Upa. 3.1, the Supreme and the individual self are distinguished as light and shadow, and according to 2.23, the knowledge of the Atman depends upon a kind of free grace:

Only by the man whom he chooses is he comprehended,

To him the Atman reveals his essence.

(Paul Deussen, The Philosophy of the Upanishads, 1966, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, p. 177)

In the S'vetas'vatara, God and the Soul, though their original identity is not denied, are clearly distinguished from one another. In S'vetas'vatara 4. 6,7 it is said:

Two bright-feathered bosom friends

Flit around one and the same tree;

One of them tastes the sweet berries,

The other, without eating, merely gazes down.

On such a tree the spirit, depressed,

In its weakness mourns, a prey to illusion,

Yet when it gazes worshipping on the might

And majesty of the other, then its grief departs.

(Paul Deussen, The Philosophy of the Upanishads, p. 177)

" Hinduism quests for reality and for spirituality. Spirituality is the striving for realities and values which always elude man. Spirituality is self-transcendence. The spiritual is the Perfecting of Man, the Divinizing (sic) of Man, for in Hinduism, the metaphysical axiological principles of divinity and humanity tend to blend into one another. Hinduism deifies man and humanizes God. The spiritual man is the man in process toward the god-man." [\[19\]](#)

Man as a self is a thing aspiring to Being. Man becomes what he is. his is-ness is his becoming. He is a becoming, not a being. His "being" is becoming-ness. his is-ness is in process such that he never is the finality of beast or god. He creatively discovers what he is, and he discovers creatively what he can become. The self is always infinitely more than it would be if it were only what it is. [\[20\]](#)

"To find God, man must looked inside. "The yogi is testing an hypothesis: that the deepest truth is opened only to those who turn their attention inward, and in this experiment the physical senses, so useful elsewhere, can be nothing but busy-bodies. "the senses turn outward," observe the Upanishads. "man therefore, looks toward what is outside, and sees not the inward being. Rare is the wise man who... shuts his eyes to outward things and so beholds the glory of the Atman within.'

Five hundred years later the Bhagavad-Gita takes up the theme like an echo:

Only that yogi

Whose joy is inward,

Inward his peace,

And his vision inward  
 Shall come to Brahman  
 And knows Nirvana". [\[21\]](#)

To find God hidden everywhere, in everything, is the true knowledge:

Who sees his Lord  
 Within every creature  
 Deathlessly dwelling  
 Amidst the mortal,  
 That man sees truly.  
 Who sees the separate  
 Lives of all creatures  
 United in Brahman  
 Brought forth from Brahman,  
 Himself finds Brahman. [\[22\]](#)

To know our essence, to know that Brahman has a living abode in our self is the sine qua non condition of becoming saints and seers

"A person of the measure of a thumb is the Inner Soul (Antaratman),  
 Ever seated in the heart of creature.  
 He is framed by the heart, by the thought, by the mind,  
 They who know that become immortal." (Svetasvatara Up. 3,13)

"By knowing what is therein, Brahma-knowers become merged in Brahma,  
 intent thereon, liberated from the womb (i.e. from rebirth) (Svet. 1.7)

"That Eternal should be known as present in the self (Atmasamstha). Truly there is nothing higher than that to be known,

When one recognizes the enjoyer, the object of enjoyment, and the universal Actuator, All has been said. This is the threefold Brahma." (Svetas. 1. 12)

The Monistic Theory in Hinduism has a famous conclusion for Man: Man is God himself. Tat Tvam Asi. (Chand. Up. 6.9.4 - 6.10.3 - 6.11.3. 6.12.3 - 6.13. 3 - 6.14.3 - 6.15.3 - 6.16.3 - 6.8.5.)

"Verily that great, unborn Soul, undecaying, undying, immortal, fearless, is Brahma. Verily Brahma is fearless. He who knows this becomes the fearless Brahma." (Brih. Up. 4.4. 25)

" He, verily, who knows that supreme Brahma, becomes very Brahma" (Mundaka Up.2.9).

In the title to his Latin translation, 'Oupnekhat,' Anquetil Duperron set this sentence evidently as the summary of the contents of the Upanishads: 'Quisquis Deum intelligit, Deus fit,' 'whoever knows God, becomes God.' [\[23\]](#)

In India, many saints and seers are, in fact, living illustrations of the Monistic Theory and Mysticism. As proof, a summary of Shankara's life will corroborate this idea.

Shankara was born in the late Eighth Century. He is best known for his doctrine of absolute or unqualified monism, or absolute nonduality, which, briefly stated, is that Brahman alone is real, the phenomenal world is unreal or mere illusion. The individual soul has no reality apart from Brahman, though caught by maya or illusion ; they, as well as the world around them, seem to have a kind of reality. This is due to ignorance of the alone reality of Brahman. This being so, salvation or moksha comes in the knowledge of the identity of the individual soul with the world soul, Brahman. [\[24\]](#)

Shankara had a prodigious memory; anything his teachers said stuck in his mind forever. What the average student learned in twelve years Shankara learned in one.

His teacher was Govindapada, a most realized man on earth, a man who had traveled inward into himself, to the very core of his being. Shankara implored Govindapada to make him heir to the knowledge of self-realization.

Govindapada taught him four sutras:

**Prajnam Brahma** Brahman is pure consciousness

**Ayatma Brahma** Soul is Brahman

**Tat tvam Asi** You are that consciousness

**Aham Brahmasmi** I am Brahman.

At the age of twelve, Shankara was sent by his teacher to Banares to teach people on how they could understand their real selves. Indeed, his tender age, coupled with his extensive knowledge and deep insight, astounded all who came to see him. From that time onward, Shankara became known as Acharya (Teacher) or Shankaracharya.

At Banaras Shankaracharya turned the tide of atheism. He compiled commentaries on the Brahma Sutra, Bhagavad Gita, and the principle Upanishads, all of which explained the non-dual substance, Brahman, as the ultimate reality. Shankaracharya comments on the nature of Brahman as that which is beyond the senses, impersonal, formless, eternal, and unchangeable, as the summum bonum of the Absolute Truth. According to Shankaracharya, that which is known as the Atma or soul is but a covered portion or illusioned part of the Supreme Brahman. That illusion, says Shankaracharya, is due to the veil of maya, which is created out of ignorance or forgetfulness of the True Self.

Shankaracharya's theory of illusion states that, although the Absolute Truth is never transformed, we think that it is so, which is an illusion. Shankaracharya did not believe in the transformation of the energy of the Absolute. Acceptance of the transformation of energy would have necessitated the acceptance of the Personality of the Absolute Truth or the personal existence of God- full-fledged theism. According to Shankaracharya we ourselves are God. When the veil of ignorance is removed, man will realize his complete identity as being inseparable from the Supreme Being or God.

Shankaracharya 's conviction was that the spiritual substance, Brahman, is supra-mundane -separate from the gross and subtle bodies of mind and intelligence in this world. Shankaracharya further stressed that mukti, or liberation from the cycle of birth and death, is possible only when the living being renounces his relationship with the material world. Shankaracharya says that the concept of "I" and "Mine"- I am an individual and these are my possessions: wife, children, property, etc.- are the causes of bondage to material existence and must be forsaken. Thus, the bulk of his followers were, and continue to be, celibate. Therefore, it is apparent that Shankaracharya was the partisan of Adwaita-vedanta. He stressed that the main purpose of the Vedas is this: Brahman alone is real; the phenomenal world is an illusion; and the individual soul is identical with Brahman. For him, rituals can lead only to karma- both good and bad, which prevents one from attaining self-realization. Then the only goal of the Vedas is Brahman.

Shankaracharya died at the age of thirty-two. [25]

Thus, we see that Shankaracharya devoted his whole life to illustrating the Monistic Theory and Mysticism.

- [1] The Upanishads, Breath of the Eternal, translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester (a Mentor Book from New American Library, New York) copyright by Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, California.
- [2] Mund. 1.1.7 and 2. 1. 1. - Brih. 2. 1. 20. - Paul Deussen, The Philosophy of the Upanishad.1966, Dover Publications, Inc. 180 Varick Street, New york, N.Y.10014, p. 163.
- [3] Cavendish, Richard, Mythology, an illustrated Encyclopedia, 1980, p. 16 and 32.
- [4] Rig veda X, 90 ; Yajurveda (VS, XXXI, XXXII; Atharvaveda, XII, 6 7 X, 2; Taittiriya Up. 1,5.1.-1,6.1; Aitareya Up. 1. 1-5.
- [5] Yantra, the tantric symbol of cosmic unity. Madhu Khanna, 1979, Thames and Hudson Ltd, London, Printed in Great Britain by Balding & Mansell, Cambridgeshire, p. 31.
- [6] Ib. p. 32.
- [7] Ib. p. 32.
- [8] Ib. p. 33.
- [9] Ib. p. 33.
- [10] Ib. p. 80.
- [11] Ib. p. 33.- Chandogya Up. (VIII, I, 1-3)
- [12] Ib. p. 12.
- [13] Andhra Pradesh, c. 19th century. Wood.- Ib. p. 168.
- [14] Siva Samhita 2, 1-3, text cited and translated by Jean Varenne in Yoga and the Hindu Tradition, p. 155.- Ib. p. 119.
- [15] Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy, 1971, The Pocket Book Edition, p. 339.

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[16] Troy Wilson Organ, The Hindu Quest for the Perfection of Man, 1970, Ohio University Athens, Ohio, p. 4.

[17] Ib. p. 23.

[18] The thirteen principal Upanishads translated from the Sanskrit, by Robert Ernest Hume, Geoffrey Cumberlege Oxford University Press, 1951, p. 1,2, 21.

[19] Troy Wilson Organ, The Hindu Quest for the Perfection of Man, 1970. Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, p.64.

[20] Ib. p. 69.

[21] Huston Smith, the Religions of Man, 1958, Harper & Brothers, p. 57)

[22] Bhagavad Gita, translated by Swami Prabhavananda, and Christopher Isherwood, Nancy Wilson Ross, Three Ways of Asian Wisdom, a Clarion Book, Published by Simon and Shuster, New York, 10020, 1969, p. 12.

[23] Robert Ernest Hume, The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, 1988, Delhi Oxford University press, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, p. 377.

[24] Vergilius Ferm, An encyclopedia of Religion, The Philosophical Library of New York, 1945, p. 707.

[25] The Clarion Call, magazine, Volume I, No 3, Summer 1988, Shankara the incarnation of Shiva. Jeffrey Wallace, p. 14-17, 60-61.

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# The Monistic Theory

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## Chapter 16

### Confucianism and the Monistic Theory

Confucianism gets its name from Confucius (the Anglicized pronunciation of Kung-Fu-Tzu which means "Kung the Teacher"). It was one of the great religions that have dominated China, and its satellites, such as Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Vietnam, for more than two thousand years.



**Confucius : The Teacher-Standard of All Eternity** (Wan-shih shih-piao : 萬世師表)

Brevity shall be the primary consideration in the life of Confucius. Suffice it to mention that he lived from 551 to 479 B.C., almost at the same time as Zoroaster in Iran, Ezekiel in Israel, Pythagoras in Greece, Lao-Tzu in China, and Buddha in India.

"The Confucian literature, as traditionally conceived, consists of the so-called Five Classics and Four Books.

"The Five Classics: Book of Rites, Book of Change, Book of History, Book of Poetry, and Spring and Autumn Annals- were, with one exception, in existence before Confucius's time. But they were edited by him and his followers, so that, in the form in which they appear, they definitely reflect a Confucian perspective.

"The exception is the Spring and Autumn Annals, a history of the Chou era from 721 to 481 B. C. which has traditionally been ascribed to Confucius himself.

"The Four Books are the more distinctively Confucian sources. Foremost among them is the Analects-disconnected sayings of Confucius that were preserved by his disciples.

"Then there are the Golden Mean and the Great Learning- expanded chapters from the Book of Rites, as interpreted by Confucius and refracted through the understanding of his early followers.

"These two books are collections of essays on basic Confucian themes, such as the Superior Man, the Nature of true manhood, the significance of ritual, of education and of music, the art of government, the moral order of the universe.

"The last of the Four Books is the Book of Mencius, containing the doctrines of a great Confucian thinker who lived two centuries after Confucius. Mencius' work comes closest, of these varied materials, to exemplifying what the West would expect in a systematic moral and religious philosophy. [1]

### Confucianism and the Monistic Theory

Confucius, according to his own words, did not create a new religion, but only handed down the religion and the doctrines as practiced and taught in the remote antiquity, by ancient Chinese Holy Sovereigns.

He did not create a new line of politics but displayed only politics and regulations as applied by the emperors of ancient times.

He did not create any new convention and institution, but endeavored only to find out and to conform to natural laws.

In other words, he only fostered what is ideal, pertaining to religion, moral, and politics, and promoted what is universal, eternal and natural.

It is said in the Doctrine of the Mean: "Chung Ni handed down the doctrine of Yao and Shun, as if they had been his ancestors, and elegantly displayed the regulations of Wan and Woo, taking them as his models. Above, he harmonizes with the lines of Heaven, and below he was conformed to the water and land (Doctrine of the Mean, Chap. XX).

To find out the religious life of the ancient China, we must therefore refer ourselves to ancient Sovereigns of China, such as:

Yao (Nghieu; 2757-2255 B.C.).

Shun (Thuấn; 2255-2205 B.C.)

Iu (Đại Võ, 2205-2197 B.C.)

Wan (Văn Vương; 1258?- ? B.C.)

Woo (Võ Vương; 1122- 1115 B.C.)

We can say ancient, if we figure that the Flood occurred, according to some Christian books, at about 2400 B.C., that Abraham lived around 1800 and Moses around 1200 B.C. [2]

We must also survey a historical period spanning over almost two thousand years before Confucius.

It points out some very important religious features: Chinese people, then, believed in God, considering Him as a creator, a judge and a sovereign who rules the world through the agency of Holy Kings, named Sons of God. (Cf. Book of Poetry, and Book of History).

God was in the Heaven, but at the same time, He was very close to people, helping them, protecting them, conducting them and chastening them if necessary. It is said in the Book of Poetry:

" Revere the anger of God,  
 And presume not to make sport or be idle.  
 Revere the changing moods of God,  
 And presume not to drive about (at your pleasure).  
 Great God is intelligent,  
 And is with you, in all your goings.  
 Great God is clear seeing,  
 And is with you in your wanderings and indulgences." [3]

We can also illustrate this closeness of God with people, by two other historical traits:

a). When King Woo (Võ Vương) confronted the immense army of the tyrant Shou (Trụ Vương), in the wilderness of Muh (Mục Dã), the slogan to raise his morale and the morale of his soldiers, was "GOD IS WITH YOU, have no doubts in heart". [4]

b). After the battle, Shou (Trụ Vương) fled to the "Stag Tower" (Lộc Đài) and burned himself to death. In the mean time, Woo (Võ Vương), having received the congratulations of the princes on his victory, pressed on after the tyrant. On arriving at the capital, the people were waiting outside the walls in anxious expectations, which the king relieved by sending his officers among them with the words: "Supreme God is sending down blessings". The multitude reverently saluted the king, who bowed to them in return, and hurried onto the place where the dead body of Shou (Trụ) was". [5]

Moreover, the Ancient Holy Sovereigns believed that God was really present in their soul. For them, God was really their essential and true nature and their changing phenomenal soul was only a veil or at most an expression of God. It is said in the Shoo King:

"The human Self is restless and changing  
 The divine Self is very recondite,  
 Realize purity,  
 Realize Oneness,  
 Stick to your Central Self." [6]

Thus was the profession of faith of the Holy Kings, two thousand years B. C.

Talking plainly, we say:

"Under the changing garb of our human self, there is a Divine Self, recondite indeed, but nevertheless real. It serves as our kernel, our ground, our Central Self. Recognizing this essential and divine nature, we perfect our self, purify our self, and realize oneness with this Central Self."

In other words, man's ultimate goal is to become perfect, to be united to God, recondite in his own soul, and to become an expression of God.

King Wan (Vãn Vương) was so called because he was so virtuous that he was in fact considered as an expression of God. (The She King, Decade of King Wan, Ode 1, 7, p. 431).

Confucius, when his life was endangered, when he was surrounded by the people of K'wang (Khương), claimed also that his was really an expression of God, exactly as King Wan. He said: "After the death of King Wan, was not the expression (of God) conferred to me? If God has wished to let his expression perish, then I should not have got such an honor. While God does not let his expression perish, what can the people of K'wang do to me?" (Analects, IX, 5).

Commenting on Confucianism, Father Mateo Ricci, a Jesuit who came to China to preach Gospel, at the XVIIth century, has written:

"I have noted many passages (of their Scriptures) that are in favor of our faith, such as the unity of God, the immortality of the soul, the glory of the Blessed ones, etc". [7]

Father Lecomte (1655-1728) was more enthusiastic:

"The Chinese religion, seems to have conserved intact and pure, in the course of the ages, the primary truths revealed by God to the first human being. China, happier than any other country in the world, has drawn almost from the fountain-head, the holy and primary truths of its ancient religion.

"The first emperors built temples to God and it is not a small glory to China for having sacrificed to the Creator in the most ancient temple of the world. The primary piety is conserved in the people thanks to the Emperors who endeavored to maintain it, so that idolatry could not penetrate in China." [8]

But the Roman Catholic Church has condemned all these views.

The first emperors referred to, were:

Hwang Te (Hoàng Đế; 2697-2597 B. C.)

Yao (Nghiêu; 2357-2555 B.C.)

Shun (Thuần; 2255-2205 B.C.)

Iu (Đại Võ, 2205-2197 B.C.)

Wan (Văn Vương; 1258-? B.C.)

Woo (Võ Vương; 1122-1115 B.C.)

It is worth to note that these emperors lived before, or at least, at the period of the Biblical Flood, and much longer before Abraham (1800).

In the metaphysical standpoint, Confucianism, through the agency of the I Ching (Dịch Kinh), sustained that everything is rooted in God and has sprung out from God.

After multifarious changes and mutations through time and space, after a long dialectical and cyclical movement of expansion and contraction, of extroversion and introversion aimed at its fulfillment, everything will return to God as its original soul.

This is called the theory of Cyclical change (Tian di xun huan zhong er fu shi: Thiên Địa Tuần Hoàn, Chung Nhi Phục Thủy).

God is then the quintessence of everything, and the unifying principle of the universe. He is transcendent, at the same time immanent in everything. The phenomenal world consequently is only various expressions of this essential Being, exactly as the eight trigrams or the sixty four hexagrams are various expressions of the Wu Chi (Vô Cực) or T'ai chi (Thái Cực).

For Confucius, God, and the perfection of God, is in the Center of everything. The aim of our study is

to find out this Center, this Kernel. It is said in the beginning of the Great Learning: "What the Great Learning teaches is to brighten the mirror of the Conscience; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest perfection. The point where to rest being known, the object of the pursuit is then determined; and that being determined, a calm unperturbedness may be attained to. To that calmness there will succeed a tranquil repose. In that repose there may be careful deliberation, and that deliberation will be followed by the attainment of the desired end.

"Things have their roots and their branches. Affairs have their end and their beginning. To know what is first and what is last will lead near to Religion.

"The ancients who wished to let their Conscience shine throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they first regulate their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivate their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectify their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thought, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the Discovery of the Kernel of everything.

The Kernel of everything being discovered, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their States were rightly governed. Their states being rightly regulated, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.

"From the Son of God down to the mass of the people all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides." (Cf. J. Legge, *The Great Learning*, p. 358-359).

The Kernel of everything is also called The Eternal Center (Trung Dung), The Center and Equilibrium (Trung Chính), the Supreme Summit (Thái Cực), the One (Nhất), or The Eternal Religion (Trung Đạo). Names can vary, but the Idea remain the same.

This idea of God as origin, sustainer and indweller of the universe and of the human soul is similarly expressed many times in the Upanishads.

According to the Indian Upanishads, The Great Self or Person is the eternal axis which keeps the universe in being. He is God who controls the world from within, the ground on which all existence is woven. [\[9\]](#)

Applied to man, this cosmic view helps to solve the enigma of the human sphinx.

Instead of being composed of body and soul as sustained by Christian theology, man according to Confucianism, is tripartite. He has: A divine Self (Sing, Tính) or spiritual Self. A psychological or human Self (Sin, Tâm). A corporeal or material self (K'io, Xác)

He is then a real microcosm reflecting the macrocosm. This tripartite conception of man, denied by Christian theology, is however amazingly contained in the Old, as well as, in the New Testament.

In the Bible, Spirit and Soul are referred to as two different entities. The Spirit is designated by the term Ruah in Hebrew, Pneuma in Greek and Spiritus in Latin. The Soul is designated by Nephesh in Hebrew, Psyche in Greek and Anima in Latin.

This tripartite conception of man is clearly referred to by St Paul in 1 Thessalonians, 5, 25. "May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and

blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (I Thess. 5, 23). In The Epistle to Hebrews, St Paul considered Spirit and Soul as two different entities. He said: "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any edge sword, piercing to the division of soul (Psyche) and Spirit (Pneuma). (Hebrews, 4, 12)

Freud, on his own, has also recognized three factors in man behavior: The Id or the animal self, The Ego, The Superego.

The Superego can be compared with the Spirit. It is also what Carl Jung has called the Collective Unconscious, and William James has called the Mystical or Cosmic Consciousness.

Now, if we put aside our corporeal body, that everyone can easily experience, we realize that the master-key to unlock the mysteries not only of Confucianism, but also of all great religion in the world, is the "Spirit and Soul Theory".

a)- According to Confucianism, the Spirit or our true nature (Sing; Tính), is in fact divine. It is the "Divine Spark" (Ming te; Minh Đức) referred to in the Great Learning; the Nature (Sing; Tính) referred to in the Doctrine of the Mean. Mencius sustained therefore that this Nature is truly good. [\[10\]](#)

It is also nothing else than our Moral Conscience, where all the moral laws are written by God.

The Book of Poetry said:

"God is giving birth to the multitude of the people,  
To every faculty and relationship annexed its law.  
The people possess this normal nature,  
And they consequently love its normal virtue" [\[11\]](#)

The Doctrine of the Mean sustained that the model of perfection is not to be far-fetched. It can be found in our own Spiritual Self. [\[12\]](#) "Therefore, the superior man governs man according to their nature, with what is proper to them, and as soon as they change what is wrong, he stops". [\[13\]](#)

This assertion reminds us of one similar passage in the Deuteronomy, where God, after giving the Ten Commandments to Israel, has said: "For these commandments which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say: Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither it is beyond the sea, that you should say: Who will go over the sea, for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is in your mouth, and in your heart, so that you can do it!" (Deuteronomy, 30, 11-14)

That also reminds us of one passage of Jeremiah: "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after these days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts..." (Jeremiah, 31, 33)

b). On the other hand, the soul or our Ego is human, and consequently imperfect. It should be educated, chastened and harnessed to become perfect. Our soul can be dissipated easily by external agents. This is what Confucianism called the loss of the soul. Mencius complained that people are losing their soul and do not know how to seek for it. He said: "When men's fowls and dogs are lost, they know how to seek for them again, but they lose their soul and don't know how to seek for it. The great end of learning is nothing else but to seek for the lost soul. (Mencius, VI, I. 11)

The true religion, for a Confucian, is then the quest for this Divine Self, the gradual realization of this

Divine Self. Mencius said: "All things are already complete in us. A conversion inward for self-fulfillment will give us a highest pleasure" (The work of Mencius, Book VII, Pt. I, Chap. 4).

Conversion is then man's turning back to his truest nature. Wang-Yang-Ming (Vương Dương Minh), another Confucian philosopher of a later period (1472-1529) sustained the same view. "Every man, said he, has an inborn Divine mind, which is our Spiritual Self, namely our moral Conscience. The moral Conscience is the same in the sage and in the fool. The difference resides in that the sage keeps the conscience clear and fulfill himself according to its directives, while the fool obscures it and neglects its suggestions". [14]

The SPIRIT-SOUL Theory can be proved by the teachings of any great religion.

Buddhism has the Buddha-Nature (Dharmakaya) and the Illusory Ego.

The Quran accepts also a threefold state of man: The Physical State or Nafs-Ammara. The Moral State or Nafs-Lawwama. The Spiritual State or Nafs-Mutmainnah. [15]

Taoism has the Tao and the Human Soul.

St Paul referred to a Psychological Body, and a Spiritual Body in his first Corinthians (I. Cor. 12, 44).

Ancient Greek philosophers distinguished the "Nus" or Divine Mind from the "Psyche" or the Soul.

Hinduism has the Atman and the Individual Soul theory. In the Chandogya Upanishad, The Atman is referred to as "this Soul of mine within the heart is smaller than a grain of rice, or a barley-corn, or a mustard-seed, or a grain of millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet; this Soul of mine within the heart is greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than these worlds. Containing all worlds, containing all desires, containing all odors, containing all tastes, encompassing this whole world, the unspeaking, the unconcerned-this is the Soul of mine within the heart, this is Brahma. Into him I shall enter on departing hence. If one would believe this, he would have no more doubt." (The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, Robert Ernest Hume, 1988, Printed in India, 3, 14.)

To illustrate these two parts radically different but at the same time merged together, Tagore resorts to "the dewdrop and the sun-ray" parable.

The dew-drop complains to the sun: "I am longing for you, but never I dare nourish the hope to serve you. I am too little to attract you, O almighty God, and in all my life I will be tearful! The sun replies: "I am illuminating the immense sky, but I do take care of the small dew-drop. I will be a light ray, and will overwhelm Thee, and thy life will be a world of brightness. (Nguyễn Đăng Thục, Lịch Sử Triết Học Đông Phương, III, p. 10)

We can sum up these preceding ideas as follows:

God is not far from man. He is very close to man, not only close, but resides in fact in the innermost of the human soul.

The true human nature partakes to the nature of God.

Human nature, as well as human destiny, is then sublime.

The insight of the relationship between God and man helps Confucius to understand the true destiny of man.

According to Confucius, man should use his life for self-perfecting in order to reach the highest state of perfection, rendering him worthy to be united to God. At the same time, he should also help other people

to cultivate themselves and to perfect themselves.

"Consequently, the basic concern is no longer the struggle for life, for the precarious requisites of continued physical existence, it is instead the quest for the good life, for the finest moral and spiritual realization of which man is capable under the complex condition that a civilized society confronts". [\[16\]](#)

It is said in the beginning of the Doctrine of the Mean:

"What God has conferred, is called the Nature,

The realization of this Nature is called Religion.

The illustration of this Religion, is called Instruction.

This Religion may not be severed from us even for an instant.

If it could be severed, it would not be the Religion."

And a little bit further:

"Our Central Self or Moral Being is the great basis of existence, and harmony or moral order is the universal law in the world. When our true Central Self and harmony are realized, the universe then become a cosmos and all things attain their full growth and development." [\[17\]](#)

Chu hsi (Chu Hi), commenting on this first chapter of the Doctrine of the Mean, has said: "This religion is to be traced to its origin, to God, and is unchangeable, while the substance of it is provided in our self and may not be departed from...The learner should direct his thoughts inward and by searching in himself, there find these truths so that he might put aside all outward temptations appealing to his selfishness, and fill up the measure of the goodness which is natural to him ". [\[18\]](#)

A true Confucian, believing that God is immanent and present in his soul, will behave himself always very properly. "Going out of home, he is reverent as if he has to welcome a distinguished guest; in dealing with people he is respectful as if he is performing a ritual ceremony." [\[19\]](#) Alone, he is furthermore careful and reverent, venerating Him who is invisible, fearing Him who is inaudible, but from Whose view nothing is left unsighted. [\[20\]](#)

The quest for the Divine is then at the same time, the quest for self-fulfillment.

God, being immanent in our soul, the model of perfection is also contained in our innermost self.

Consequently, the Great Learning consists of discovering this divine nature; the noblest duty of man is to rekindle this Divine Spark latent in him.

The self-fulfillment should be rooted in this transcendental discovery, because only the discovery of one's own divine nature can truly help man to transform himself and fulfill himself completely.

Translated into Christian language, it means that the Kingdom of God is not far, it is already within us (Mat. 3,2.- Luke 17,21)

This knowledge and this fulfillment begins from the innermost of an eminent man and will irradiate and propagate themselves to other people, from the family, to the nation, from the nation to the world, for the benefit of the whole mankind.

The essential rule of conduct of a superior man is the imitation of God. (The I Ching, Chien hexagram, the Image.)

Now if perfection is the lot of God; the attainment of perfection is the lot of man. [\[21\]](#)

It is rather amazing to note that five hundred years later, Jesus Christ has taught to humanity the same lesson:

"You therefore, said he, must be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect". (Mat. 4, 48)

According to the Doctrine of the Mean, Goodness, Knowledge and Energy are three cardinal virtues leading to perfection. [\[22\]](#)

It is said in the Doctrine of the Mean:

"He who desires to attain to perfection, is he who chooses what is good, and firmly holds it fast.

" To this attainment, there are requisite the extensive study of what is good, accurate inquiry about it, careful reflection on it, the clear discrimination of it, and the earnest practice of it.

"The superior man, while there is anything he has not studied or while in what he studied there is anything he cannot understand, will not intermit his labor.

"While there is anything he has not inquired about, or anything in what he has inquired about which he does not know, he will not intermit his labor.

"While there is anything which he has not reflected on, or anything in what he has reflected on, which he does not apprehend, he will not intermit his labor.

"While there is anything which he has not discriminated, or his discrimination is not clear, he will not intermit his labor. if there is anything which he has not practiced or his practice fails in earnestness, he will not intermit his labor.

"If another man succeed by one effort, he will use a hundred efforts. If another man succeed by ten efforts, he will use a thousand.

"Let a man proceed in this way, and though dull, he will surely become intelligent, though weak, he will surely become strong" . [\[23\]](#)

We realize, then, that to increase our goodness we should fulfill all our duties required by our stations in life and apply the Golden Rule towards other people; that to increase our intelligence, we should keep on inquiring, studying, and thinking through all our life, and that to increase our will power, we should have the sense of emulation and strain after a perfect life.

The religious life starts, then, from the reverent feeling of the presence of God in man's soul, develops itself through the progressive blooming of all our potentialities and ends in the complete union with God.

James Legge in his commentaries of the Doctrine of the Mean, has written: "Between the first and the last chapters, there is a correspondence, and each of them may be considered as a summary of the whole treatise. The difference between them is that in the first, a commandment is made with the mention of God as the conferrer of man's nature; while in this the progress of man in virtue is traced step by step till the last, it is equal to that of God. [\[24\]](#)

According to the Great Learning, our life should be devoted to rekindle the divine spark in our self, to renovate people and to tend towards the highest excellence (The Great Learning, Chap. 1)

We are advised by Confucius to study the Book of Poetry to know how to enjoy and appreciate all the beauties revealed by nature and men.

We should study the Rites, to know all the natural laws and good procedures embodied in good manners and ceremonials.

We should study Music so that we can harmonize ourselves with other people and with the cosmos. (Confucian Analects, VIII, 9)

Understanding that though apparently petty and humble, man has in fact a very noble destiny, that man can have a good life here and that God is always present in the human soul to direct man through the voice of the conscience, Confucius felt himself overwhelmed with joy. He said: "If man in the morning hear the true religion, he may die in the evening without regret." (Analects, IV, 8).

Fortified by his faith, he could also say: "With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bent arm for a pillow, I have still joy in the midst of these things. Riches and honors acquired by unrighteousness are to me a floating cloud." (Analects, VII, 15).

Only this religious faith could explain why even being in the distress, in the wilderness between Chan (Trần) and Ts'ai (Sái) regions, Confucius could take his lute and sing to it (Lin Yutang, the Wisdom of Confucius, p. 81), and why he could spend many years in propagating the new faith without fluctuations.

His activities remind us of Romain Rolland's saying: "I feel in me a strong faith, I should share this faith to whom in need. I will make a revelation to my people, I will be a pioneer. No matter if the world will destroy me or pierce me. May I only rekindle this faith in others and in me. [\[25\]](#)

To cultivate one's soul in order to be united to God is also the ultimate goal of all religions.

This ultimate goal can be forsaken by the followers of religions, but it is nonetheless, treasured in their sacred Scriptures.

In John's Gospel, Jesus Christ has prayed many times for this oneness with God not only for him but for all. [\[26\]](#)

It is said in the Quran: "And if my servants ask thee concerning Me, tell them that I am very near them. I listen to the supplications of supplicators, therefore they ought to seek my union with prayers and believe in me, so that proceeding aright they may arrive at fulfillment. " [\[27\]](#)

And again: "Verily we are God's and verily to Him shall we return." [\[28\]](#)

Tagore has said: "The Infinite for its self-expression comes down into the manifoldness of the finite and the finite for its self-realization must rise into the unity of the Infinite. Then only is the cycle of the truth complete. (Creative Unity) [\[29\]](#)

The Buddha has taught people how to forsake the illusory Ego and to realize the Reality, how to sprung from the Temporal into the Eternal, from the Phenomenal which is Samsara into the Noumenal which is Nirvana.

Buddhism too has been a stumbling-block to Western religious thinkers; for Buddhism is undoubtedly a religion, and in its primitive form it is undoubtedly atheistic, at least in the sense that we normally understand the world. But though the Buddhist Scriptures lay such tremendous emphasis on the impermanence of all things, there are passages enough to show that over against this ever-changing world the Buddha saw something that did not change, over against Prakriti he saw Purusa though he would not have formulated this thus. [\[30\]](#)

He calls it "deathlessness, peace, the unchanging state of Nirvana, or more clearly, he says: "There is,

monks, an unborn, not become, not made, uncompounded. If there was not such a state of unborn, not become, not made, uncompounded, no escape could be shown here, for what is born, has become, is made, is compounded, therefore an escape can be shown for what is born, has become, is made, is compounded." [31]

Taoism has also fostered this unitive life and sustained that the union with God was the highest religious form in the Antiquity. [32]

Confucius realizing this common aim of humanity, has exclaimed: "In nature, all things return to their common source, and are distributing along different paths; through one action, the fruit of a hundred thoughts are realized." [33]

In brief, for Confucius,, our life should be ordained spiritually, morally, physically, individually and socially so that we can realize human perfection.

For that, we should have a sound idea about our true nature. We should be convinced of our eminent destiny. We should be enthusiastic and persevering in our quest for our self-fulfillment and the divine life. We should obey all nature laws, and should develop all our potentialities. We should cultivate not only our spirit and our soul but also our mind, our body, our environment so that everything will become perfect.

We can never emphasize enough that, for Confucianism, the norm of perfection is already in the inmost of our soul. If we desire to work for our own perfecting, we have only to act in conformity with this internal norm, which is our moral conscience. According to Wang Yang Ming (1472-1529), the Perfect Ones are perfect only because they obey this celestial norm and get rid of all human passions.

Now if we desire to imitate the Perfect Ones, we have only to eliminate all our selfish passions and to maintain in us the celestial norm.

"Later generations do not know that to become perfect, they have only to apply themselves to this celestial norm. On the contrary, they seek perfection only in knowledge and capacities, believing that the Perfect Ones know everything, can do marvelous things, and that one should acquire each of the numerous knowledges and capacities of the Perfect Ones. So one forsakes the celestial norm, namely, the Moral conscience, one exhausts oneself to investigate books, to scrutinize institutions, to compare the vestiges of the Perfect Ones. As results, the more our knowledge becomes widened, the more human desires are increased; the more our capacities are increased, the more the celestial norm is obnubilated..." [34]

Confucianism recognizes two ideal types of man: The gentleman or superior man and the Saint.

The Superior Man or the Gentleman is he who takes care of his spirit and his soul.(Mencius, VI, Pt. I. Chapt. 15)

He knows his high destiny. (Analects XX, 3)

He has high aspirations. (Analects XIV, 24)

He endeavors to cultivate himself. (Analects XV, 17, 20; Doctrine of the Mean chap. XIV & XX)

He likes to tread on the path of virtue rather than on that of profit. (Analectd IV, 6 & XV, 9)

He is intelligent, adaptable, eager to learn. (Analects VI, 25 & IV 10. Doctrine of the Mean, XX)

He prefers action to words. (Analects XV, 23. V, 11- XII, 15)

He is always composed, serene, and satisfied (Analects, IV, 1. VII, 36)

Mencius has portrayed the Superior Man by these words: "To dwell in the wide house of the world, to stand in the correct seat of the world and to walk in the great path of the world; when he obtains his desire for office, to practice his principles for the good of the people; and when that desire is disappointed, to practice them alone; to be above the power of riches and honors to make dissipated; of poverty and mean condition to make swerve from principle; and of power and force to make bend: These characteristics constitute the great man." [\[35\]](#)

The Book of Poetry has also praised the Superior Man as follows:

'Look at those recesses,  
 In the banks of the Ke,  
 With these green bamboos,  
 So fresh and luxuriant!  
 There is our elegant prince,  
 As from the knife and the file,  
 As from the chisel and the polishes!  
 How grave is he and dignified!  
 How commanding and distinguished!  
 Our elegant and distinguished prince,  
 Never can be forgotten. [\[36\]](#)

Above the Superior Man is the Saint, the ideal man, the achieved type of perfection.

The Saint acts always in conformity with his moral nature. His intelligence perceived without effort the inmost cause of everything; he will experience no difficulties at tending towards the goodness and at staying firmly in the path of righteousness, order and duty. The Saint is in fact the personification of God. [\[37\]](#)

Therefore, man should develop all his potentialities. An individual cultivates himself to become a superior man, and then a sage, and then a saint. A Saint takes God as his model, a sage take a Saint as his model, a superior man will imitate a sage, and an individual will imitate a superior man.

Personal cultivation begins with learning. It is with good reason that the Lun Yu (Luận Ngữ) opens with the following saying of the Master: "To learn and to relearn again, isn't it a great pleasure?" Reminiscing about his own lifelong course of cultivation, Confucius identified the starting point thus: "At 15, I set my heart on learning; at 30 I was firmly established; at 40 I had no more doubts; at 50 I knew the will of God; at 60 I was ready to listen to it; at 70 I could follow my heart's desire without transgressing what was right. "Education, teachers, and even books have always been accorded great respect and attention in China. Confucius was the great professional teacher of China, and he is revered as the "Supreme Sage and Foremost Teacher".

When properly understood and pursued, however, learning goes hand in hand with practice. The famous "golden rule" pronounced by Confucius came in answer to an inquiry by a pupil concerning conduct. The dialogue runs as follows:

Tzu Kung (Tử Cống) asked: "Is there any one work that can serve as principle for the conduct of life." Confucius said: "Perhaps the word 'reciprocity': "Do not do to others what you would not want others to do

to you." (Analects XV, 23)

In addition to learning and practice, personal cultivation requires reflection, or meditation. In the Lun Yu there is recorded the remark by one of Confucius' immediate disciple, "I daily examine myself on three points" (honesty in business transactions, sincerity in relations with friends and mastery and practice of teachers' instructions). Later, Mencius said: 'He who has exhaustively search his mind, knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows God.' [38]

It would be a failure on our part, if we would not deal with the Confucian political theory, because Confucius has never rested only in the improvement of the individual.

"The kingdom of world brought to a state of tranquillity was the great object which he delighted to think of; that it might be brought about as easily as "one can look upon the palm of his hand" was the dream which it pleased to him to indulge.

"He held that there was in men an adaptation and readiness to be governed which only needed to be taken advantage of in the proper way. There must be right administrators, but given those, and "the growth of government would be rapid, just as vegetation is rapid in the earth..." [39]

"This readiness to be governed arose according to Confucius from the duties of universal obligation, or those between sovereign and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder brother and younger, and those belonging to the intercourse of friends.

"Men as they are born into the world, and grow up in it, find themselves existing in those relations. They are the appointments of Heaven. And each relation has its reciprocal obligations, the recognition of which is proper to the Heaven-conferred nature. It only needs that the sacredness of the relations be maintained, and the duties belonging to them faithfully discharged, and the "happy tranquillity will prevail all under heaven..." [40] "With these ideas of the relations of society, Confucius dwelt much on the necessity of personal correctness of characters on the part of those in authority, in order to secure the right fulfillment of the duties implied in them. This is one grand peculiarity of his teaching...

Confucius said: "To govern is to set things right. If you begin by setting yourself right, who will dare to deviate from the right?" "Chi K'ang (Quí Khang Tũ) asked about government and Confucius replied: "To govern means to rectify. If you lead on the people with correctness, who dares not to be correct?" (Analects, XII, 17).

" Chi K'ang (Quí Khang Tũ) distressed about the number of thieves in the State, inquired of Confucius about how to do away with them. Confucius said "If you, Sir, were not covetous, though you should reward them to do it, they would not steal." (Analects, XII, 18).

"Chi k'ang asked about government, saying: "What do you say to killing of unprincipled for the good of the principled? Confucius replied: "Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good and the people will be good. (Analects, XII, 19).

"The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it." (Analects, XII, 19).

As to the institutions of government, Confucius endeavored to foster the Theocracy, promoted by the ancient Sovereigns.

Theocracy is an ancient form of government in which God is supposed to rule over all the people, through the agency of a Holy Sovereign, called Son of God. In Theocracy, the king is God's vicar on earth;

he is king at the same time pontiff, and is the mediator between God and men.

He should be then perfect, because he is really the Son of God, conducting people to perfection by his teaching and his life.

He should select wise, virtuous and capable ministers to help him governing people.

The government should aim to take care of all people, to foster prosperity and happiness, to instruct people and LEAD THEM GRADUALLY TO A PERFECT AND HOLY LIFE.

The Great Political Charter of Ancient China, now three thousand years old, was reported to be inspired by God, to the Great Iu (2205-2197). [\[41\]](#)

It contains nine chapters. We sum up them as follows:

- 1). The Ruler should know the properties of the elements in order to help all the people to live properly.
- 2). The Ruler should know how to cultivate himself, to fulfill himself, to become intelligent, competent, majestic, wise and saintly.
- 3). The Ruler should know how to govern his subjects. For this purpose, he should fulfill eight duties:
  1. Provide food to people.
  2. Secure commodities for people.
  3. Foster religious duties of people.
  4. Secure the comfort of people dwellings.
  5. Teach people all their moral duties.
  6. Deter them from evil by a good organization of Justice.
  7. Regulate festive ceremonies and social intercourse for people.
  8. Secure the well-being of the State by having an efficient army.
- 4). The Ruler should be informed about the movement of the celestial bodies, the rhythm of the seasons. He should establish an accurate calendar in order to harmonize the works of his subjects with the cosmic and seasonal changes.
- 5). The Ruler should be a living example of perfection and a spiritual guide as well as a temporal guide for all his people.
- 6). The Ruler should govern with correctness and straightforwardness. But he should also know how to rule or strongly or mildly according to circumstances, and people.
- 7). If the Ruler has doubts about any great matter, he must consult with his own intelligence; consult with the nobles and officers; consult with God through the agency of divination.
- 8). The Ruler should consider all the natural calamities as warnings of God concerning his defective behavior or his defective government and amend consequently.
- 9). The Ruler should consider the happiness and extremities of the nation as reflecting faithfully his own attainments and defects in reference to people. In fact, a good government will result in prosperity, healthiness and high moral standard in the nation. A bad government will result in calamities, illness and high frequencies of delinquencies in the nation.

In brief, love, cooperation, trustfulness, respect for human dignity are the framework of this ideal

## Theocracy.

"The celebrated passage in the Li Chi (Lễ Ký), sometimes referred to as the Confucian Utopia, begins with the following pronouncements: "When the age of the Great Tao prevailed, the world was a community of all people. Men of virtue and talent were upheld and mutual confidence and goodwill were cultivated."(Li Chi - Lễ Ký, Li Yun - Lễ Vận)

James Legge has summarized the ancient Chinese creed and the ancient Chinese Theocracy as follows:

"The name by which God was designated was the Ruler, and the Supreme Ruler, denoting emphatically his personality, supremacy, and unity... By God, kings were supposed to reign, and princes were required to decree justice.

"All were under law to Him; and bound to obey His will. Even on the inferior people, He has conferred a moral sense, compliance with which would show their nature invariably right. All powers that be are from Him. He raises one to the throne and put down another. The business of Kings is to rule in righteousness and benevolence, so that the people may be happy and good. They are to be an example to all in authority, and to the multitudes under them. Their highest achievement is to cause the people tranquillity to pursue the course which their moral nature would indicate and approve.

When they are doing wrong, God admonishes them by judgments, storms, famine, and other calamities. If they persist in evil, sentence goes for against them. The dominion is taken from them, and given to others more worthy of it." [\[42\]](#)

Thorton in his History of China, observes: "In my excited surprise and probably incredulity, to state that the Golden Rule of our Savior: "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you", which Mr. Locke designates as "the most unshaken rule of morality, and foundation of all social virtue" had been inculcated by Confucius, almost in the same words, four centuries before." [\[43\]](#)

I quote again James Legge : "But I must now leave the sages. I hope I have not done him injustice. The more I have studied his characters and opinions, the more highly have I come to regard him. He was a very great man, and his influence has been on the whole a great benefit to the Chinese, while his teachings suggest important lessons to ourselves who profess to belong to the school of Christ." [\[44\]](#)

## Confucian Mysticism

Up to now, no one has talked about Confucian mysticism. Confucius can be called a mystic, but when he speak about himself, he is very brief, and use very humble terms.

The highest Confucian mystics, mentioned by Confucius and Mencius, were Yao (Nghiêu; 2357-2255 BC), Shun (Thuần; 2255-2205 BC), Iu (Đại Võ; 2205-2197), King Wan (Văn Vương; 1258-? BC), and Woo (Võ Vương; 1122-1115 BC). (The works of Mencius VII, part 2, 38)

The life of these Holy Sovereigns is described in the Shoo King, or the Book of Historical Documents (Kinh Thư, and in the She King, or the Book of Poetry (Kinh Thi).

We know that in these ancient times, people endeavored to become perfect and to be united to God, and believed that God was very close to everyone.

In the Great battle in the wilderness on Muh, that confronted the troops of Woo, and those of the tyrant Show, to galvanize the faith of the King in God, the Grand Master Shang Foo (Trọng Phụ) thus said to King Wu (Võ Vương):

"The troops of Yin-Shang (Ân Thương)

Were collected like a forest,

And marshalled in the wilderness of Muh.

We rose [to the crisis];-

'GOD IS WITH YOU,' [said Shang-Foo to the King],

'HAVE NO DOUBTS IN YOUR HEART.'

The wilderness of Muh (Mục Dã spread out extensive;

Bright shone the chariot of sandal;

The teams of bays, black-maned and white-bellied, galloped along;

The grand-master Shang-fu (Trọng Phụ)

Was like an eagle on the wing,

Assisting King Woo (Võ Vương),

Who at one onset smote the great Shang (Thương).

That morning's encounter was followed by a clear bright [day]. [\[45\]](#)

At this ancient time, people believed that God illumined their heart, to show them the way of wisdom, so that they could have the same virtue of God. It is said in the She king:

The illustration of illustrious [virtue] is required below,

And the dread majesty is on high. [\[46\]](#)

At this period, The Holy Sovereigns believe that God descends in their heart. Therefore, they never relaxed in the maintenance of their virtues. It is said in the She King:

Full of harmony was he in his palace;

Full of reverence in his ancestral temple.

Out of sight he still felt as under inspection,

Unweariedly he maintained [his virtue]. [\[47\]](#)

King Wan has attained a high degree of perfection, and became an expression of God, therefore he was named King Wan. Wan means in fact expression. It is written in the She king:

'The doings of High heaven,

Have neither sound nor smell,

Take your pattern from King Wan,

And the myriad regions will repose confidence in you.' [\[48\]](#)

At this time, people believed that following the way of their ancestors was following the true religion of God, and the true filial piety.

It is written in the She King:

Ever think of your ancestor,

Cultivating your virtue,

Always striving to accord with the will [of Heaven].

So shall you be seeking for much happiness.

Before Yin lost the multitudes,

[Its kings] were the assessors of God.

Look to Yin as a beacon,

The great appointment is not easily [preserved]. [\[49\]](#)

It is said also:

This King Wan,

Watchfully and reverently,

With entire intelligence served God,

And so secured the great blessing.

His virtue was without deflection;

And in consequence he received [the allegiance of] The States from all quarters. [\[50\]](#)

At this time, all the great people liked to live in conformity to God's will. This is called leading a holy life. In brief, at this time, people understand already what is mysticism, and what does it mean by Union with God. Confucius rarely says that he is a mystic, that he has realized Union with God, except only one time, when his life was endangered, when he was surrounded by the people of K'wang. Then he declared himself an expression of God, exactly as King Wan. He said: "After the death of King Wan, was not the expression [of God] conferred to me? If God had wished to let his expression perish, then I should not have such an honor. While God does not let his expression perish, what can the people of K'wang do to me?" [\[51\]](#)

Mencius called mystics men who practiced the Doctrine of the Mean, that I have retranslated as The Eternal Center. In this book, Confucianists pretend that mystics followed the natural path of perfection, written by God in the hearts of all people. Mencius added that only in about 500 years, can one find a Mystic. He gave us also a list of Chinese Mystics in the last chapter of his book. (J. Legge, The Works of Mencius, pp. 501-502)

To become a mystic, we must believe that the nature of man is good. The Goodness of man is proclaimed by Confucius, and especially by Mencius.

In the beginning of the Doctrine of the Mean, It is said: "What God has ordered us to realize is called The Nature. An accordance with the Nature is called Religion. The regulation of this Religion is called Instruction. The Religion cannot be left even for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be the Religion." So the true Religion is to follow our own Nature, and the injunctions of our nature are written in our conscience.

For Confucius, the true religion springs forth from the inmost of our heart. It is said in the Doctrine of the Mean: "The religion of the superior man is rooted in himself, and sufficient attestation of it is given by the masses of the people. He examines them by comparison with those of the three kings, and finds them without mistake. He sets them up before heaven and earth, and finds nothing in them contrary to their mode of operation. He presents himself with them before spiritual beings, and no doubt about them arise. He is prepared to wait for the rise of a sage a hundred ages after, and has no misgivings..." (Doctrine of

the Mean, Chap. XXX, 3).

Mencius is categorical in affirming that the nature of man is good. "The tendency of man's nature to good is like the tendency of water to flow downwards. There are none but have this tendency to good, just as all water flows downwards." (J. Legge, The works of Mencius, Book VI, Part I, 2, p. 395).

It is said in the Shoo king:

The Human Self is restless and changing,

The Divine Self is very recondite.

Realize purity, Realize Oneness,

Stick to your Central Self.

(J. Legge, The Shoo King, The Counsels of the Great Wu, 15 p. 61. Translation of the Author)

In that case, man has two hearts, or two minds: A Carnal mind or Human self, full of passions, and a Divine Self, or a Spiritual Mind very simple, and pure. It is our Central Self, which gears us in our way to perfection.

To find out this Central Self in our self is the beginning of our Mystical way. It can be also called Illumination, or Conversion, or rebirth of the Spirit. To orient our self from our Carnal mind to our Spiritual mind is to tread on the Celestial pathway.

To get rid our self of our Carnal Mind, is to become a Saint.

The whole human pathway is then cyclical, half of it is called Human life; another half is termed Divine Life. The first half is dominated by extroversion, the second half is dominated by introversion or introspection. The middle of our life is then around 35, or 36 years.

It is said in the I Ching: "One Yin and One Yang is called Religion, if you can follow this path, it is good. If you can follow this path up to its end, you will realize your Nature. (The I Ching, The Great Treatise I, chapter 5, 1.)

Confucius also said: "My religion is that of an all-pervading unity... Tsang (Trang Tử) said: The religion of our master is to realize perfection in our heart, and to render other people similar to us" (Analects, Book IV, 15)

Confucius has get rid of his carnal mind. It is said in the Analects: "There were four things from which the Master was entirely free: He has no foregone conclusions, no arbitrary predetermination, no obstinacy and no egoism. (J. Legge, Analects, Book IX, 4, p. 217)

We must repeat that the Doctrine of the Mean is the book that teaches people the Mystical Way. In its first chapter, a commencement is made with the mention of God as the conferrer of man's nature, while in its last chapter, the progress of man in virtue is traced, step by step, till at last it is equal to that of God. "A Saint, or Confucius, can be compared to heaven and earth, in their supporting and containing, their overshadowing and curtaining all things; he may be compared to the four seasons in their alternating progress, and to the sun and moon in their successive shinings." [\[52\]](#)

We finds also that in the period of Sung (960-1279), there is a philosopher, called Lu chiu Yuan (Lục Tuợng Sơn; 1139-1192) who taught a monistic system of the mind which was the legislator of the universe. He was also a mystic.

Convinced that "Truth is nothing other than the mind and the mind nothing other than the truth" and

that "the Six Classics are but footnotes of my mind," Lu chiu Yuan did not emphasize book learning and did not write a single book himself. Condemning the method of extension of knowledge through investigation of things, he believed that spiritual cultivation consisted of contemplation - looking inward into one's own mind - and sudden enlightenment. [53]

In presenting Confucianism, I try to give all its main characteristics, but I can not be exhaustive. I didn't give the lectors its evolution through the ages, because I realize that people don't understand Confucius' ideas yet, so I endeavor to emphasize some aspects of Confucianism, such as its relationship to God, its way of understanding man, its way to govern man, so that man can have a virtuous life.

I like Confucianism because it does not have an organized body of clergy.

In Confucianism, man can find God inside himself, and needs no help from any clergy.

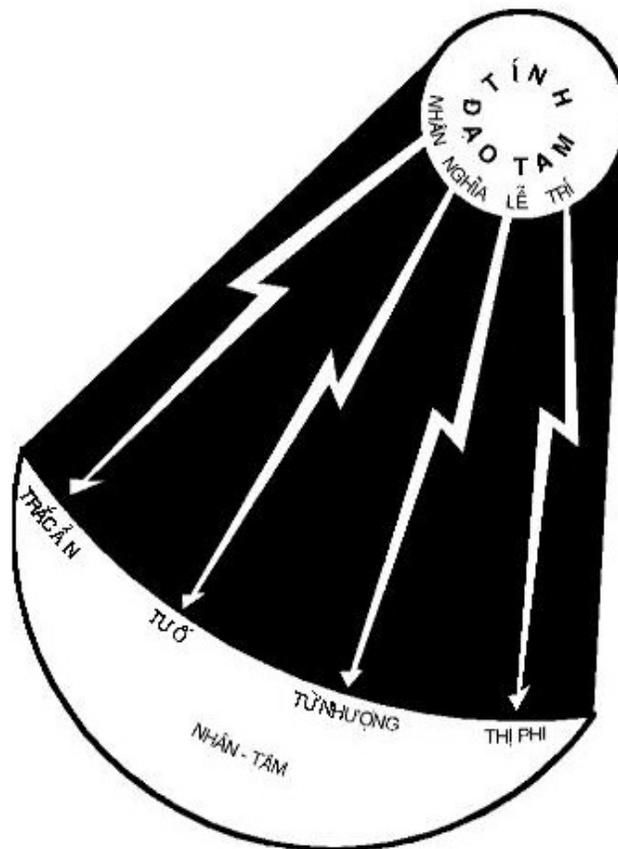
It does not have any external cult for God, and tries only to live according to the injunctions of the moral conscience. (J. Legge, The Doctrine of the Mean, Chap. I, 2,3. Analects XII, 4)

In our study, I have lead you in the profundity of the mind, pretending that only there, you can find the source of your life, and the mainstream of all your energy. God is there, and all the highest motivation of men spring forth also from there.

In my study of Confucianism, I have devised two diagrams, one depicting the soul of an ordinary man, and the other depicting the soul of a saint.

In the first diagram, The Xing (Tính Đạo Tâm) of man, or the Divine Self of man is represented by the Sun. It is perfect in itself and contains in perfection all the four cardinal virtues: The Principle of Benevolence (Nhân), the Principle of Righteousness (Nghĩa), the Principle of Propriety (Lễ), and the Principle of Knowledge (Tri).

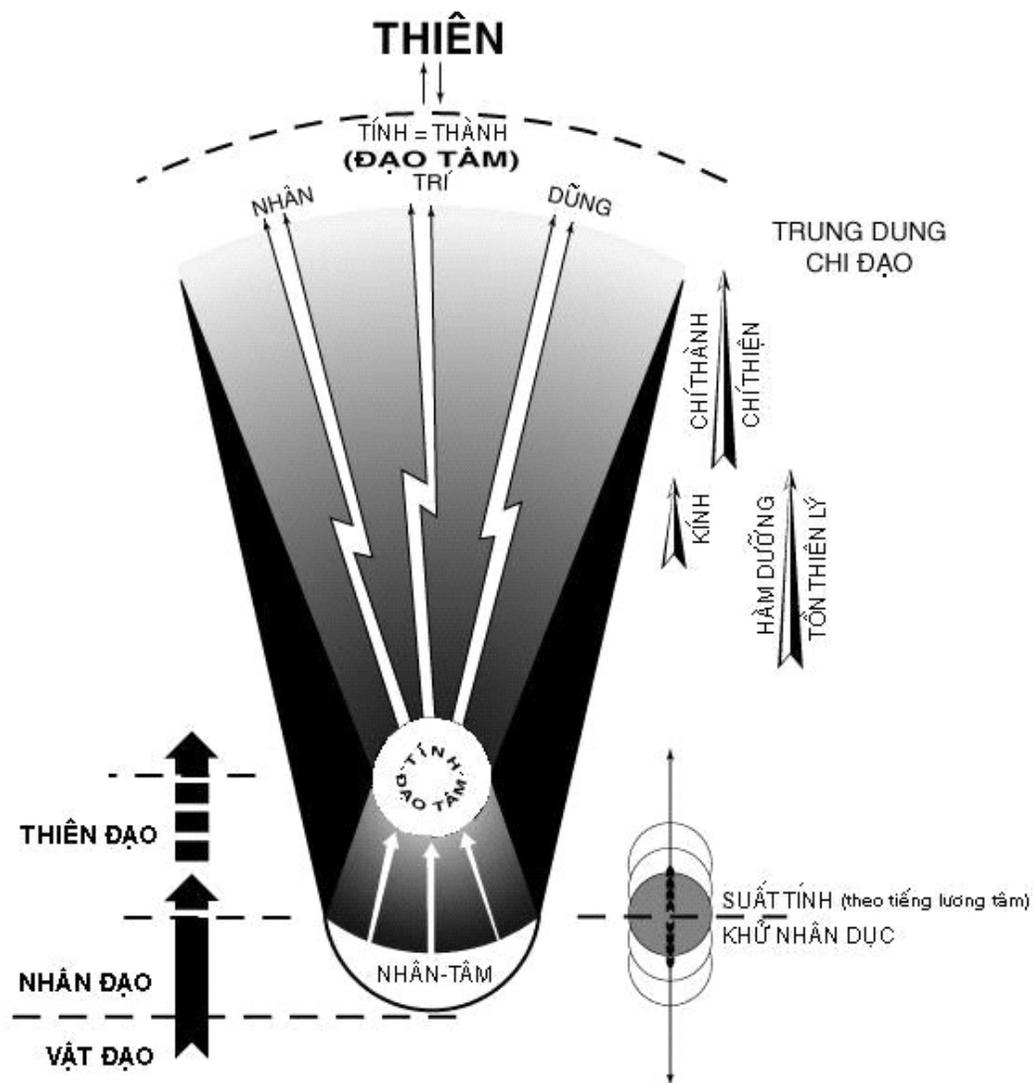
The Xin (Nhân Tâm) or the Human Self, is represented by the Moon. It has in itself the Feeling of commiseration (Trắc Ẩn) derived from the principle of Benevolence, the Feeling of Shame and Dislike (Tư Ổ), derived from the principle of Righteousness, the Feeling of Modesty and Complaisance (Từ Nhượng), derived from the principle of Propriety, the Feeling of Approving and Disapproving (Thị Phi) derived from the principle of Knowledge. Exactly as the moon receives its rays from the sun, The Xin (Tâm) receives all their feelings from the Xing (Tính). These feelings are then imperfect and inadequate.



The Divine Self and The Human Self

Legend:

- Đạo Tâm:** Divine Self
- Tính:** Nature
- Nhân:** Principle of Benevolence
- Lễ:** Principle of Propriety
- Nghĩa:** Principle of Righteousness
- Trí:** Principle of Knowledge
- Nhân Tâm:** Human Self
- Trắc Ẩn:** Feeling of Commiseration
- Tư Ỗ:** Feeling of Shame and Dislike
- Từ Nhượng:** Feeling of Modesty and Complaisance
- Thị Phi:** Feeling of Approving and Disapproving



Physical Duty, Psychological Duty and Spiritual Duty

## Legend:

<b>Thiên :</b>	God	<b>Trung Dung Chi Đạo:</b>	The Religion of The Principle of the Mean
<b>Đạo Tâm :</b>	Divine Self	<b>Chí Thành, Chí Thiện:</b>	Driving up to perfection
<b>Tính, Thành:</b>	Nature, Divine Self	<b>Suất Tính (Theo tiếng Lương Tâm):</b>	To follow our own Nature or Conscience
<b>Nhân:</b>	Principle of Benevolence	<b>Khử Nhân Dục:</b>	Conquer our passions
<b>Trí:</b>	Principle of Knowledge	<b>Kính:</b>	In reverence to the Godhead within us
<b>Thiên Đạo:</b>	Spiritual Duty	<b>Hàm Dưỡng:</b>	To keep our mind clean
<b>Nhân Đạo:</b>	Psychological Duty	<b>Tôn Thiên Lý:</b>	To keep all the celestial norms
<b>Địa Đạo:</b>	Physical Duty	<b>Nhân Tâm:</b>	Human Self

Now if we go to the second diagram, we see immediately that we must change the direction of our lives. We must go now from our Xin back to our Xing, to realize our Divine Self. We must then make a Conversion. This Conversion can be called also the Rebirth of the Spirit. This change in the sense of our life can be also called the Introversion Way or the Instrospective Way. We can see now that the way of a plain man is diametrically opposed to that of a saint. The one is extrovert, the other is introvert. We can say that all saints are introvert. (J. Legge, The Works of Mencius, Book II, chap. 6, pp. 201- 205)

We learn also from Confucius a great lesson that, without effort, we cannot realize anything good. Furthermore, being a human being, and living in this immense and beautiful world, we cannot lead a lazy life, but we should strive to something more beautiful, and more useful

We should find out in our self our divine nature, and try to realize it in our life. This Divine Nature is the

Tai Chi (Thái Cực), or the Ens Realissimum or The Xing (Tính). [\[54\]](#)

We should find out all the natural laws that govern all the aspect of our life, physically, physiologically, mentally, spiritually (J. Legge, the She King, Decade of Tang, Ching min, p. 541.)

We should obey all the natural laws that help us to bloom all our potentialities. (J. Legge, The She King, Odes of Pin, Fah ko, p. 240)

We should become poets, always living with nice ideas, with nice dispositions of our soul, knowing how to find out and to enjoy all the natural beauties.

We must know how to live in harmony with the cosmos, with every man, and everything. (Analects VIII, 9)

We should be responsible for everything good or bad, happening in our life, and in the life of our nation. If all of us live properly, and cooperate with each other, our political and economical life will be prosperous; if not, we will live miserably.

Confucius teaches us that we have three kinds of duty:

- 1). Physical duty (Địa Đạo, Vật Đạo): We must improve our environment, our material life.
- 2). Psychological duty (ren tao, Nhân Đạo): We should live properly, and behave properly with each other.
- 3). Spiritual duty (Tian dao, Thiên Đạo): We should cultivate our spirit, progressing to perfection, and live in union with God. (R. Wilhelm, the Yi Jing, Ta Chuan, The Great Treatise, Chapter X, 1, pp. 351-322

But now, as people do not yet evolve enough to follow the spiritual duties, therefore Confucius is very brief about it. (Analects III, 12)

In short, we don't find in Confucianism, any superstition. It teaches us only what is natural, what is true. (J. Legge, the Doctrine of the Mean, Chap. XI).

Since the XVIIth century, Confucianism has been attacked, by Catholic missionaries who tried to present it as atheistic, and recently by Mao-tse-Tung who likes to supplant it.

Missionaries came in China at the beginning of the XVIIth century, and were full of prejudices against Chinese people. They regarded them contemptuously, and considered them an inferior race.

"They (the missionaries) despite the "yellow races" of the Orient; tried to convert these inferior beings and, at the same time, told each other, in print, and even told them to their face, that they were so brutish, so contemptible, that they were hardly worth converting. "Chinese civilization" wrote a distinguished missionary priest in the middle of the 19th century, "is a monstrosity, not only anti-Christian, but anti-human..." The religions of the Chinese are monstrous, absurd, the most ridiculous in the world. "One does not find humanity, he concluded, among the people of the Orient, but only "monkeydom." [\[55\]](#)

"The Chinese, being by nature inferior to the European, will always be inferior as a Christian." [\[56\]](#)

"All the missionaries will love the Chinese for the love of God and for the sake of their soul; we will devote our self to them, on supernatural principles; but friendship!; that is impossible." [\[57\]](#)

Missionaries sustained that Confucianism is atheistic, that Confucius himself was damned, with all other Chinese ancestors who were all atheists and idolaters.

"In his twenty first question, Navarette asked if Gentiles, i.e. non Christian Chinese who live a

respectable life (non nimis laxe, sed aliquatiter modeste viventes) could be saved?

"Some missionaries" he said, meaning the Jesuits, have denied this proposition". The Holy Office replied: "Those who teach that these Gentiles are not punished with eternal suffering contradict the Holy Scriptures". Answering the 22th question, the Holy Office affirmed that Infidels dying without baptism, or without having had a real desire for baptism, were damned". [\[58\]](#) "The priest of the Foreign Missionary Society announced that "Confucius was damned to eternal flames." The Holy Office replied: "Allowing for what has been said, it is forbidden to say that Confucius is saved."...

Navarette however, reinforced in his opinions by these decisions, declared, five years later, that since "Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pliny, Seneca, etc, were irretrievably damned, how much more Confucius, who was not worthy to kiss their feet." [\[59\]](#)

In sum, the missionaries' strategy can be resumed as follows:

a). Admission of some compromise, showing some respect to Confucian morale, agreeing that T'i, or Shang T'i. or T'ien means God, accepting the ancestral cults of Chinese people. This is the way of Jesuits but is rejected by the Roman Catholic church.

b). No compromise at all. Destroy Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, as perverting religions and promulgate the Catholic faith. This is the policy of all the other missionaries. The Roman Catholic Church follows this view. [\[60\]](#)

As for Mao-Tse-Toung, he taxed Confucianism of feudalism, and tried to supplant it in China.

"The victory of Communism in 1949 and the Cultural Revolution of 1966, have meant a break with tradition that is far more profound than anything that has happened in China since the unification by the Ch'in (Tan) dynasty in 221 BC. Confucianism, whether as a state cult or as an organized system of belief, is now a thing of the past in its homeland, though it still has professed adherents in the latter sense on Taiwan and elsewhere outside the Chinese People Republic (e.g. among Chinese living in Southern Asia and North America.) [\[61\]](#)

Communist rule in China has put an end to all free inquiry and established Karl Marx's system of dialectical materialism as the state philosophy.

Today, most of us have a more enlightened view of China, and yet some misconceptions remain. The key to understand China lies in the ability to focus on key problems rather than in the memorization of endless data.

Today, also, Chinese studies are pursued by many students in many universities in the West. The cultural interest behind this development may be traced to such modern philosophers as John Dewey and Bertrand Russell, Ernest Francisco Fenelossa (an American Orientalist), and Esra Pound, poet and translator of Confucian Classics. [\[62\]](#)

Confucian Classics are translated in French and English by many scholars such as P. Regis, Zottoli, Leon Wieger, Seraphin Couvreur, J. Legge, Richard Wilhelm. Such interest means that Confucianism can never be destroyed, because it tries to discover all the natural laws or Li that are behind all human behaviour.

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[\[1\]](#) Edwin A. Burt, Man Seeks the Divine, p. 160.

- [2] Flood dates about 2400 B.C. (Cf. Henry. H. Halley, Pocket Bible Handbook, p. 33).
- [3] J. Legge, The She King, Decade of Shang Min, Pan 8, p. 503.
- [4] James Legge, The She King, Decade of King Wan, Ode II, p. 436.
- [5] James Legge, The Shoo King, p. 308, notes.
- [6] Cf. James Legge, The Shoo King, The Counsels of the Great Wu, 15.  
Gaubil says:- 'The heart of man is full of shoals (ecueils); the heart of Taou is simple and thin '; and adds in a note:'The heart of man is here opposed to that of Tao. The discourse is of two hearts,- one engaged in passions, the other simple and very pure. Tao express the right reason. It is very natural to think that the ideas of a God, pure, simple and Lord of men, is the source of these worlds.'  
J. Legge, The Shoo King, The Counsels of the Great Yu, p. 61, see note.
- [7] Translated from French, Henry Bernard Maitre, Sagesse chinoise et Philosophie Chretienne, p. 103)
- [8] Translated from French, Henri Bernard Maitre, Sagesse Chinoise et Philosophie Chretienne, p. 133.  
Nouveaux memoires du P. Lecomte, parus en 1696.
- [9] Chandogya Upa. 3. 14. 3-4. Brhdaranyaka Up. 2.5. 14-15 and 3.8 and 6-8)
- [10] The Works of Mencius, Book VI, Pt 1, Chap. 2.
- [11] J. Legge, The She King, Decade of Tang, VI, Ching Min, 1, p. 541.
- [12] The Doctrine of the Mean, Chap. 13.
- [13] The Doctrine of the Mean, Chap. 13.
- [14] Trần Trọng Kim, Nho Giáo II, p. 265.
- [15] Harmat Ahmah, The Philosophy of the Teaching of Islam, 1959, p. 19.
- [16] Edwin A. Burtt, Man Seeks the Divine, p. 160.
- [17] James Legge, The Doctrine of the Mean, Ch. 1. And Lin Yu Tang, The Wisdom of Confucius, New York, 1938, p. 108, 129f, 125f.
- [18] J. Legge, The Doctrine of the Mean, chap. I, p. 385.
- [19] Confucian Analects, XII, 2.
- [20] The Doctrine of the Mean, Chap. 1.
- [21] The Doctrine of the Mean, Chap. XX.
- [22] Doctrine of the Mean, Chap. XX, 8.
- [23] J. Legge, The Doctrine of the Mean, Chap. X, 19, 20. p. 413f.
- [24] The Chinese Classics Vol. 1 & 2, Prolegomena, p. 54.)
- [25] Nguyễn Nam Châu, Sứ Mạng Văn Nghệ, p. 9)

[26] John, 1: 11, 21, 22, 10, 30; 13, 20.

[27] Quran, Al-Baqara, verse 187.

Harrat Almad, The Philosophy of the Teaching of Islam, p. 121.

[28] Quran, Al Baqara verses 156-158.

[29] Nguyễn Đăng Thục, Lịch Sử Triết Học Đông Phương, II, 9.

[30] Suttampata, 204: Apud Conze, Buddhist Texts through the Ages, p. 93.

[31] Udana, 80-81, ibidem p. 95: apud R. C. Zaehner, Mysticism Sacred and Profane, p. 126.

Le Nirvana et le Samsara sont aussi l'un a l'autre, comme l'eau et les vagues. Nirvana c'est l'etre (et la buddheite) dans l'etat de permanence. Samsara c'est l'etre (et la buddheite) dans l'état d'impermanence. Le Nirvana c'est l'eau; le Samsara c'est la houle. Le Nie-p'an c'est l'etre absolu le reste Cheng-Seu est l'apparence. Dans l'ocean du Nie-p'an permanent, nous sommes des rides impermanentes. Sortir de l'impermanence pour entrer dans la permanence, c'est Kie-t'ouo, la delivrance.

Leon Wieger, Histoire des Croyances religieuses et des Opinions philosophiques en Chine depuis l'origine jusqu'a nos jours, 1922, p. 549.

[32] Tao Te King, p. 64.

[33] Wilhelm, The I Ching, Commentaries on the Appended Judgments, p. 362.

[34] Wang Tch'ang Tche, La philosophie morale de Wang Yang Ming, p. 54f.

[35] J. Legge, The Works of Mencius, Book III, Pt. II, chap. 2.

[36] The Great Learning, III, 4

J. Legge, The She King I V. Ode I, stand 1.

[37] Stanislas le Grall, Le Philosophe Tchou-Hi, sa doctrine, son influence. Chap. Le Saint.

[38] Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979, Vol. 4. p. 1098, under the title: Confucianism.

[39] J. Legge, The Chinese Classics, Vol. I & II, Prolegomena, p. 102.

[40] J. Legge, The Chinese Classics, Vo. I & II, Prolegomena, p. 102.

[41] J. Legge, The Shoo King, The Great Plan, p. 320f.

[42] J. Legge, The Shoo King or the Book of Historical Documents, Prolegomena. p. 193.

[43] Thornton, History of China, vol., p. 209. James Legge, The Chinese Classics, Vol. 1 & 2, Prolegomena, p. 109.

[44] J. Legge, The Chinese Classics, Prolegomena, p. 111.

[45] J. Legge, The She King, Decade of King Wan, Book one, Ode two, 7 & 8, pp. 435-436.

[46] J. Legge, The She King, Decade of the King Wan, p. 432.

- [47] J. Legge, The She King, Decade of King Wan, Sze chae, p. 446.
- [48] J. Legge, The She King, Decade of King Wan, p. 431.
- [49] J. Legge, The She King, Decade of King Wan, p. 431.
- [50] J. Legge, The She King, p. 433.
- [51] Analects, IX, 5.
- [52] Cf. Richard Wilhelm, The I Ching, Book III, the Commentaries, d) 11, p. 382. – J. Legge, The Doctrine of the Mean, Scope and Value, Prolegomena, p. 53.
- [53] Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979, Vol. 4, p. 1096, under the title Confucianism.

[54] Thọ Văn Nguyễn, The Doctrine of the Mean, p. 165, note 1.

La Realite infinie est le substrat de toute possibilité, le fondement universel. Si toutes les négations sont des limites, aucune chose n'est possible que par une autre chose qu'elle suppose, sauf l'ens realissimum. (Kant, Oeuvres T. 17, 478. and Lucien Golmann, La communauté humaine et l'univers chez Kant, p. 50.

Nous trouvons chez Kant un très grand nombre d'expressions pour designer l'inconditionné: Le Supra Sensible, le Souverain Bien, la Totalité, l'Universitas, le Nouméné, la Chose en Soi, l'Intellect Archétype, la Volonté Sainte, l'Entendement Intuitif ou Createur. (Ibidem. 137)

[55] Malcolm Hay, Failure in the Far East, p. 167.

[56] Malcolm Hay, Failure in the Far-East, p. 168.

Methode de l'Apostolat moderne, Hongkong, 1911, p. 800.

[57] Malcolm Hay, Failures in the Far-East, p. 168.

[58] Malcolm Hay, Failure in the Far-East, pp. 128-129.

[59] Malcolm Hay, Failure in the Far-East, pp. 128, 104, and 129.

[60] Les Jesuites avaient entrepris cette Evangelisation sur une échelle cyclopedienne et s'étaient dressés contre les autres missions catholiques, franciscaines, capucines et dominicaines, qui toutes croyaient en la politique de la table rase cad en l'absence totale de compromis avec les cultures et modes de pensées de l'étranger. Selon cette doctrine opposée à celle des Jésuites, les missions chrétiennes devaient tenter de convertir les masses et détruire de fond en comble les civilisations paiennes...

Amaury de Riencourt, L'Ame de la Chine, p. 230.

...Des lors, les Jésuites se sentirent sur un terrain assez solide pour tenter un syncrétisme grandiose, par lequel ils auraient voulu fusionner la morale confucianiste avec le catholicisme romain. Ils élaborèrent donc un plan audacieux, préconisant l'établissement d'une Eglise Chinoise autonome avec ses propres rites chinois et ils le proposaient au Vatican. La première decision du Pape Innocent X, prise en 1645, fut défavorable aux Jésuites, et une dernière bulle papale condamna leur action en 1742, avec une precision mortelle.

Amaury de Riencourt, L'Ame de la Chine, pp. 226-227.

[\[61\]](#) Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979, Vol. IV, page 1103, under the Article: History of Confucianism.

[\[62\]](#) Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979, Vol. 4, p. 1099.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 17

### Buddhism and the Monistic Theory

In my attempt to present Buddhism in a new way, I shall disengage its philosophical assumptions, and I will examine it under the aspect of Monistic Theory, and Mysticism.

#### BUDDHA'S LIFE

Buddha's life can give us an insight into his basic philosophy. Before 1952, his birthday varies, but since the second world Buddhism meeting in Tokyo, in 1952, one codifies his birthday on the 15th of April, 623 B.C. His full name was Siddhartha Gautama of the Sakyas. Siddhartha was his given name, Gautama his surname, and Sakya the name of the clan to which his family belongs. His father was a King. One called him Buddha, because Buddha means the "Enlightened One", or the "Awakened One". This means illumination, enlightenment, or awakening in regard to the real in contrast to the seeming. At sixteen he married a neighboring princess named Yasodhara, and had with her a son, called Rahula. Even his king father tried to shield him from contact with sickness, decrepitude, and death; one day, however, he encountered a decrepit man, broken-toothed, gray-haired, crooked and bent of body, leaning on the staff, and trembling. He learned then the fact of old age. On another occasion, he met a body racked with disease, lying by the road, and on his third journey, a corpse. Finally, on a fourth occasion, he saw a monk with shaven head, ochre robe, and bowl; on that day he learned the possibility of withdrawal from the world. These Four Passing Sights obsessed him forever, until, one night when he was 29, he escaped from his royal palace, and plunged into the forest in search of enlightenment.



Seven years followed, during which he devoted himself to this end. He had many Brahmans for teachers: Alara Kalama, and Uddaka Ramaputta.

He had also five comrades, with whom he practiced asceticism for five years. Their names are: Ajnata Kaundinya, Asvajit, Bradrika, Dasabala Kasyapa, Maha Naman. Buddha almost died from his severe asceticism, but was saved by Sujata, a girl, who gave him some milk mixed with honey. Buddha soon recognized the futility of asceticism. And soon he took a regular diet, and gained weight. His comrades left him, when seeing him abandoning asceticism.

Siddhartha devoted himself to mystical concentration, and sat beneath a fig tree, known popularly as the Bo tree (short for Bodhi or enlightenment). He sat there in deep thought for 49 days, and became enlightened at the end of this period.

After his illumination, he joined the five comrades that had left him, at Benares, and became their master. Then Buddha began his teaching career. BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS. He taught:

### **The Four Noble Truths (Tứ Diệu Đế, Aaryasatya)**

- (1) Everything is suffering (Khổ Đế, Duhka)
- (2) The origin of suffering (Tập Đế, Duhkasamudaya) is desire (trsnā)
- (3) There exists Nirvana, an end to suffering (Diệt Đế, Duhkanirodha)
- (4) A Path, defined by Buddha, leads to Nirvana (Đạo Đế, Dukkhanirodhagaminipatipada).

Everything is suffering, because of its transiency. Nirvana, because of its permanency, is the realm of bliss.

Garma C.C. Chang explains The Four Noble Truths as follows:

The four basic principles of Buddhism preached by Buddha in his first sermon: 1. that, in the final analysis, life is suffering; 2. that the causes of suffering are passion-desires; 3. that there is a state of peace and joy called Nirvana which is beyond all sufferings and passions; and 4. that the way (the Path) which leads to Nirvana includes the practice of discipline, meditation and intuitive wisdom. [1]

### The Five Skandas or the Five Aggregates (Ngũ Uẩn)

(1) **RUPAS** (Sắc) - Forms or Corporeality: These are phenomena consisting of the Four Great Elements: Earth, Water, Wind, Fire, and of the Five Roots, i.e. the five organs of senses: Eyes, Ears, Nose, Tongue, and Body, and of the five objects of the five senses, i.e. Color, Sound, Smell, Taste, and Touch. So Rupas englobes the external environment and our body.

(2) **VEDANA** (Thọ) - Sensations, Feelings.

(3) **SANJNA** (Tưởng) - Perceptions, Cognitive Phenomena.

(4) **SAMSKARAS** (Hành) - Psychic Constructions, including both conscious and unconscious activity. Volition. Impressions. It englobes, then, all our mental activity.

(5) **VIJNANA** (Thức) - Thought, Knowledge: All knowledge coming from our senses, and our mind.

The Five Aggregates are then:

(1) Our environment.

(2) Our body.

(3) Our mind.

(4) Our feelings.

(5) Our ways to deal with external environment.

All of these factors have three characteristics: transiency, no-self, and suffering. Thus, the Five Aggregates are our Lesser Self and the depot of all sufferings.

Mircea Eliade writes: "As we shall see, the Buddha reduces the "self" to a combination of five aggregates (shandhas) of the physical and psychic forces. And he states that dukkha is, in the last analysis, the five aggregates. [2]

The Twelve Nidanas (Thập Nhị Nhân Duyên). This is the doctrine of Dependent Origination, which stressed the conditionality, relativity and interdependence of all factors that we call Man. It explained why we are linked to the chain of existence, why we have Decrepitude, and Death.

(1) **Avidya** (Vô Minh), Ignorance or Unenlightenment.

(2) **Samskara** (Hành), Activity.

(3) **Vijnana** (Thức), Consciousness.

(4) **Nama-Rupa** (Danh Sắc), Name and Form.

(5) **Sadayatana** (Lục Nhập), the Six Sense Organs i.e. Eye, Ear, Nose, Tongue, Body and Mind.

(6) **Sparsa** (Xúc), Contact, Touch.

(7) **Vedana** (Thọ), Sensation, Feeling.

(8) **Trsna** (Ái), Thirst, Desire, Craving.

(9) **Upadana** (Thủ), Laying Hold of, Grasping.

(10) **Bhava** (Hữu), Being, Existing.

(11) **Jati** (Sinh), Birth

(12) **Jaramarana** (Lão, Tử), Old Age, Death.

Under this category, we see that Buddha is discussing our actual world, the world of phenomena, the world of different causes that are linked together to produce changes, birth and death. This is our world including the environment, our body, our mind and our affections. This world, in sum, is transient, and is the world of Samsara. In that case, we have to find the world of permanency: i.e. Nirvana.

### The Eightfold Path (Bát Chính Đạo)

The Eightfold Path is a course of treatment, but it is not external treatment passively accepted by the patient as coming from without. It is treatment by training for life. Instead of a random, irreflexive life, pushed and pulled by circumstances, Buddha taught us a way of intentional living. By long and patient discipline, the Eightfold Path intends to mold the total man, and changes us into a different being. The Eightfold Path is the way leading to Nirvana and is:

(1) **SAMYAG-DRSTI** (Chính Kiến), Correct Views in regard to the Four Noble Truths, and freedom from the common delusion typical of laity. Buddhism lays much stress on Enlightenment, on Awakening. If we consider this world as transient and contingent, as of no-self and of pain, and besides that, we have nothing permanent, nothing immortal, we can conclude that in our life, we should seek for pleasure, because at death, we have nothing left. But, if we see that besides changes, birth and death, we have also immortality, besides the superficial changing man, we can have also an immortal man, besides Samsara we can have Nirvana, then our life, at least, has a meaning. Now, what is the Buddhist meaning of Nirvana? Nirvana is supreme happiness (param sukha). It is secure from birth, disease, old age and death. Nirvana is unconditioned. It is free from arising, disappearing, enduring and changing. It is not aggregates that arise, disappear, endure and change. Early Buddhism accepted the reality of conditioned things and hence deduced the reality of the unconditioned, especially Nirvana, which led to the saying: "There is an unborn, unarisen, uncreated, unconditioned; if there were no unborn, there would be no release for what is born, arisen, created, conditioned, [3]

(2) **SAMYAK-SAMKALPA** (Chính Tư Duy), Right Thought, Right Purpose or Aspiration.

Some scholars translate it as Right Thought, some as Right Purpose, I prefer Right Purpose, or Aspiration.

(3) **SAMYAC-VAC** (Chính Ngữ), Correct Speech, Avoidance of False and Idle Talk.

(4) **SAMYAC-KARMANTA** (Chính Nghiệp), Correct Deed, or Conduct, getting rid of all improper action so as to dwell in purity.

(5) **SAMYAG-AJIVA** (Chính Mệnh), Correct Livelihood or Occupation.

(6) **SAMYAG-VYAYAMA** (Chính Tinh Tiến), Correct Zeal, or Energy, in uninterrupted progress in the way of Nirvana.

(7) **SAMYAC-SMRTI** (Chính Niệm), Correct Remembrance, or Memory, which retains the true and excludes the false.

(8) **SAMYAK-SAMADHI** (Chính Định), Correct Meditation, Absorption, or Abstraction.

In brief, Buddha teaches that we must find our way to Nirvana, that we should aspire to become Buddha even in this life, that we must always keep our body, our mouth, our intentions, in perfect

condition, that we must endeavor to reach the summit, that we must always think about our emancipation, and keep our mind serene. In so doing, we can reach Nirvana, even in this life.

## TWO BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOOL

After his death, Buddhism soon became divided into many sects. We have the Hinayana or Theravada school, or Small Vehicle (Tiểu Thừa) with 18 sects, and the Mahayana or Great Vehicle (Đại Thừa). Hinayana spread to Ceylon, Thailand, and Burma, Cambodia and Laos. The Mahayana school spread to Tibet, Mongolia, China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

The three characteristic marks of Hinayana are: The impermanence of phenomena, the unreality of the ego, and Nirvana. The Hinayana is described as self-benefiting. Its aim is personal salvation. The Mahayana, on the contrary, tries to lead all people to Buddhahood. Its objective is the salvation of all the living, for all are Buddha and will attain bodhi. It has a conception of an eternal Buddha, or Buddhahood as Eternal (Adi- Buddha), but its special doctrines are, inter alia, (a) the bodhisattvas, i.e. beings who deny themselves final Nirvana until, according to their own vows, they have first saved all the livings; (b) Lesser Self or Phenomenal Self, or Self in the realm of Samsara, and Greater Self, which is the Noumenal or Nirvana Self. It refers, specially, to the Great Ego, The Buddha, or to any Buddha. Mahayana is described as self-benefit to the benefit of others, unlimited altruism and pity.

Buddha avoided answering during his life, all philosophical questions such as: This world is unlimited or limited; Buddha still exists, after entering Nirvana or not; Man has Self or not

In fact, "Buddha did not doubt the reality of Nirvana (Absolute); only he would not allow us to characterize and clothe it in empirical terms as being, non-being etc. His silence can only be interpreted as meaning the consciousness of the indescribable nature of the Unconditioned Reality. Professor Radhakrisnan wrote: "If the Buddha declined to define the nature of the Absolute or if he contented himself with negative definitions, it is only to indicate that Absolute being is above all determination. Why then, did Buddha not admit in expressed terms the reality of the Absolute. Buddha refused to describe the Absolute, for that would be to take a step out of the world of relativity, the legitimacy of which he was the first to contest in other. The Absolute is not a matter of empirical observation. The world of experience does not reveal the Absolute anywhere within its limits." [4]

In the time of Buddha, these kinds of questions were considered ineffable, or avyakata, or avyakrtavastuni in Sanskrit.

## TWO ASPECTS OF THE WORLD: PERMANENCE (NIRVANA), IMPERMANENCE (SAMARA)

We know that Buddha is born on the 15th of April of 623 B.C. when the Upanishads are already well established (8th century- 5th century B.C.). We know also that Buddha had accepted many ideas from Hinduism, such as, Nirvana, Metempsychosis, Karma, Dharma (natural law), Avidya (nescience), Samsara. Before, Western scholars thought that Buddha didn't accept the notion of Atman (Anatman). They thought that Buddhism has three clear conceptions: (1) All is impermanent (anita); 2) all is sorrowful (duhkha); (3) all is devoid of a self (anatman). [5]

I try to demonstrate that Buddha always accepts the idea that there is something permanent in this world. For him, birth, illness, old age, death are in the realm of transiency. In that case, Nirvana must be something permanent. In "A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist terms", page 328, Nirvana is defined as "Liberation, Eternal Bliss". It says also that the Nirvana Sutra claims for Nirvana the ideas of permanence,

bliss, personality (Self), purity in the transcendental realm. In Mahayana, final Nirvana is transcendental, and is also used as Absolute... Nirvana has eight flavors or characteristics: permanence, peace, no aging, no mortality, purity, transcendence, unperturbedness, and joy. [6]

### MAN'S TWO SELVES: GREATER SELF (ATMAN), AND LESSER SELF (ILLUSORY EGO).

As for Atman, or the real Self, denied by Hinayana, or Theravada sects, Mrs. Rhys Davids, a leading Pali scholar in the West, and a life student of Theravada, sustained that Buddha never rejected it. According to her, "Buddha begins his mission by advising man to seek thoroughly for the Atma, and ended by bidding men lives as having Atma for their lamp and refuge. The Buddha concern, she said, was with the wayfarer upon the way. "How to wayfare from this to That; here was life's problem." And this was a long journey... [7]

"Gautama was both teaching and expanding the Immanent cult of his day." Accepting the Upanishads ideal of the self as the ultimate value, Buddha taught how to realize it, how to become that. He insisted on conduct (sila), works, concentration (samadhi) and insight (panna) and dependence on oneself rather than on rituals or knowledge... Mrs. Rhys Davids quotes... the mahaparinibbana passage "attadipa attasarana" etc and translates it: "Live as they who have the Self for a lamp, the Self for a refuge, and none other." [8]

Mr. Humphreys, one of the associates of Mrs. Rhys Davids, is of the same opinion. "If, said he, the Buddha, then taught Atta, as his brilliant predecessors in the field of Indian thought, what did he say was not-self An-Atta? He is quite specific. It is the five Skhandas, the constituents of personality in which there is no permanent Self to be found...But the monks would not leave this statement alone. Attacking the concept of Atman as degraded in the Buddha's day to a thing...the size of a thumb, in the human heart, they swung too far. "No self, no self, they cry, and in the time produced the joyless, cramping doctrine, a drearly proclaimed today," especially in Theravada Buddhism.

Elsewhere, Humphreys concedes that the attack of the Theravada monks, or Bhikkus, is legitimately "directed against the concept of an unchanging individuality, a separate self, distinct from the vast totality of Life and its illimitable forms. "However, he adds, "the Bhikkus ignore the 'Unborn, Unoriginated, Unformed' of their Scriptures, as inherent in every manifested thing. "Clearly, the phenomenal self, whether called ego, shadow, or the evolving soul, is changing all the time" "but this does not mean "no soul, no self at all" [9]

In the celebrated Udana passage, Buddha says: If 'There is a not- born, a not-become, a not-created, a not-formed, if there were not this not- born, not-become...there would not be the escape, the ways out of this bondage (Samsara). [10]

So there is something permanent in our self. This is called Nirvana, or Great Self, or True Mind, or the essential Bhutatatatha, or the Bhutatatatha mind. This is the Real, the Eternal, or the Reality. It is the eternal, impersonal, unchangeable reality behind all phenomena. Buttha is substance, that which exists; tatatha is suchness, thusness, i.e. such is its nature. Bhutatatatha implies then the absolute, the ultimate source and character of all phenomena, it is the All. This is the noumenal. This can be compared with the Atman, in Hinduism.

Everything in us belonging to the realm of transiency, or arising from the influences of unenlightenment (Avidya), is untrue. They are called phenomena, and as such, they are constantly

changing (Samsara). They constitute also our Lesser Self, or our False or Illusive Mind. "Are there then two types of self in the Pali Canon? Ms I. B. Horner, a pupil of Mrs. Rhys Davids and the present President of the Pali Text Society, shows that it is so. In the famous article reprinted in "The Middle Way" (Vol. 27, p. 76), she lists some seventeen passages from the Pali Canon, which make this clear. The "lesser Self" and the "greater Self" are clearly distinguished, and the "great Self" is described as "a dweller in the incommensurable." But the Dhammapada, the most famous text in the Canon, will itself suffice. "Self is the lord of self, what other lord could there be?" and again, "Self is the lord of self and self's "bourn". i.e. the very goal of all endeavor. If it is possible to lift the Buddha teaching nearer still to the Hindu original, look at: "the Self in thee knows what is true and what is false." Every mystic since the world began would agree. [\[11\]](#)

Instead of distinguishing our self into Greater and Lesser Self, we can call our Moral Conscience, Greater Self, and our phenomenal ego, Lesser Self.

We see that Buddha has nothing to do with Brahman, and Brahma. He disregards the Hindu's equation: Atman = Brahman, and the famous saying Tat Tvam Asi, That Art Thou of the Chadyogya Upanishads. We see that his way to find out the truth is introspection. We also now know why people call Buddha an atheist.

## BUDDHISM AND THE MONISTIC THEORY

I am deeply convinced that Buddhism, especially, the Mahayana sect, adopts the Monistic Theory, as the main frame to build the world. One of the most famous of their assertions is: "One is all and all is one" expressing the unity of all things, a tenet of the Hwa-Yen and T'ien-T'ai Schools.

There is also the famous slogan: The Phenomenal is the Absolute, the Absolute is the Phenomenal.

We have also this slogan: Everything is produced by the Tathagata-garba, or by the Bhutatatatha-Mind, or the permanent Mind.

Buddhism then declares: ADVAYA, no second, non-duality, the one and non-divided, the unity of all things, the one reality, the universal Buddha-Nature. The sect proclaiming Advaya, is called the Monistic Doctrine. [\[12\]](#)

## WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE BHUTATATATHA (Chân Như) or ABSOLUTE?

Bhuta is substance, that which exists. Tatatha is suchness, thusness, i.e. such is its nature. It is the Real, as thus always, or eternally so. It is Reality in contrast with unreality, or appearance; and unchanging or immutable as contrasted with form and phenomena. It resembles the ocean in contrast with the waves. It is the eternal, impersonal, unchanging reality behind all phenomena... The word is fundamental to Mahayana philosophy implying the absolute, the ultimate source and character of all phenomena, it is the All. It is also called Self-existent pure Mind, Buddha-Nature, Dharmakaya, Tathagata-garba, or Buddha-treasury, Reality, Dharma-realm; Dharma-nature; The Complete and perfect real nature, or reality. It can be called also the Undifferentiated whole; The Unconditioned; The Void, Static, Abstract, and Noumenal; The Pure and Undefined; The Free and The Inexpressible. It is Formless, Uncreated, without characteristics or qualities, and absolute in itself. We can also say that the Bhutatatatha has twelve aspects: (1) It is the Void or Immaterial, the Inactive or Nirvana-like. (2) It is the medium of all things. (3) It is the nature of all things. (4) It is the Reality contra the unreality of phenomena. (5) It is immutable contra mortality and phenomenal variation. (6) It is universal or undifferentiated. (7) It is immortal, or apart from birth and death, or creation and destruction. (8) It is eternal, its nature being ever sure. (9) It is the abode

of all things. (10) It is the bound of all reality. (11) It is the realm of space, the void, or immateriality. (12) It is the realm beyond thought and expression.

Many Buddhists Schools declare that the Bhutatatha is beyond all description. The San Lun Zong defines it as the formless which contains all forms, the essence of being.

### WHAT IS THE PHENOMENAL OR SAMBARA?

The Phenomenal is then unreality or appearance, and form. It is like waves on the surface of the ocean of being. It is the conditioned, dynamic, affected or infected, defiled, and expressible in words. It is in bonds, and not free. It has characteristics and qualities. It is the contrary of the Absolute.

The Absolute, and the Phenomenal can be considered as separate, the Absolute being the Reality, or Being, The Phenomenal being manifestation, or phenomena. The absolute can be compared with the Natura Naturans, and the Phenomena being the Natura Naturata. We can have these pairs of opposites:

Enlightenment	Avidya, or Ignorance
Nirvana	Samsara
The One	The All, The Distinct.
The One	The Multiple
The Autonomous	The Dependent.
The Absolute	The Phenomenal
The Infinite	The Finite
Greater Self	Lesser Self
The Non-Existent	The Existing.
Unattached, Unfettered	Clinging to the unreal.
Permanency	Transience
Happiness	Unhappiness
Self	Not self
Purity	Impurity
The True Mind	The False Mind
The Ocean	The Waves
The Real	The Unreal

So we can say that Buddhist philosophers conceived nature like Spinoza, under a double aspect: as active and vital process, which Spinoza calls natura naturans-nature begetting, and as a passive product of this process, which he calls natura naturata- nature begotten.

But this distinction is only fictitious for Buddhist philosophers. We distinguish only to see reality better, to know our way back home, to be united with the One. But after knowing that Reality is always behind all phenomena, we can say that: Bhutatatha is all things, or Substance is Manifestations, or Mortality is Nibbana, or Rupas are the Void, et cetera.

There are some Mahayanist Schools that openly teach The Monistic Theory, such as Hwa Yen (Hoa Nghiêm) and T'ien T'ai (Thiên Thai) Schools. The Hwa Yen School has a famous Sutra, called The Garland Sutra (The Gandavyuha or Avatamsaka, Hoa Nghiêm Kinh)). It is so called because everything in this world is like different flowers, constituting the garland. The string that unite all the flowers are the Absolute, the Bhutatatha. Apparently there are many flowers, but essentially they are One. If we move one flower, the whole garland is also moved. It means that All is One. Buddha and sentient beings are identical. When we are awakened, we are called Buddha, when we are ignorant we are called the living.

The living and the Buddha are one, i.e. all are the undivided whole, or absolute: they are of the same substance; all are Buddha, and of the same dharmakaya, or spiritual nature; all are of the same infinity. The living and the Buddha are but temporary names, borrowed or derived for temporal indication.

The realm of Totality can also be explained by The Hall of Mirrors devised by Fa Tsang (Pháp Tạng). The Empress Wu Tsei T'ien (Vũ Tắc Thiên) has initiated the question, and Fa-tsang has found out the device.

One day, in the year of A.D. 699, The Empress Wu Tsei-T'ien asked Fa Tsang the following question: "...You have explained the Hwa yen Doctrine to me with great clarity and ingenuity; sometimes I can almost see the vast Dharmadhatu in my mind's eye, and touch a few spots here and there in the great Totality. But all this, I realize, is merely indirect conjecture or guesswork. One cannot really understand Totality in an immediate sense before reaching Enlightenment. With your genius however, I wonder whether you can give me a demonstration that will reveal the mystery of the Dharmadhatu (Pháp Giới, the Infinite Universe))- including such wonders as "all in one" and the "one in all," the simultaneous arising of all realms, the interpenetration and containment of all dharmas, the Non-Obstruction of space and time, and the like? After taking thought for a while, Fa Tsang said, "I shall try, your Majesty. The demonstration will be prepared very soon."

A few days later Fa Tsang came to the Empress and said, "Your Majesty, I am now ready. Please come with me to a place where the demonstration will be given." He then led the Empress into a room lined with mirrors. On the ceiling and floor, on all four walls, and even in the four corners of the room were fixed huge mirrors - all facing one another. Then Fa Tsang produced an image of Buddha and placed it in the center of the room with a burning torch beside it. "Oh, how fantastic! How marvelous!" cried the Empress as she gazed at this awe inspiring panorama of infinite interreflections. Slowly and calmly, Fa Tsang addressed her: "Your Majesty, this is a demonstration of Totality in the Dharmadhatu. In each and every mirror within this room you will find the reflection of all the other mirrors with the Buddha's image in them. And in each and every reflection of any mirror you will find all the reflections of all the other mirrors, together with the specific Buddha image in each, without omission or misplacement. The principle of interpenetration and containment is clearly shown by this demonstration. Right here, we see an example of one in all and all in one - the mystery of realm embracing realm at infinitum is thus revealed. The principle of the simultaneous arising of different realms is so obvious here that no explanation is necessary. These infinite reflections of different realms now simultaneously arise without the slightest effort; they just naturally do so in a perfectly harmonious way..."

As for the principle of the non-obstruction of space, it can be demonstrated in this manner...(saying which, he took a crystal ball from his sleeve and placed it in the palm of his hand)." Your Majesty, now we see all the mirrors and their reflections within this small crystal ball. Here we have an example of the small containing the large as well as the large containing the small." This is a demonstration of the non-obstruction of "sizes," or space... [\[13\]](#)

We can also say that the parable of Indra's net is parallel to the demonstration of the interpenetration of realm-embracing-realm through the exhibition of inter-mirror reflections given by Fa Tsang to Empress Wu. It is said in the Hwa Yen Sutra that high above in heaven, on the roof of the palace of the God Indra, there hang innumerable ornaments in the form of small crystal marbles. They are interlaced in various patterns forming a great complex network. Because of the reflection of light, not only does each and every one of these marbles reflect the entire cosmos, including the continents and oceans of the human world

down below, but at the same time they reflect one another, including all the reflected images in each and every marble, without omission. [\[14\]](#)

Fa Tsiang has also written a famous essay, called On The Golden Lion, to explain that "all of the elements arise simultaneously, that the whole of things creates itself, further, that ultimate principles and concrete manifestations are interfused, and that the manifestations are mutually identical. Thus, in Fa-Tsang's example of the golden lion in the Imperial palace, gold is the essential nature or principle (li), and lion is the particular manifestation or form (shih); moreover, as gold, each part or particle, expresses the whole lion and is identical with every other part or particle. Applied to the universe, this model means that all phenomena are the expressions of absolute reality, the ultimate suchness or voidness, while still retaining their phenomenal character; each is both "all" and "one." All the constituents of the world (the dharmas) are interdependent, cannot exist independently and each possesses a sixfold nature: universality, speciality, similarity, diversity, integration, differentiation.

The ideal is a harmonious totality of things encountered in the perfectly enlightened Buddha. The Buddha-nature is present potentially in all things. There are an infinite number of Buddhas and Buddha realms. There are myriads of Buddhas in every grain of sand and a Buddha-realm at the tip of a hair. [\[15\]](#)

The Monistic theory is also professed by the T'ien T'ai (Thiền Thai) School. Tcheu-K'ai (Trí Khải), the founder of this school, is essentially monistic. He said that Everything is One with the Ultimate Reality, which is the Essence of the universe. He called The uncreated Dharmakaya (Pháp Thân) or the Absolute, the Ocean or the Buddha, and all other phenomena Waves. These phenomena have No-Self, are transient, and are ever-changing. All things are then changing, but the Ultimate Essence are unchanging, and not devoid of Self. The Ultimate Essence is then Nirvana, and phenomena are things that are born and die. They belong to the realm of Samsara. In brief, we have on one side, The Tchenn-jou (Chân Như), or Comical Reality, that is One, infinite, autonomous, and indivisible, like Water; on the other side, we have the worldly phantasmagoria, that are relative, distinct, finite, dependent, and multiple. They are like waves on the surface of the water. To know this Cosmic Reality, to be one with this is entering the Nirvana, not to know this is to be in the realm of Samsara, in the realm of mortality. Getting out of the impermanence, and entering into the permanence, is to enter in the Nirvana. That is to say, all livings have in themselves the same Buddha-Nature, and can become Buddha. Buddha means only Awake; living things are ignorant of their destiny. A Buddha and an ordinary man are like two khakis: one ripe, and one still green. The Buddha-Nature is fully developed in one, while in the other, it is still latent. That is to say, it is not hard to become a Buddha.

Because all is One, Buddhism professes the love of all living things, and stresses on vegetarianism. Zen Buddhism is known also for its love of nature.

### [Buddhism as Mysticism](#)

In every Buddhist School we can find some mystical tendency, but in Ch'an or Zen Buddhism, we can say that it is developed at the utmost. Ch'an, or Zen Buddhism, flourished in China. It was founded there, by Bodhidharma, an Indian scholar and teacher. He came in China on the twenty first of September, 520. His teaching was:

- A special transmission from master to disciple outside the Scripture,
- No dependence upon the authority of words and letters,
- Direct pointing to the soul of man

## Seeing into one's own nature and attaining Buddhahood.

We can see that Ch'an or Zen aim only to help people find his own Buddhahood inside oneself. It emphasizes the direct, intuitive awareness of one's own Buddha-nature. According to Bhodidharma, "knowledge gleaned from reading is worthless; no merits flows from good works; only meditation that admits one to direct insight, into the Great Emptiness of the Buddha-reality, only truth revealed to one's thought when one turned inward to actualize the Buddha in one heart, is of any value. [16]

"Ch'an teaches that the Buddha-Nature is inherent in every one but lies dormant because of ignorance. It is best awakened not by the study of scriptures, the practice of good deeds, rites and ceremonies, or worship of images, but by a sudden breaking through of common, everyday, logical thought." [17]

Ch'an or Zen School began first with just simple living, and stern self- discipline as the preparation for meditation and inward vision. Ch'an or Zen is an introvertive mysticism. Some one calls it 'inward way', or 'mysticism of introspection', or 'introversion'. The introvertive looks inward into the mind. It culminates in the perception of the Ultimate Unity - what Plotinus called the One - with which the perceiver realizes his own union or identity.

A Zen monk, when he was still ignorant, knows only his 'lesser self'. This Self is The Phenomenal Ego in us. It is then the Samsara. In our ignorance, we act, and think accordingly to its injunction.

Under the guidance of a good master, the monk realizes step by step, that in his body, there is also 'the Greater Self', which receives many names such as Anouttara-Samyas-Sambodhi, which means Supreme Enlightenment Mind, or Prajna Paramita Mind. Instead of presenting all these synonyms, let us say that "the Greater Self" is the Absolute or Nirvana. Our goal is only to get rid of the 'Lesser Self', and become one with the 'Greater Self'. The Awakening is the acknowledging of the 'Greater Self'.

The early Buddhists in India absorbed the tradition of Yoga, and, like Yoga, took it for granted that meditation and moral discipline were prerequisites for the attainment of transcendental wisdom (prajna). The emphasis of Zen, as it was systematized in China from the 6th century and further developed in Japan from the 12th century is on the awakening of prajna from the depths of unconsciousness where it ordinary lies dormant. [18]

After the Awakening, one should proceed to the dissolution of the 'Lesser Self.' This is very logical, because the 'Lesser Self' is considered only as phenomena, while the 'Greater Self is the Absolute. The Awakening does not depend on instruction; it can happen suddenly. We recall the story of the Ch'an sixth Patriarch, Hui-neng. Hui-neng was an illiterate fellow. He was advised, and given some money, when he was only a seller of firewood, to go to Tung-Tsan monastery, in Wongmui, to meet the fifth Patriarch, Hwang-yen. Hwang-yen had, at this time, about a thousand disciples. After meeting the Patriarch, Hui-neng was admitted in the Pagoda as a worker. His job was to decorticate rice, to take off the chaff from the kernel. One day, everyone is asked to make a poem, expressing his knowledge in Ch'an. The one with the best poem, was to be nominated as the sixth Patriarch. The leader of all the disciples in the pagoda, named Shen-Hsiu, a very learned man, was the first to write a poem, as follows:

The body is the Bodhi-Tree;

The mind is like the mirror bright.

Take heed to keep it always clean,

And let no dust collect upon it.

Every one in the pagoda praised this stanza, and was sure that Shen-Hsiu would become the Sixth Patriarch. Hui-Neng, getting out of the kitchen, had someone read the preceding poem. He then asked someone to write, for him, his own quatrain, based on the poem of Shen-Hsiu:

Bodhi (True Wisdom) is not a tree,  
The mind is not a mirror shining.  
As there is nothing from the first,  
Why talk of wiping off the dust?

When the fifth Patriarch went to make inquiry about all the poems, he singled out immediately the two preceding stanzas, and asked for their ownership. Before the public, he seemed to praise the first one, and was against the second one. But later on, he called for Shen-Hsiu and scolded him severely for his poem, saying that he has not yet attained the Buddha-Nature in man. He went also to the kitchen to seek Hui-neng, and gave him a sign to meet him at midnight. When Hui-neng came, he was welcomed as Sixth Patriarch. He was praised as having attained the Buddha-Nature in man.

We see now, that Shen-Hsiu's poem dealt only with the 'Lesser Self'; he talked about wiping daily the 'Lesser Self' to become Buddha, while Hui-neng sustained that in the 'Greater Self' we have no dust to wipe off. He denied all the comparisons on Shen-Hsiu, saying that the Self is not a tree, nor a mirror, the Self cannot collect dust, etc all this means that he talked only about the "Greater Self". Hui-Neng became one of the most famous of all the Ch'an Patriarchs in China. After becoming the sixth Patriarch, he continued to teach of the need to find Buddha in our self.

In sum, in Zen Buddhism we find that Buddhism has been simplified to the utmost:

No praise, no worship for any external Buddha.  
No dependency on Scriptures.  
No emphasis on external ceremonies.

Emphasis only on the value of all men. We do not depend on any Buddha to be saved, but we are saved by our proper means.

If we have any masters, we depend on them only when we are still ignorant. Once awakened, we are free to do what we like.

We are not depending on any posture, or on rhythmic respiration. The only thing we are required to do is to tame our False Mind, and to realize our True Mind.

We do not depend on any external Buddha. "It was reasoned that if all things contain the Buddha-nature, then the Buddha could rightfully be equated with a dung-heap". [\[19\]](#) Someone asked Chao Zhu (Triệu Châu): "I will go to the South, please give me some advice". Chao answered, "If you go to the south, where there is Buddha, pass by calmly; where there is no Buddha, don't stop either." [\[20\]](#) The monk Dan He (Đan Hà), on one cold night, has chopped off one wooden Buddha, and used it as fire-wood. [\[21\]](#)

Buddhism so conceived is only Psychology or Psychology in profundity. And we are invited by Siddhartha Gautama to come and see for ourselves. The "come and see for yourself" attitude of the original Great Teacher, Siddhartha Gautama, who became the Buddha, The Enlightened One, his pragmatic insistence on "Don't take my word for it, try it yourself" the unswerving challenge of his famous

aphorism, "Look within, [thou art the Buddha](#), are very specific. No other teacher has said it".<sup>[22]</sup>

We know also his aphorism: "Live as they who have the Self for a lamp, the Self for a refuge; as they who have Dharma for a lamp, Dharma for a refuge, and none other".<sup>[23]</sup>

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- <sup>[1]</sup> Garma C.C.Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality, The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park and London, 1989, p. 254.
- <sup>[2]</sup> Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas, Vol. 2:From Gautama to the Triumph of Christianity*, pp. 93-94.
- <sup>[3]</sup> Cf. *The World of Buddhism*, ed. by Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich, Facts on File Publications, New York, 1984, p. 52.
- <sup>[4]</sup> T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, The Mandala Books, Unwins Paperbacks, London, Boston, Sydney, 1980, pp. 47-48.
- <sup>[5]</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 66b.
- <sup>[6]</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 328b.
- <sup>[7]</sup> Joseph Head & S. L. Cranston, *Reincarnation, The Phoenix Fire Mystery*, Julian Press, New York, 1957, p. 63; 73-75).
- <sup>[8]</sup> T.R.V. *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, Mandala books, Unwin Paperbacks, London, Boston, Sidney, 1969, p. 21 & note 1, p. 23. 9. Joseph Head & S.L. Cranston, *Reincarnation, the Phoenix Fire Mystery*, Julian Press, New York, 1977, p. 63 and 75, 76.
- <sup>[9]</sup> Joseph Head & S.L. Cranston, *Reincarnation, the Phoenix Fire Mystery*, Julian Press, New York, 1977, p. 63 and 75,76. T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, the Mandala Books, Unwin Paperbacks, London, Boston, Sydney, 1980, pp. 47, 48.
- And Udana pp. 80-81.
- <sup>[10]</sup> T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, the Mandala Books, Unwin Paperbacks, London, Boston, Sydney, 1980, pp. 47, 48.
- And Udana pp. 80-81.
- <sup>[11]</sup> Joseph Head & S.L. Cranston, *Reincarnation, The Phoenix Fire Mystery*, Julian Press, New York, 1977, pp. 63, 75-76)
- <sup>[12]</sup> *A dictionary of Chinese Buddhist terms*, Buddhist Culture Service, 16 Ta-Tung South Road, San Chung Shih, Taipei, Taiwan, China, compiled by William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, p. 103.
- <sup>[13]</sup> Garma C. C. Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Reality, The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park and London, 1989, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>[14]</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 165.
- <sup>[15]</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. III, p. 383, under Buddhism Article.
- Garma C.C. Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, pp. 166, 168.

- [16] Man's religions, John B. Noss, The Macmillan Company, Collier-Macmillan limited, London, 1970,p. 172.
- [17] Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1979, Vol. II, p. 726, under Ch'an.
- [18] Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. X, page 872, under Zen article.
- [19] Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. III, p. 386, under Buddhism article.
- [20] Thiền Luận của Suzuki, Bản dịch của Tuệ Sĩ, An Tiêm Xuất bản Saigon, 1971, notes 2 & 3, p. 80.
- [21] Ib. p. 485.
- [22] Nancy Wilson Ross, Buddhism, A Way of Life and Thought, Alfred A. Knopf New York, 1980, p. 4.
- [23] T.R.V. Murti, the Central Philosophy of Buddhism, Mandala Books, Unwin Paperbacks, London, Boston, Sydney, 1989 p. 21 & note 1, p. 23.

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 18

### Taoism and the Monistic Theory

Side by side with Buddhism and Confucianism, Taoism has an enormous cultural impact upon the people of China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. In this essay, I will give:

1. A general view of Taoism.
2. The essence of Taoism: Taoism and the monistic theory.
3. Taoism and the natural life.
4. Taoism versus death.
5. Taoism and Mysticism.
6. The changes of Taoism through the ages.
7. Things we can learn from Taoism.

#### 1. A general view of Taoism

The founder of Taoism was Lao Tzu. His true name was Li Er (Lý Nhĩ), from the Principality Chu of China. No one knows for sure the date of his birth and of his death. Father Henri Dore assumed that he was born around 584 B.C., and died circa 500. He met Confucius around 503. He was the author of the famous book, Tao Te Ching. It was written for the entreaty of the guardian of the pass, Yin Hsi (Yin Xi, Doãn Hĩ), when Lao Tzu passed by his place, Han Gu (Hàm Cốc).

In the Third Chapter of his book Nan Hoa Jing (Nam Hoa Kinh), Chuang Tzu (late 4th century- circa 300 B.C.) talked about the death of Lao Tzu. But common people persisted to believe that Lao-Tzu become Immortal.

The famous Historian Si Ma Qian (Tư Mã Thiên), who lived circa 200 years after Chuang Tzu, wrote that Lao-Tzu had a son named Zong (Tông), and at the end of his life, Lao-Tzu went through the pass Han Gu, and went to a place unknown. He said that Lao-Tzu was 160 or 200 years old.

Bian Shao (Biên Thiệu) author of Lao Tzu Ming (Lão Tử Minh) (165 A.D.), affirmed that the masses believed that Lao-Tzu existed since immemorial time. He was a God-like man.

Bian Hua Jing (Biến Hóa Kinh), written about 612 A. D., proclaims that not only Lao-Tzu existed since immemorial time, but became man many times to save humanity.

Wang Fu (Vương Phủ), author of the Hua Hu Jing (Hoa Hồ Kinh), written at the dynasty of Han Hui Di (Hán Huệ Đế) (290-306), said that Lao-Tzu, after going through the pass, Han Gu (Hàm Cốc), went to Tarim, and afterwards, to India. Gautama Buddha was one of his avatars, or his disciples.

This book created many polemics between Buddhists and Taoists through the ages: especially in the

Liang (Lương) (580), Tang (Đường) (668 and 696), and Yuan dynasty (Nguyên; 1258 and 1280-1294). King Yuan She Zu (Nguyên Thế Tổ) (280-1294), favoring the Buddhists, condemned this book and all other Taoist books, except the Tao-Te Ching to auto-da-fe, giving an end to the polemic.

Anyhow, since the Han (Han) dynasty, Lao-Tzu was considered as the avatar of God. [\[1\]](#)

Some believed that Emperor Huang-ti (Hoàng Đế) (2698-2797 B.C.) was the founder of Taoism and Lao-Tzu was only a continuator of it. Anyhow, Lao-Tzu never said that he was the only retainer of the truth, but showed much respect to the Ancients in his book (Tao Te Ching, Ch. 15, Ch. 41, 42, 68, 57. 22, 46, 78). He said that Union with God is the highest level reached by Ancients (Ch. 68). So we can say also that he is only a continuator of Taoism.

Lao-Tzu was determined to revive the ancient tradition prevalent at the time of Emperor Huang-Ti (2698-2797 B.C.). Since Huang-Ti was the founder of Taoism, which Lao-Tzu later revived, it is called the doctrine of Huang-Lao (Hoàng Lão). His philosophy was developed afterwards, by Lie-Tzu (Liệt Tử) (430-349 B.C.), author of the Chong Xu Zhen Jing (Xung Hư Chân Kinh) and by Chuang Tzu (Trang Tử) (360-280 B.C.), author of the Nan Hua Jing (Nam Hoa Kinh).

Chuang Tzu was much more famous than Lie Tzu, so one can call Taoism, also, as The Religion of Lao Chuang (Lão Trang).

What is then the philosophy that linked these people together? It is based on The Monistic Theory.

Why were they venerated as God? Because, they were Great Mystics. No philosophers in the past realized that all the great Taoists were the proponents of the Monistic Theory, nor knew that they were similar, being Mystics.

Adepts of the Monistic Theory believe that the world is One, that all is One, that everything proceeds from the One. They never say that they are the sole knowers of the truth, but that many people before them already shared their view.

They became mystics by vocation, and believe that the Whole is in themselves, that they like to be united with the Whole. Taoists called the One, the Tao, and the Whole, Nature.

Leon Wieger, in his book, *Les Pères du Système Taoïste* has given in pp. 513-516 an Index, summarizing all the great ideas of Lao Tzu, Lie Tzu and Chuang Tzu. One has to refer to this index to believe the veracity of my words.

Taoism, at its beginning, was, then, only a philosophy, an art of living, or an way of asceticism aiming toward self-emancipation, reserved for some. But since the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), thanks to the innovations of Zhang Dao Leng (Trương Đạo Lăng) (-died circa 156), one of the descendants of Zhang Lang (Trương Lương), famous mentor of King Han Gao Zu (Hán Cao Tổ) (206- 195), and of all his brothers and descendants, such as Zhang Jue (Trương Giác), Zhang Bao (Trương Bào), Zhang Lu (Trương Lỗ) of the Epoch of the Three Kingdoms (222-277), and thanks to the contributions of famous men such as Ji Xuan (Cát Huyền) (229-251), Zheng Si Yuan (Trịnh Tư Viễn) (at the end of the third century), Kou Qian Zhi (Khẩu Khiêm Chi; - 423), Ji Hong Bao Pu Zi (Cát Hồng Bao Phác Tử) (281-340), Taoism became a popular religion with ceremonials, prayers, public repentance, amulets etc Zhang Jue (Trương Giác), Zhang Lu (Trương Lỗ), of the Epoch of Three Kingdom (222-277), leaders of the popular Taoism, tried to overturn the reigning dynasty. The insurrection was called the Revolt of the Yellow Turbans (Giặc Khăn Vàng) (184 AD).

Since then, that is since Han times (206 BC-AD 220), both Western sinologists and Chinese scholars

themselves have distinguished between a Taoist philosophy of the great mystics and their commentators (Tao-chia) (Đạo Gia) and a later Taoist religion (Tao-chiao). (Đạo Giáo) [\[2\]](#)

It is necessary to know that since the Three Kingdom era (Thời tam Quốc) (481-249 B.C.) up to the Han dynasty (Former Han 206 B.C.- 23 A.D., and Later Han 25 A.D. - 167 A.D.) many Taoists began to make the Pills of Longevity. Among the pioneers are: Wei Bo Yang (Ngụy Bá Dương), and Bao Pu Zi (Bao Phác Tử). But since the Tang (Đường) and the Sung (Tống) dynasty, instead of external pills, one seeks for internal ones. This is the Esoteric Alchemy, the Taoist Yoga, aiming to teach the technics of respiration, the transformation of our soul, and the union with the One. The promotor of the movement is Zhong Li Quan (Chung Ly Quyền), Lu Tong Bin (Lữ Đồng Tân), Liu Hai Chan (Lưu Hải Thiềm) and disciples, Wang Zhong Yang (Vương Trùng Dương) and disciples. The Chinese Esoteric Alchemy is a bit similar to the European Esoteric Alchemy.

Besides, we must know that the I-Ching (Dịch Kinh) had much influence on Taoists. For Taoists, the Yin and the Yang are two complementary, interdependent principles or phases alternating in space and time. They evoke the harmonious interplay of all pairs of opposites in the universe. For Taoists, in the beginning there is only one Primordial Breath, that is split afterward into the light, ethereal Yang breath, which formed Heaven; and the heavier, cruder Yin breath, which formed Earth. The diversifications and interactions of Yin and Yang produced the Ten Thousand Beings. (Extroversion phase)

But by proper intervention, Yin and Yang could reproduce The Primordial Breath, or Tai-Chi, or the Pill of Longevity (Tan; Đờn) (Introversion phase). These two phases, extroversion and introversion, englobe the two alternating phases of the Ying and the Yang: The "dark side" and the "sunny side" of everything.

The Yin phase (the dark side) produces, then, the Ten Thousand of Beings. It can be also called the common Way of all Mortals.

The Yang phase (the sunny side) reproduced the Tao. This way is also called the Way of the Immortals. Very few can discover this Way or this Narrow Gate. This Way, as we know, leads us to The Pill of Longevity. Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu are on this side of the path, therefore their voices seem to be lost in the desert.

Kings of the Tang (Đường) dynasty (618-907) considered Li Lao Jun (Lý Lão Quân) (Lao-Tzu) as their ancestor; therefore they have much consideration for Taoism. They built temples to the One (Tai Yi; Thái Nhất), to the Five Emperors (Wu Di; Ngũ Đế), to Li Lao Jun (Lý Lão Quân; Lao Tzu). They ascended mountains, hoping that they could meet Immortals there. Many Kings of this dynasty have taken the so-called Pills of Immortality. But, instead of immortality, many Kings such as Xian Zong (Hiển Tông; 806-821), Mu Zong (Mục Tông; 821-826), Wu Zong (Vũ Tông; 841-847), Xuan Zong (Tuyên Tông; 847-860) became mentally deranged or died very young.

Kings of the Song dynasty (Tống; 960-1278) showed also much respect for Taoists. Song Zhen Zong (Tống Chân Tông), in 1015, endorsed Zhang Zheng Sui (Trương Chính Tù), descendant of Zhang Tao Leng (Trương Đạo Lăng) with the title of Tian Shi (The Celestial Master; Thiên Sư), and gave him The area of Lung Hu Shan (Dragon-Tiger Mountain; Long Hồ Sơn). Since then, their descendants always benefited from this area, which can be said, their Vatican, until the coming of the Republic of China (1911) which deprived them of that.

In the Yuan dynasty (Nguyên); 1260-1367), Yuan She Su (Nguyên Thế Tổ) in 1275, conferred also on Zhang Zong Yan (Trương Tông Diễn) the title of Tian Shu (Celestial Master; Thiên Sư). But in 1281, there

was a polemic between Buddhists and Taoists concerning the book Hua Hu Jing (Hóa Hồ Kinh) of Wang Fu (Vương Phủ), Yuan She Su (Nguyên Thế Tổ) condemned all Taoist books to auto-da-fe, except the Tao-Te-Ching and ended the polemic, as said before.

The Ming (1368-1628; Minh) does not much favor Taoism. In Ming Wu Zong (1506-1521; Minh Vũ Tông), and Ming She Zong (1522-1566; Minh Thế Tông) era, Taoism reprinted the whole collection of Tao Cang (or Tao Tsang, Taoist Canon; Đạo Tạng). It contains nearly 1,500 titles, among which are many documents from the first century of esoteric Taoism. It is to this single repository that scholars must turn in order to study the literature of the Taoist religion. Taoist books on circulation are scarce. Besides the Tao-Te-Ching, the Chong Xu Zhen Jing (Xung Hư Chân Kinh) of Lie-tzu (Liệt Tử), the Nan Hua Jing (Nam Hoa Kinh) of Chuang Tzu (Trang Tử), The Book of the Yellow Court (Huang-Ting Ching; Huỳnh Đình Kinh), The Can Tong Qi (Tham Đồng Khí; The Unitive Life) of Wei Bo Yang (Ngụy Bá Dương), The Yin Fu Jing (Âm Phù Kinh), The Xing Ming Gui Zhi (Tính Mệnh Khuê Chỉ), the common people do not have much access to Taoist books, so their knowledge on Taoism is very limited.

In the Qing dynasty (Thanh; 1644-1909), Taoism is also not in favor.

Nowadays, in Taiwan, Taoism is prosperous. There are, in all, 86 sects sponsored by the government. Among them, six are dominant:

1). The Cheng I (Chính Nhất; Heavenly Master sect), from Lung-Hu-Shan, Kiangsi Province (Long Hồ Sơn; Quảng Tây).

2). The Mao Shan sect (Mao Sơn), with two varieties of ritual i.e. strict monastic ritual meditation based on the Yellow Court Canon (Huỳnh Đình Kinh), and military Nin-Jitsu like ritual (Nhẫn Thuật) based on the Ch'i-Men Tun Chia (Kỳ Môn Độn Giáp).

3). The T'ai-Chi sect (Thái Cực) from Wu-Tang Shan (Võ Đương Sơn) in Hupei (Hồ Bắc), with two styles of liturgy, i.e., military style exorcisms performed with sword, halberd ax and spear, and meditations of internal alchemy after the tradition of Chang San Feng (Trương Tam Phong).

4). The Ch'uan Chen sect (Toàn Chân Phái) influencing laymen who practice Taoist meditation and interior alchemy in the privacy of their homes.

5). The Shen-Hsiao order (Thần Tiêu Phái) which includes Taoists who call themselves by many names and titles; thus Taoists of the Ling-Pao sect (Linh Bảo Phái), Lord Lao sect (Lão Quân Phái) and in general Taoists who derive their ancestry from Chang-Chou prefecture (Chương Châu Phái) in Amoy province (Hà Môn Tỉnh), practice ritual deriving from the Shen-Hsiao tradition (Thần Tiêu Phái).

6). The Lu-Shan order (Lư Sơn Phái), which can be identified because its adherents wrap a red cloth around the head, blow on a buffalo horn, and ring the three forked bells deriving from Shingon Buddhism (Chân Ngôn), during their liturgy. [3]

## 2. The Essence of Taoism. Taoism and The Monistic Theory

Founders of Taoism are:

Lao-tzu, author of The Tao Te Ching.

Lie-tzu, author of the Chong Xu Zhen Jing.

Chuang Tzu, author of the Nan Hua Jing.

In order to know the essence of Taoism, one should recur to these books. Afterwards, one should read also The Yellow Court Canon (Huỳnh Đình Kinh), The Yin Fu Jing (Âm Phù Kinh), The Can Tong Qi

(Tham Đồng Khế; The Unitive Life), the Xing Ming Gui Zhi (Tĩnh Mệnh Khuê Chi) etc. to have some idea about the subject. It means that Taoism requires an illumination, or a gnosis to be understood.

Taoist books are hard to understand. They are written in a very strange way, mixing what is far-fetched with what is fabulous and what is real. But, if we have some guiding ideas, it can become rather clear. The following are some guide lines:

1). Taoism, instead of saying that this world is created by God, sustains that it is emanated from a Cosmic Stuff. This Cosmic Stuff or the Principle is incommensurable, ineffable. It is the origin and the goal of everything. It englobes everything in itself, transcends this world and at the same time is immanent in it. Taoists call this Principle, Tao.

Tao has two aspects: The unmanifested aspect, and the manifested one.

When it is unmanifested, it is called Nothing, The primeval Energy (Zu Qi; Vô Cực), Tan (Đan), Tao (Đạo), Hong Meng (Hồng Mông), Hun Dun (Hỗn Độn), Hun Lun (Hồn Luân) etc. now, we call this aspect, the Essence, or the Noumenon of everything.

When it is manifested, It is called Tai Ji (Thái Cực), Gu Shen (Cốc Thần), the Yellow Court (Huỳnh Đình), the Huan Guan Qiao (Huyền Quan Khiếu) etc Now we call this aspect: The Phenomenal.

Later on, to let people understand better this Essence of the Universe, one tends to give it an human appearance, for instance, one calls it The Jade Emperor (Ngọc Hoàng). Since then, anthropomorphism invades Taoist literature. And one takes these human creations as real personages.

So, what Lao-Tzu calls the "permanent Tao" in reality is nameless. The name (Ming) in ancient Chinese thought implies an evaluation assigning an object its place in a hierarchical universe. The Tao is outside these categories.

It is something formlessly fashioned, that existed before Heaven and Earth... Its name (Ming) we do not know; Tao is the byname that is given. Were I forced to say to what class of things it belongs I should call it Immense.

Tao is the "imperceptible, indiscernible," about which nothing can be predicated but that latently contains the forms, entities, and forces of all particular phenomena: "It was from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang; the Named is the mother that rears the Ten Thousand Beings, each after its kind." The Nameless (wu-ming; Vô Danh) and the Named (yu-ming; Hữu Danh), Not-Being (wu; Vô) and Being (yu; Hữu), are interdependent and "grow out of one another."

Not-Being (wu) and Tao are not identical; wu and yu are two aspects of the permanent Tao: "in its mode of being Unseen, we will see its mysteries; in the mode of the Seen, we see its boundaries." (Tao Te Ching, chapter I).

Not-Being does not mean Nothingness but rather the absence of perceptible qualities; in Lao-Tzu 's view it is superior to Being. It is the Void (that is, empty incipience) that harbors in itself all potentialities and without which even Being lacks its efficiency. [\[4\]](#)

In chapter 26 of The Tao Te Ching, Lao-tzu said: "

There was something formed out of chaos,

That was formed before Heaven and Earth.

Quiet and still! Pure and deep!

It stands on its own and doesn't change.

It can be regarded as the mother of Heaven and Earth

I do not yet know its name:

I "style" it "the Way."

Were I forced to give it a name, I would call it "the Great". [5]

2. The Tao, emanating everything, is latent in them.

Dong Guo Zi (Đông Quách Tử) asked Chuang Tzu (Trang Tử):

- Where is the Tao? - It is everywhere.
- Please show me more specifically.
- It is in the ant.
- Can you low it?
- In this blade of grass.
- Lower.
- In this fragment of tile.
- Lower.
- In this manure, in this dung-water.

Dong Guo Zi did not say anymore. Chang Tzu said: "...Do not ask if the Principle is in this or in that. He is in everything. Therefore one call him great, whole, universal. All these terms pertain to one reality, to the cosmic oneness." [6]

3. If Heaven, Earth, and everything in it, emanate from One Reality, they are then only part of the whole. Therefore, Heaven, Earth and everything can not live separately from each other, because in so doing, they become immediately imperfect.

Lie-tzu wrote: "Heaven and Earth have not all capacities, The Saint is not omnipotent, things do not have all properties. Heaven gives life and cover, Earth gives matter and sustains, the Saint teaches and corrects, things have their own qualities. They must depend on each other." [7]

4. If Tao, if Heaven is everywhere, and immanent in everything, then to find it, we must go deep in our soul, we should become introvert. It is written in the book Tai Shang Bao Fa (Thái Thượng Bảo Phiệt): "Wen De Ju (Văn Đức Tự) one day met a Taoist monk. He invited him in his house. After entertaining him, he asked him what was the secret procedure for self-culture. The monk replied: The Tao is in your heart, your heart englobed already the Tao. If your Heart is separated from the Tao, you created for yourselves your own Hell; if your heart is united with the Tao, you will find your Peng Lai San Dao (Bồng Lai Tam Đảo), your Paradise on earth. [8]

It means that Ying Zhou, Fang Zhang, Peng Lai San Dao (Doanh Châu, Phương Trượng, Bồng Lai Tam Đảo) all these earthly Paradises reside in fact, in our heart.

Many ancient Chinese Kings, such as Qi Wei Wang (Tề Uy Vương; 378-332 BC), Qi Xuan Wang (Tề Tuyên Vương; 332- 313 BC), Yan Zhao Wang (Yên Chiêu Vương; 311-278), Qin Shi Huang Ti Di (Tần Thủy Hoàng Đế; 249-246 BC) were lured by Taoists monks, and thought that these earthly paradises

really existed. They spent much money, sending many people to these fictitious places, in order to find Immortals, and Longevity Pills. [9]

5. Understanding that the Soul must be united with the Divine Spirit, if one aspires to immortality, one can grasp the basic concept for the Longevity Pill of the past. The equation for this consists only as follows:

$$\text{Yin} + \text{Yang} = \text{Tai Ji.}$$

$$\text{Soul} + \text{Tao} = \text{Real Man, or the Pill.}$$

Afterwards, one creates many new works, to replace them, such as White Gold, Black Silver; Lead, Mercury; Child, Girl; Sulfate of Mercury, Mercury; Sun, Moon; Dragon, Tiger etc All these new words serve only as synonyms to designate the Soul and the Tao, or the Spirit and the Breath in our self, but they tend also to misguide neophytes unfit for illumination.

Applying this Equation to the human body, one understands the ancient way to prolong our life. It consists only in concentrating our self and directing our breath properly.

It is written in the Introduction to Medicine, chapter Self-Nourishing: "All the theories on Pills, on Sulfate of Mercury, on Lead and Mercury, on Dragon and Tiger etc tends only to describe the theory of Spirit and Breath held together. If we can master our breath, if our breath depends on us, our energy will be full, and we can avoid all diseases." [10]

6. If Tao is present everywhere, and in everything, It must helps everything evolve properly, and live fully. Therefore, who understands the Tao, will not use its own intellect to derange the harmony of the whole.

Chuang Tzu said: "Heaven is inside, Man is outside...Don't let man destroy Heaven" [11]

In the Taoist view, all beings and everything are fundamentally one; opposing opinions can arise only when people lose sight of the Whole and regard their partial truths as absolute. They are then like the frog at the bottom of the well who takes the bit of brightness he sees for the whole sky. The closed system - i.e. the passions and prejudices into which petty minds shut themselves - hide the Tao, the "Supreme Master" who resides in themselves and is superior to all distinctions. [12]

Lie-tzu wrote in his book: "There was a man in the Principality of Song (Tống), who made a leaf out of jade, and offered it to the Prince. He made it in three years. And it looked like a real leaf of the kind. Put among other real leaves, it is indistinguishable. The Prince rewarded him well. Lie-tzu says: "Heaven and Earth in producing everything, if it takes them three years to make a leaf, then very few trees have leaves. Therefore, the Saint bases himself in the Tao to amend everything and not in his own intelligence". [13]

Chuang Tzu in his book, Nan Hua King, wrote: "One day, a sea bird dropped at the gate of the Principality of Lu (Lỗ). The Prince thought that it was a Supernatural Being visiting his country. He came then in person to meet the Bird, brings It to the temple of his ancestors, where he entertained It. He had other people play the music of Jiu Shao (Cửu Thiệu) for It, and offer It a cow, a goat and a pork. But the bird looks at them with a wild-look, and with an sad air, and dares not eat nor drink. Three days later, It dies. This is a human way to feed a bird. If the prince like to nourish It properly, he must let It stay in the wilderness, live in the lake and river, feeds itself with fish and eel, and be where It likes. The bird doesn't like to hear human voices, and is afraid of music...If we play music in the Lake Dong Tinh (Động Đình Hồ), birds will take flight, fishes will dive, but men will gather to listen to it... Fish live in water, but man dies in it.

So, different habitats, different customs... [\[14\]](#)

So, Chuang Tzu liked to oppose the Heaven-made and the man-made, that is, nature and society. He wanted man to renounce all artificial "cunning contrivances" that facilitate his work but lead to "cunning hearts" and agitated souls in which the Tao will not dwell. Man should equally renounce all concepts of measure, law and virtue. "Fashion pecks and bushels for people to measure by and they will steal by peck and bushel. "He blamed not only the cultural heroes and inventors praised by the Confucians but also sages who shaped the rites and rules of society.

That the unwrought substance was blighted in order to fashion implements - this was the crime of the artisan. That the Way (tao) and its Virtue (te) were destroyed in order to create benevolence and righteousness - this was the fault of the sage. [\[15\]](#)

Applying this principle to human beings, Lao-Tzu didn't like to force people into anything. In the Tao Te King, he wrote:

For those who would like to take control of the world and act on it,  
I see that with this they simply will not succeed.

The world is a sacred vessel:

It is not something that can be acted upon.

Those who act on it destroy it;

Those who hold on to it lose it.

With things - some go forward, others follow;

Some are hot, others submissive and weak:

Some rise up while others fall down.

Therefore the Sage:

Rejects the extreme, the excessive, and the extravagant. [\[16\]](#)

5. Taoism did not intend to educate people. It let them evolve naturally. The "superior virtue" of Taoism is a latent power that never lays claim to its achievements; it is the "mysterious power" (hsuan te) of Tao present in the heart of the Sage - "the man of superior virtue never acts (wu-wei; Vô Vi), and yet there is nothing he leaves undone."

Wu wei is not an ideal of absolute inaction nor a mere "not-overdoing." It is an action so well in accordance with things that its author leaves no trace of himself in his work: "Perfect activity leaves no track behind it; perfect speech is like a jade worker whose tool leaves no mark." It is the Tao that "never acts, yet there is nothing it does not do. "There is no true achievement without wu wei because every deliberate intervention in the natural course of things will sooner or later turn into the opposite of what was intended and will result in failure.

...Thus, holy man fully recognizes the relativity of notions like good and evil and true and false. He is neutral and open to the extent that he offers no active resistance to any would-be opponent, whether it be a person or an idea. "When you argue, there are some things you are failing to see. In the greatest Tao nothing is named; in the greatest disputation, nothing is said. "

The person who wants to know the Tao is told: "Don't meditate, don't cogitate... Follow no school,

follow no way, and then you will attain the Tao"...The mystic does not speak because declaring unity, by creating duality of the speaker and the affirmation, destroys it. Those who speaks about the Tao are "wholly wrong". For he who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know. Chuang Tzu was aware of the fact that, in speaking about it, he could do no more than hint at the way toward the all-embracing and intuitive knowledge. [17]

So for Taoists, Wu Wei is transcendental action, perfect action, divine action. Some Chinese Sovereigns are throned under two big letters Wu wei. Yu Wei (Hữu Vi), is then its contrary and means human action, imperfect action.

### 3. Taoism and the natural life

In sum, great Taoists try to find natural laws and to obey them. They are very careful about taking care of their body, and call it Self-Governing or Self-Nourishment. (Cf, Chuang Tzu, Nan hua Jing, Ch. 11).

Self-governing means:

1. To live healthily.
2. To live in accord with the environment.
3. To live in accord with the Tao, that is to live a transcendent life.

1. Self-governing consists, then, to live healthily up to the number of years reserved to each of us.

Chuang Tzu said: "The number of years that we receive from Heaven, we must live it up to the end. Never try to harm it and destroy it before his term." [18]

Lie-tzu is also against the conception of living more than deserved. He tell us this anecdote:

King Qi Jing Gong (Tề Cảnh Công) passed by the mountain Niu Shan (Ngưu Sơn), and came to the north frontier of the capital, wept and lamented over his fate:

" How beautiful is our country ! plants and grass are so luxuriant. One day, if I die, where I will go? If no one since the antiquity has died, and if I must leave this country, where I will go?

His dependent Kung (Khổng) and Liang Qiu Ju (Lương Khưu Cứ) begin also to cry, and say: We people thanks to your benevolence, live on meat and vegetables, drive bad carriages and skinny horses, and even so we don't like to die, furthermore you, Sir!

The Prime Minister Yan Ying (Án Anh; Yan Zi: Án Tử) standing beside, laughs. Jing Gong, wiping his tears, asks Yan Zi: "To day, in my walk, I am moved at the sight of the spectacle, and I am sad, Kung and Ju cry with me, only you, you laugh at me, why?"

Yan Zi answers: "If all the sages don't die, then your ancestors like Tai Kung (Thái Công) and Huan Kung (Hoàn Công) are still living. If courageous people such as Zhuan Kung (Trang Công), and Ling Kung (Linh Công) are also still living, if these people are still on earth, you, Majesty, you will wear now garment of a farmer and is now working in the field, and have no time to think about your death as you do now. You surely have no access to the throne as now. Thanks to the deaths of these men, now you can reign. If you cry for these things, you are very inhuman. Now, as I see an inhuman King surrounded by flatterers, I can not refrain myself from laughing."

Jing Gong (Cảnh Công) is ashamed, drinks a cup of wine in self-punishment, and punishes his

attendants by enjoining them to drink two cups of wine each. [\[19\]](#)

So a true Taoist has not to find a way to prolong his life. All the Alchemists who try to find the Pill of Longevity, have failed miserably.

King Xuan Kung (Tuyên Tông) of the Tang dynasty (Đường; 847-860) invited Xuan Yun Xi (Hiên Viên Tập), a famous Taoist, to the capital Chang An (Trường An) and asked him; "Longevity can be learned or not. The Taoist answered: "Sir, if you can refrain your concupiscence, if you practice virtue, naturally you will enjoy long lasting happiness, why care for longevity?" [\[20\]](#)

Understanding this properly, we will see that all posterior procedures to prolong life are illusions. Even, Lao-tzu did not avoid death.

In the 33rd chapter of the Tao Te Ching, Lao-Tzu defines longevity as follows: "To die but not be forgotten - that's true long life."

This conception is very proper. Man is not forgotten, even after death. The fame of Saints and Sages persists after their death. Furthermore, it can become stronger, and is venerated by people. They died, in fact, but they are not forgotten.

Then, how to live all the amount of time reserved to us? Taoists answered: We must prevent diseases. We must live properly, and do not dissipate our energy. We must live carelessly, happily, and not be driven by external influences.

It is written in the Tao Te Ching, chap. 46:

" Therefore, the contentment one has when he knows that he has enough, is abiding contentment indeed."

It is written in Chuang Tzu:

King Huang Ti (Hoàng Đế) asked Guang Cheng Zi (Quảng Thành Tử): "I heard that you have attained the Tao. Can you show me the way of Self-Governing, and how to have everlasting life? "

Guang Cheng Zi (Quảng Thành Tử) replied: "This is a very good question. Come and I will reveal you the Tao. Its essence is mysterious, obscure and indistinct. It is silence. When one doesn't look at anything, doesn't listen to anything, when one's mind is concentrated, and still, one's body will be spontaneously right. Be contemplative, be fully detached, don't weary your body, don't move your instinct, then you can everlast. Watch your inside, protect your outside. Willing to know many things, that is what consumes you... (Tchang Tzu, Nan Hua King, chap. 11, section 3).

The book Huang Ti Nei Jing (Hoàng Đế Nội Kinh) wrote: "Huang Ti (Hoàng Đế) ask Tian Shi (Thiên Sư):

"I heard that in the great antiquity, all people live up to 100 years, and their strength is not diminished. Now people live only up to 50 years, and their strength are very much decreased. Is it due to the change of climate, or it is due to human behavior? Qi Bo answered: "In the antiquity, those who understand the Tao, will follow the yin and the yang, will regulate their eating and drinking, their sleeping and awakening, and do not over-strain, and can conserve their strength and their body intact up to 100.

Now, people are different. They use alcohol instead of water, live mindlessly instead of regularly. They meet their wife when drunk, and because of their concupiscence, they dry up their semen, and dissipate their energy. They don't know how to take care of themselves properly, and how to preserve their spirit; they try only to enjoy themselves, and have no measure in their lives... Therefore, at 50, they become

already very weak.

The Saint of the great antiquity teaches people to behave properly, to avoid harmful wind, to keep their mind still, to conserve their energy, and their moral intact. In this case, disease cannot proliferate. Therefore, people can enjoy their life, and have not much desire. Their mind will be tranquil and have no fear; their body will not have excessive fatigue, their breath will be regular, and everything will be in order.

Having enough to eat, enough to wear, enjoying good custom, and calmness in the family, people in this time have no envy. Then they are called Simple. They don't care about sex, and have no ambition. Stupid or intelligent, good or bad, they are not afraid of the environment, therefore they are united to the Tao, and can live up to one hundred years, and their strength doesn't decrease...Then, their virtue is great. [\[21\]](#)

Chinese Medicine also asserts that if we can live frugally, regularly, if we can prevent diseases, we do not have to take any medicine. [\[22\]](#)

2. He who understands the Tao must rejoice when living, but also must rejoice when dying. This is the Will of God.

Taoism teaches us to be joyful in any circumstances. We must adapt ourselves to all circumstances.

It is written in Lie-tzu: "Confucius going to visit mount Tai-shan (Thái Sơn), met, in the flat country of Cheng (Chanh), Rong Qi Qi (Vinh Khái Kỳ), wearing a deer hide, surrounded with a rope, playing a cithern and singing. "Sir", asked Confucius, "why are you so joyful?" "I have", he replied, "many things to rejoice about. First, among all the beings, man is the noblest, and I have been given a man's body. This is my first matter of joy. Second, man is nobler than woman, and I am born man. This is my second matter of joy. Third, many die after their conception before seeing the light, or die in their swaddling-clothes before the awakening of his mind, but this doesn't happen to me: I am now 90. This is my third matter of joy. And for what I must become sad? For my poverty? This is the common fate of learned people. Or for the coming death? This is the current end of all life. Then, why do you have to complain about what is normal, and what is our regular end?" Confucius tell his disciples: "This man knows how to comfort himself." [\[23\]](#)

Another anecdote: "One day while Confucius admires the fall of Lu-Liang (Lữ Lương), of 240 feet high, producing a torrent which gurgles on a length of 30 stadiums, so swift that even caiman nor turtle nor fishes can go upstream, he sees a man swimming between the eddies. Believing to deal with a desperate man seeking death, he ask his disciples to follow him on the bank of the torrent, and to save him if possible. But, some hundreds steps down stream, this man gets out of water, undoes his hair to dry it up, and follows the bank, humming. Confucius, rejoining him, said: "When I see you swimming in the stream, I think that you like to die. Afterward, when I see you getting out of the cascade with ease, I think that you are a transcendent being. But no, you are a real man. Please tell me how you can get out of the cascade so easily". He replies: "I have no special way. When I began, I labor hard. But in time, it becomes easie; finally, I do it naturally. I let myself be sucked in by the funnel of the whirlwind, then be thrown up by the peripheral eddies. I follow the movement of the water, without making any movement. That is all I can tell you." [\[24\]](#)

This anecdote reminds us of a Chapter of Zhong Yong (Trung Dung), a Confucian book:

"The superior man does what is proper to the station in which he is; he does not desire to go beyond this.

"In a position of wealth and honor, he does what is proper to a position of wealth and honor. In a position of low position, he does what is proper to a poor and low position. Situated among barbarous tribes, he does what is proper to a situation among barbarous tribes. In a position of sorrow and difficulty, he does what is proper to a position of sorrow and difficulty. The superior man can find himself in no situation in which he is not himself.

"In a high situation, he does not treat his inferiors with contempt. In a low situation, he does not court the favors of his superiors. He rectifies himself and seeks for nothing from others, so that he has no dissatisfactions. He does not murmur against Heaven, nor grumble against men.

"Thus it is that the superior man is quiet and calm, waiting for the appointments of Heaven, while the mean man walks in dangerous paths, looking for lucky occurrences.

"The Master said, "In archery we have something like the way of the superior man. When the archer misses the center of the target, he turns around and seeks for the cause of his failure in himself." [25]

#### 4. Taoism versus death

After learning to live with joy, we must learn to die with joy.

Chuang Tzu tell us this anecdote: "Zi Yu (Tử Lai) is gravely ill. He is hunch-backed and very much deformed. Zi Qi (Tử Lê) come to visit him. Breathing laboriously, but very calm, the dying man said to him: "Mother Nature is very good. It makes me as I am now. And I don't complain against it. If, after my departure from this life, it makes out of my left arm a cock, I will cry to announce the dawn. If it makes out of my right arm an arbalest, I will kill owls. If it makes out of my trunk a carriage, and harness to it, my spirit changed into a horse, I am still very satisfied. Each being received his form on his time, and gives it up on his hour. If so, why be joyful or be sad, in these vicissitudes? The Ancients say that we are like faggots tied and untied alternatively. Beings don't tie nor untie themselves. It depends on Heaven for his life or death. Then, why have I to complain about my death?" [26]

Thus, for Taoists, death is only a departure from one condition to other. If so, why are we to be afraid of death? Our apprehension of death is only an illusion. Death, like the departure of the bride from her paternal house, can bring us to another happiness. Formerly, when the beautiful Li Ji (Lê Cơ) was kidnapped from her house, she cried bitterly. But when she was married to the King of Jin (Tấn), she realized that she has no reason to cry like that. Life can be considered as a long dream. Some are beautiful, some are not. All of us are dreaming but we believe in the reality of our dream. Life and death are then similar. [27]

With such a sane conception about death and life, we know now why Chuang tzu declared that Lao-tzu was dead, while other people sustained that Lao-tzu was Immortal. They didn't like people to say otherwise.

If so, all other Taoist tales about Immortals ascending to Heaven in broad daylight, is only fiction.

In the Xing Ming Gui Zhi (Tính Mệnh Khuê Chi), at the end of the first Tome, it is written that there are in all about 10,000 Immortals having ascended to Heaven in broad daylight, some riding a dragon, some a swan, some a fish, some a wind. Out of them, 8000 ascended to Heaven with their house and furniture. If going to Heaven, and having to bring their own house and furniture, these Immortals will live a very poor life because they should provide in advance everything for them. Their Heaven is then very poor and dull!

But for Taoists, it is not yet enough to live healthily, and joyfully, one must also live transcendentally,

live in union with the Tao.

## 5. Taoism and mysticism

We find in Taoism, in the highest level of life, two types of men:

- 1). Writers and eminent artists.
- 2). True Taoists.

1. Writers and eminent artists, according to Taoism, are people living in unison with Nature, with friends, getting off all the narrow conventions of the mass, letting their own soul flourish freely on their pen, or flow on their poetry, or their music. Then, they can reach the spirit living at the bottom of matter, and communicate it to us.

When we examine famous paintings of famous Chinese painters, we will see these characteristics. Let us look at pictures, such as:

The Branch of Apricot by Xu Wei (Tử Vị),

The Six Persimmons by Mu Xi (Mục Khê),

Tree on the Rock by She Tao (Thạch Đào),

The Bamboo Branch by Ni San (Nghê Tán),

The Flower Vase by Ba Dai Zhen Ren (Bát Đại Chân Nhân)

Mount and Trees in the Mist by Mi Fei (Mi Phế) etc...

All these pictures have the same naturalness, the same simplicity, the same vividness. Their secrecy is:

Standing out of the conventional.

Sharing with nature.

Keeping the mind calm, relax, and unprejudiced.

The painter Huang Shi Gong (Hoàng Thạch Công) lived in the forest. He painted His House of Orchids, while his mind is concentrated, natural and without any prejudices.

The painter Shi Tao (Thạch Đào) said: "Talking about painting is like talking about Zen. One must get out of the realm of thinking, and reach the field of Oneness, of No-Self. In that case only he can become the best. If one is still in the field of relativity, one is not a great painter."

The painter Ba Dai Chen Ren (Bát Đại Chân Nhân) also said: "When our mind is clear and calm as the surface of water, then we will love everything. When our mind is calm as a light breeze in the sun, then we will remember everyone.

The painter Shi Tao (Thạch Đào) has a poem describing his simple life and extolling the free life in the midst of nature, far from city. He said roughly:

I like calmness, so I avoid city,

I have a thatched house in the wildness.

I am surrounded by mountains,

And I roam around freely.  
 In spring, I watch birds flying,  
 In summer, I bathe myself in streams,  
 In autumn, I visit summits of mountains,  
 In winter, I lay down and warm myself under the sun.  
 So I enjoy myself all the year long,  
 Sun and moon can revolve freely around me.  
 If I am free, I read some Taoist books,  
 If I am tired, I sleep in my thatched couch.  
 If you ask me about whom I dream.  
 I will tell you that I met Xuan Yuan (Hiên Viên; Emperor Huang Di),  
 Xuan Yuan teaches me a secret code of life,  
 And forbids me to tell it to other people,  
 My garments are now about thirty years old,  
 My knowledge is as vast as the blue sea.  
 When I use my brush, I realize that my power is very great,  
 I will not promulgate my secret,  
 If not, mounts will be smashed to ashes...

In examining the life of past writers and artists, we find out that many of them have a very noble life. A true artist endows to cultivate his personality and to live in unison with the Tao, with Cosmic Consciousness. They believe that the Tao will reveal itself only to pure minds. Only people of high talents can find out the secret presence of the Tao, can have magic brush, magic fingers, magic words, and can describe the secret rhythm that vibrate inside everything. The artist Teng Shuang You (Đặng Sương Hữu) (IX century, specialist in Apricot and Swan) refuses marriage and honors so that he can devote himself totally to painting. Thanks to this, his mind can be felt on his painting.

In this case, artist and Taoist meet at the summit. A Taoist must find out and describe the Tao immanent in him by his words and by his life, so that common people can share with him this feeling. Likewise, an artist must also discover the Universal Spirit or the Tao latent in everything, and communicate it to other people.

2. This simplicity, this independence, this casting of all conventions are to be found out again in the life of a Taoist.

Taoist is a man who can purify his mind, who can find the Tao latent in his innermost, who can live in unison with the Tao.

Lao Tzu, Lie Tzu and Chuang Tzu are such kind of men. Knowing them as such, we can understand their view, their goal, and their aspirations.

It is said in the XVI chapter of the Tao Te Ching:

"He who reaches to the maximum of the void, will be solidly fixed in the rest,

The multitude of beings are issued from the non-being,

And I see them coming back to it.

They swarm and return to their root.

Returning to their root, is to re-enter in rest.

Re-enter in rest, is called Returning to their fate.

Returning to their fate, is to be eternal.

Knowing what is eternal is Wisdom,

Not knowing this is to be reckless and wild.

To know the Eternal, is to be all-embracing,

To be all-embracing is to be impartial,

To be impartial is to be kingly,

To be kingly is to be (like) Heaven,

To be (like) Heaven is to be (one with) the Tao,

If you are one with the Tao, to the end of your days, you will suffer no harm." [\[28\]](#)

In chapter X, it is said:

"Can your soul be attached to the One without separation,

Can you maintain intact your breath like a child?

Can you conserve your profound mirror without blemish?

Can you love people and governing the state with your transcendental action,

In opening and closing the gates of Heaven, can you play the part of the female?

In understanding all within the four reaches, can you do this without using knowledge?

Give birth to them and nourish them,

Give birth to them but don't try to own them

Help them to grow but don't rule them,

This is called Profound Virtue. [\[29\]](#)

Lie-tzu sustains that to find the Tao, one should empty his mind from all menial mundane thinking. [\[30\]](#)

Chuang Tzu said roughly in chapter VI of Nan Hua Jing:

Wishing to find out the Tao, one must forget the environment, and all the external illusions. When the mind is completely calm, then the Tao will appear. Seeing the Tao, there will be no more present and past. Transcending present and past, one will accede to the Eternal. If one holds on superficial life, one will be miserable. If one doesn't cover for superficial life, one can reach to the status of divinity. Try to forget what men call by Virtue, and by Ceremony, try to forget our own ego, and our body. Neglect our own intellect, and be one with the Infinite. It is what is called to be united with the Tao and with Heaven, it is what is called escaping from the realm of Change. Who tell me about this? It is my Teacher. My Teacher regulates everything, but never mentions about his favor. He grants happiness to all generations, but never claims for it. He everlasts with everything, but never feels any decrepitude. He takes care of heaven and earth,

and carves everything, but never says that He is clever. He is always care-free. [\[31\]](#)

Taoist commentators in the world recognize that the Essence of Taoism consists of the unitive life with the Tao, or Heaven. Now we call it a mystic life, a life common to all Saints in the world without distinction of religion. A mystic life roughly has three phases:

1. A purgative life (Via Purgativa) aiming to cleanse our soul of all defects.
2. An Illuminative Life (Via illuminativa) that can enlighten our mind.
3. An Unitive Life (Via Unitiva) uniting our soul to the Tao, to the Divine.

Chuang Tzu has described very clearly these phases:

1. First he talks about the phase of Conversion: Don't let our menial daily works disturb our mind and let it forget the goal and the purpose of life. [\[32\]](#)

2. We must escape from the conditioning of external factors, close our senses, (Nan Hua Jing, Chap. XI, Section C) transcend the realm of our intellect, and of our normal imagination (Nan Hua Jing, chap. XII, Section D), cleanse our mind, and do what Chuang Tzu say to be the Fast of the Soul, or the Emptying of our Soul. (Nan Hua Jing, chap. IV, section A.- Lie tzu, chap. IV, Section N).

3. We must concentrate our mind, and enter in ecstasy. What is called by Chuang Tzu as Sitting in Forgetfulness.

4. Then we must live in unison with the Tao.

In Chapter 22, Section C of Nan Hua Jing, Chuang tzu said: "Nie Que (Khiết Khuyết) asked Bei Yi (Bì Y) about the Tao, Bei Yi (Bì Y) said: "Keep straight your body, concentrate your mind, and heaven will be in accord with you. Gather your intellect, be one with the Tao, and Divinity will be in you. Live simply and naturally as a cow just born, don't try to find out why..."

This anecdote teaches us that we must transcend our intellect and affection, be calm, be concentrative, then we can reach the highest realm of our mind.

Chuang Chung Yuan said: "To the Taoist, the attainment of Absolute Reality is to be in the realm of the Great Infinite, the realm of Non-Being. To enter the realm of non-being is to have reached the ground of the great sympathy.

One may enter the realm of non-being either through Quiescence T'ien, or through Intuitive Knowledge, Chih. The former concentrates upon Repose, or what the Buddhists called Dhyana. The latter stresses on Intuition or Prajna.

The concentration on Repose is often referred to as the method of gradual attainment; stress on Intuition is referred to as Sudden Enlightenment. Both methods are described in Taoist writings. But the goal of either method is the entry into the realm of Non-being.

Non-being manifested itself either as the Heavenly Light, or the Uncarved Block. They are two aspects of the same thing.

The first approach, through Chih, or Intuitive Knowledge is pure self consciousness through immediate, direct, primitive penetration, instead of by methods that are derivative, inferential, or rational. In the sphere of intuitive knowledge, there is no separation between the Knower and the Known, subject and object are identified...

Free identification and interfusion in the realm of non-being are the functions of the Great Sympathy.

In short, it is the Tao, the higher unity of all things.

...Psychologically speaking, it is the transformation from "a consciousness limited to ego-form of the non-ego-like-self". [33]

Live in unison with the Tao, is called wu-wei by Taoist. Wu-wei is transcendental action, which helps people participate in the life of the Tao. Therefore, the Indian monk, Jiu Ma Luo Shi (Cửu Ma La Thập) has translated Nirvana as Wu Wei.

Lao Tzu also called this life Union with God (Tao Te Ching, Chapter 68), Embracing the One (Chapter X), Chuang Tzu called it Possessing the One (Nan Hua Ching, chap. XII, A), Resting in the Womb of God (Nan Hua Ching II, C), or Reaching the Center of the Circle (Nan Hua Ching, II, C).

This kind of achieved man, Taoists called True Man (Nan Hua Ching VI, A), or Son of Gods (Nan Hua Ching XXII, B), or People of God (Nan Hua Ching, IV, A).

Chuang Tzu said: "A gnostic will have intuition, will get rid of everything artificial, and will keep only what is natural. He is then the Son of God, or people of God." (Nan Hua Ching, XXII, D,- IV, A).

The Yin Fu Jing (Âm Phù Kinh), in the opening phrase of the book, defines man as follows: "The Divine Nature is Man; the Human Nature is mechanism. To institute The Divine Way is to set a goal for Man."

## 6. Changes of Taoism through the Ages

Taoism through the Ages has many facets:

From philosophy, from an art of living, from mysticism reserved only for some elect, Taoism gradually become an exoteric religion for the mass, with creeds, ceremonies, talismans, magic, temples and monastery etc

All this is due to the works of the Kings of Han dynasty, such as: Han Wen Di (Hán Văn Đế; 179-156), Han Wu Di (Hán Vũ Đế; 140-86),

Of the Kings of Tang dynasty such as: Tang Gao Zu Li Yuan (Đường Cao Tổ Lý Uyên; 620-627), Xuan Zong (Huyền Tông; 713-756), Xian Zong (Hiển Tông; 806-820), Mu Zong (Mục Tông 821-825), Wu Zong (Vũ Tông; 841-847)

Of the Kings of Song dynasty, such as: Zhen Zong (Chân Tông; 998-1023), Hui Zong (Huy Tông; 1101-1126)

And of Celestial masters and Taoists such as: Zhang Dao Leng (Trương Đạo Lăng), Zhang Iue (Trương Giác), Zhang Lu (Trương Lão), Zheng Si Yuan (Trịnh Tư Viễn), Kou Qian Zhi (Khẩu Khiêm Chi), Bao Pu Zi (Bao Phác Tử) etc

From the religious standpoint, Taoism emphasizes on meeting with Immortals, and seeks the Pill of Longevity.

We can see that for Taoism, as well as for Buddhism and Confucianism, politicians like to influence them, to give gifts, so that they can work for them. The going up and down of all religions depends not only on some charismatic men but also on favors or disgraces of Kings. Taoism, for example, became an organized religion about 142 A.D. thanks to Zhang Dao Leng, and after the great Yellow Turban Rebellion (184 A.D.). Around 364 A. D. a new Taoist sect appeared. It is called the Mao shan sect (Mao Sơn) (Kiang

Su Province; Quảng Tây).

By far the most important order in South China, that is, China South of the Yang-Tzu river, was from the Sung dynasty until the 20th century, The Cheng I (Chính Nhất) orthodox, one order of Lung Hu Shan (Long Hồ Sơn) in Kiang Si Province (Quảng Tây). The overwhelming influence of the order in and after the Sung period was due to a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the attempt of the Imperial Court to control religions in China; Taoists were strongly advised to receive a document or license of ordination from the Heavenly Master at Lung-Hu Shan (Long Hồ Sơn), which served both as prestige for the Taoist master and a control over the Taoist order themselves. As of the Ming dynasty, Taoists were given ranks and grades after the manner of mandarins, that is, a series of nine P'in (Phạm) or grades of excellence were given to the Taoists who came to Lung-Hu Shan for ordination. Now the important point to remember is that all Taoists, no matter what the order or sect, provided that they resided in Southern China, were advised to receive their license of ordination from the Heavenly Master, Thus the Head of Cheng I Taoism at Lung-Hu Shan (Long Hồ Sơn) had the power to grant license in Mao-Shan (Mao Sơn), Wu-Tang Shan (Võ Đương Sơn), Ch'uan Chen (Toàn Chân), and Shen-Hsiao ritual (Thần Tiêu), as well as in his own Cheng I brand (Chính Nhất) of Taoism. [\[34\]](#)

The second change in Taoism is its tendency to use magic and talismans, to call for wind and rain, and to do exorcism. This is the secret property of witches that few can have access to.

The third change in Taoism, is all their methods of corporeal hygiene and exercises such as:

- Massage,
- Kong-fu: The Eight Movements (Bát Đoạn Cẩm), The Six Movements (Lục Đoạn Cẩm), The Tai Ji Quan (Thái Cực Quyền).
- Respiratory techniques aiming to regulate the breath.
- To keep calm techniques: Techniques to keep the mind still, and the soul calm.

The fourth change in Taoism is to find out beneficial remedies for the body. We have therefore many famous doctors such as Tao Hung Jing (Đào Hoàng Cảnh; 452-536), Go Hong (Cát Hồng; 281-340), Zun Zi Ho (Tôn Tử Mạc, 581-682) etc

The fifth change in Taoism is to get rid off all mundane conventions, and honors, and to live naturally according to our will. This is the tendency of the so-called Seven Sages of the Bamboo Forest on the Jin (Tấn) dynasty: Ruan Ji (Nguyễn Tịch), Ji Kang (Kê Khang), Liu Ling (Lưu Linh, Ruan Xian (Nguyễn Hàm), Shan Dao (Sơn Đào), Xiang Xiu (Hương Tử), Wang Rong (Vương Nhung). Many artists followed this trend of life. Wan Bang Rong (Vạn Bang Vinh) of the Sung (Tống) dynasty has a poem, reflecting this life:

If there were no mandarins, no tests, no honor,  
 People would have a very simple life.  
 If there were no carriage, no horses,  
 No one would get out of their villages.  
 Because people have created many things,  
 Then one is enticed in these complicated ways.  
 Who can be like a swan,  
 Flying high in the sky.

The sixth change in Taoism, is the quest of the Longevity Pill. People try to find out drugs that not only can prolong life but also help people live for ever.

Since the fourth century B.C., Sung Wu Ji (Tống Vô Ky) sustained that one can live out of the body, and become immortal.

Afterward, we find Bao Pu Zi (Bao Phác Tử) spending his whole life in the search of the Longevity Pill.

We can sum up their ways of working as follows:

Abstention of rice, to let the body become light and pure.

Inhalation of the Yin and Yang breaths, essence of Heaven and Earth. To bathe under the morning sun to take in the Yang energy. To drink the dew from the atmosphere at night, to capture the Yin energy.

To use minerals, considered as essence of Yin and Yang, to make pills.

People of the past consider Sulphur and Gold as the essence of Yang. But these ingredients can not exist in combination. Therefore one has to prepare them.

To ingest Sulphur, one must ingest Cinnabar a combination of Mercury and Sulphur (S<sub>2</sub>Hg).

To prepare artificial Gold, one uses an alloy of Lead and of Arsenic, or of Lead and of Silver (Argentiferous Lead or Arseniferous Lead). Dealing with these kinds of Lead, one obtain Red Sulfide of Arsenic, or Yellow Sulfide of Arsenic. The later one is considered as the Artificial Gold.

Cinnabar, Red Sulfide of Arsenic and Yellow Sulfide of Arsenic are considered as The Pill, or at least they are main ingredients to make the pill.

Examining all the ingredients entering into the preparation of the pill, we see that all of them are potent poisons. Following is one formula to prepare the pill:

Cinnabar (Đơn Sa or Chu sa).

Red Sulfide of Arsenic (Hùng Hoàng).

Yellow Sulfide of Arsenic (Thư Hoàng).

Sulphur (Lưu Hoàng).

Borate of Soda (Nhưng Diêm).

Mica (Vân Mẫu).

Saltpeter (Tiêu Thạch).

Copper Sulfate (Không Thanh) [\[35\]](#)

All the Emperors who tried these pills died very young, such as:

Ai Di (Ai Đế) of the dynasty Dong Jin (Đông Tấn; 361-366)

Tang Xian Zong (Đường Hiến Tông; 805-820)

Tang Mu Zong (Đường Mục Tông; 820-824)

Tang Wu Zong (Đường Vũ Tông; 840-847)

The Taoist who spent his life working on the Pill, Ji Hong Bao Pu Zi (Cát Hồng Bao Phác Tử) died at 61.

Aware of the toxicity of these Pills, the reactions of the Emperors will be as follows:

To kill all the makers of the Pills, as in the reign of Tang Y Zong (Đường Ý Tông; 860).

To accept the Pills and to use them only when the King is dying, as done by King Wen Xuen Zi (Văn Tuyên Đế) of Bei Qi (Bắc Tề; 550-559).

To let criminals condemned to death penalty to experiment the Pills, as done by the King Dao Wu Ti (Đạo Vũ Đế) in 400.

The famous writer Su Dong Po (Tô Đông Pha) wrote to one of his friends: "Recently, I have received some Cinnabars (Chu Sa), very well presented, but I have not enough courage to take them." [36]

The Seventh change in Taoism, is to find the Pill in man himself. It is called the Inner Tan (Nei Tan; Nội Đan). The promotor of the movement is Wei Bo Yang (Ngụy Bá Dương), author of the Book Can Tong Qi (Tham Đồng Khế; The Unitive Life) in which Can (Tham) means to participate to the life of God; Tong (Đồng) means to be in unison with God: and Qi (Khế) means to be united with God (2nd century).

Afterwards, we find many famous Taoists following this way, and they are venerated as great mystics. We have: Han Zhong Li (Hán Chung Ly), consider as the Patriarch of the sect; Lu Tong Bin (Lữ Đồng Tân), his famous disciple; Wang Zhong Yang (Vương Trung Dương), the Founder of the sect Quan Zhen (Toàn Chân) etc

The Sect emphasizes on breathing techniques and aims to regulate breath.

Roughly they distinguish two kinds of breath:

1. Pulmonary respiration that they tax as ordinary respiration.

2. Respiration through the spinal column, inside the Channel Du (Inhalation), and the Channel Ren, an imaginary Channel in the Mid-Section of the thorax and the abdomen, (Exhalation). They only considered this respiration as a True Respiration. When this respiration begins to work, the pulmonary respiration will ceases.

3. Abstention of both respirations, pulmonary and medullary (What is called: Turtle respiration, or fetal respiration). Then they keep their breath immobile in the Third Ventricle or Ni Wan to nourish the brain.

These techniques are similar to Yogi techniques. Both Yogis and Taoists take good care of their spinal column. The tip of the Coccyx in man is called by Yogis as the Brahma-gate, and by Taoists and Acupuncturists as The Village-gate (Wei-Lu; Vĩ Lư).

These techniques are taught in a very abstruse way in books such as:

Chang Po Tuan, translated by Thomas Cleary, The Inner Teachings of Taoism, Shambhala, Boston and London, 1986.

Lu K'uan Yu. Taoist Yoga, Alchemy and Immortality, Samuel Weiser inc. New York.

Huang Yuan Ji (Huỳnh Nguyên Cát), Yue Yu Tang Yu Lu (Lạc Dục Đường Ngữ Lục), Zhen Shan Mei Chu Ban (Chân Thiện Mỹ xuất bản), 1973.

I have made a study on this subject in my manuscript book, called Huang Ting Nei Jing (Huỳnh Đình Nội Cảnh, Chap. 20, On Respiration, p. 199- 206.

## 7. Things we can learn from Taoism

This essay on Taoism helps us to know many things:

The search for the Pill of Longevity is a complete failure.

Our body can never obtain immortality, because being a composite body, it must be decomposed. All our actual surgical techniques can only prolong our life for some more years.

Man can not imitate cicada, nor snake to throw away his skin. Ascension of man to heaven in broad daylight is also a myth.

Magic and talisman gradually lead people into a world of fear and mutual distrust. Before when the King Han Wu Di fell ill, the Imperial Court had killed almost 10000 people, accused of making harm to the King, by talisman.

Man can't avoid rice and cereals to become lighter and quicker. This is against natural laws. To prevent errors, we must find out and keep all the natural laws.

But when Taoists teach us to keep all the hygienic principles, to prevent diseases, to eat regularly, to work measurably, to live healthily, to live up to the age given to us by Nature, all these advices are very sound, and we must listen to them.

As for living joyfully, dying tranquilly, getting off external influences, obeying all the natural laws these are very sound advices.

But the aim of this essay is to present the Monistic Theory and Mysticism in Taoism.

We can see that all the great Taoists believe that we came from the One, and must return to the One. Lao tzu called this the Return to the Root, the Return to Wu Ji, the Return to Simplicity, the Return to the state of the New-Born. [\[37\]](#)

He said also that the Return to the Root, or the Union with God, is the highest state that man can attain. (Tao Te Ching, Ch. 68).

Confucius also declares that man must be United with God (Doctrine of the Mean, Ch. 26).

We can infer that Nirvana must signify also: Union with God. One day, I asked a Hindu, Major in the Commission for stopping the War in Vietnam, what was the meaning of Nirvana, in the Hindi language. He answered immediately: "Union with God."

Chuang Tzu advises us to go back to the Tao, to Heaven.

The 2nd chapter of the Nan Hua Ching describes the Mystical Flight to the Origin.

The more people of Antiquity advance in the way of self-cultivation, the more they realize that they should abandon menial findings of their low intellect, and should have the vast perspective of Saints and Sages: It means that they should live in unison with the Tao, with nature, and with all beings.

## Conclusions

In studying Taoism, we must know what is meant by Wu Wei, the Transcendental or Divine Action. We must learn, also, how to live tranquilly, how to conserve our mind in perfect equilibrium, how to live joyfully, and not to be disturbed by anything.

Alan Watts makes a summary on Taoism as follows:

"The philosophy of Lao-tzu is simple: Accept what is in front of you without wanting the situation to be other than it is. Study the natural order of things and work with it rather than against it, for to try to change what is only sets up resistance. Nature provides everything without requiring payment or thanks, and also provides for all without discrimination - therefore let us present the same face to everyone and treat all

men as equals, however they may behave. If we watch carefully, we will see that work proceeds more quickly and easily if we stop "trying", if we stop putting in so much extra effort, if we stop looking for result. In the clarity of a still and open mind, truth will be reflected... Te - which may be translated as "virtue" or "strength" - lies always in Tao, or "natural law." In other words: Simply be." [38]

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- [1] Anna K. Seidel, *La Divinisation de Lao-Tzu dans le Taoisme des Han*, p. 11.
- [2] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1979, *Macropaedia* Vol. 17, p. 1034.
- [3] Michael Saso, from Japan, [Towards a methodology in the study of religious Taoism](#), see *Phuong Dong Magazine* No 25, p. 405-406.
- [4] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 17, 1979, p. 1037.
- [5] *Lao-tzu Te-Tao Ching*, trans. by Robert G. Henrichs, Ballantine Books: New York, 1989, p. 236.
- [6] Leon Wieger, *Les Pères du Systeme Taoist*, Tchoang-Tzeu, Nan-Hoa- Tchenn-King, chap. 22, section F. p. 395.
- [7] Leon Wieger, *Les Pères du Systeme Taoiste*, Lie Tzeu, Tch'oung-Hu Tchenn King, chap. 1, Section D, p. 71.
- [8] *Tai Shang Bao Fa Tu Shuo*, Book Xiao, p. 16.
- [9] Leon Wieger, *Textes Historiques*, Tome I, pp. 212 and infra.
- [10] *Introduction to Medicine*, chapter Self-Nourishment, p. 39.
- [11] *Liệt Tử VIII*, Nguyễn Hiến Lê, *Liệt Tử Và Dương Tử* tr. 153.
- [12] Leon Wieger, *Tchoang-tzeu, Nan Hua King*, Chapter 17, section A, p. 312.
- [13] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 17, 1979, p. 1037.
- [14] Leon Wieger, *Chuang Tzu, Nan Hua King*, Chap. 18, Section E, p. 353.
- [15] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol 17, 1979, p. 1036.
- [16] *Lao-tzu, Te-Tao Ching*, trans. with an introduction and commentary by Robert G. Henricks, Ballantine Books: New York, 1989, p. 244.
- [17] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 17, 1979, p. 1037.
- [18] *Chuang Tzu, Nan Hua King*, chap. 6, Section A.
- [19] Nguyễn Hiến Lê, *Liệt Tử và Dương Tử*, La Boi, 1972, VI, 12, tr. 113-114.
- [20] Leon Wieger, *Textes Historiques*, Vol. II, p. 1498.
- [21] *Huang Ti Nei Jing*, Ch. Simplicity of people in the great antiquity. (*Su Wen Jing*)
- [22] *Introduction to Medicine*, book I, Ch. Taking Care.
- [23] Leon Wieger, *Les Pères du Systeme Taoiste*, p. 75.

- [24] Leon Wieger, Les Pères du Systeme Taoiste, p. 93.
- [25] James Legge, the Doctrine of the Mean, p. 395-396.
- [26] Leon Wieger, Les Pères du Systeme Taoiste, Tchoang-Tzeu, chap, 6, E, p. 257.
- [27] Ibid. Tchoang tzeu, Chap. 2. p. 225.
- [28] Cf. Robert G. Henricks, Lao-Tze Te-Tao Ching, Ballantine Books. New York, 1989, p. 218.
- [29] Cf. Ib. 206.
- [30] Nguyễn Hiến Lê, Liệt Tử và Dương Tử tr. 145.
- [31] Chuang Tzu, Chap. VI, Sections G, H, I, K. Summary, and Translation.
- [32] Chuang Tzu, Nan Hua King, Chap. XX, section G.
- [33] Chuang Chung Yuan, Creativity and Taoism, pp. 49, 50 and 121.
- [34] Michael Saso, [Towards a methodology in the study of religious Taoism](#), in *Phuong Dong*, no 24, p. 406.
- [35] Henri Dore, Variétés Sinologiques No 66, Chap. II, section B, Art. V.
- [36] Trần Văn Tích, Tư Tưởng Lão trang Trong Y Thuật Đông Phương, tr. 141.
- [37] Tao Te Ching, A New translation by Gia Fu Feng and Jane English, 1972, Vintage Books, New York, Ch. 16, and 28.
- The Tao Te Ching, A new translation with commentary, Ellen M. Chen, A New Era Book, Paragon House, New York, 1980, Ch. 16 and 28.
- Nguyễn Văn Thọ, Đạo Đức Kinh, [Ch. 16](#), [Ch. 28](#).
- [38] Lao-Tzu Tao Te Ching, A New Translation by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English, Vintage Books, New York, 1972, see last cover page .

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# The Monistic Theory

by Nhân Tử Nguyễn Văn Thọ

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## Chapter 19

### Caodaism and the Monistic Theory

Caodaism was officially founded through a medium system by Cao Đài or the Supreme Being in 1926. The message was first given to a group of South Vietnamese elites, administrators or secretaries in the Cochinchina government: Ngô Văn Chiêu, Cao Quỳnh Cư, Phạm Công Tắc, Cao Hoài Sang, Lê Văn Trung, etc. One of the Spirits revealed Himself first under the pseudonym AAA (first three letters, with different accents, of the Vietnamese alphabet), then gradually under the pseudonym Cao Đài (High Tower), or Cao Đài Tiên Ông Đại Bồ Tát Ma Ha Tát (His Highness The Very Great Immortal). The Spirit afterward was symbolized by an Eye, image of the Universal and Individual Conscience. Caodaists call this Spirit God himself.

Caodaism spread rapidly in South Vietnam. Its main Temple is now in Tây Ninh (South Vietnam), a very beautiful architectural monument. Its pantheon of Saints includes such diverse figures as Buddha, Lao-tzu, Confucius, Jesus Christ, Li Tai Bai (Lý Thái Bạch), Joan of Arc, Victor Hugo, Sun Yat Sen (Tôn Dật Tiên) etc..

Its followers now number around 2 million.

It has a temporal pope, Lê Văn Trung, and a spiritual pope, Li Tai Bai (Lý Thái Bạch), the famous poet of the Tang dynasty (Nhà Đường) (701-762).

Caodaism tries to be, esoterically, a synthesis of all religions in the world, but exoterically, it is now a syncretism of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism.

Caodaists are very divided among themselves. Most of them are exoterists, some are esoterists. An exoterist Caodaist tries to live a normal family and social life, to practice good and to avoid evil. He doesn't make harm to any creature, considered as participating in the Divine life, and conducts himself in a brotherly fashion believing that "God is you, and you are God".

An esoterist Caodaist belongs mainly to Ngô Văn Chiêu's sect, called Chiêu Minh Vô Vi, is strictly vegetarian, cultivates his personal holiness, endeavors to eradicate his inferior self, and develops the divine element within. The ultimate aim is to be united with Cao Đài or with God.

All the messages that a Caodaist receives from the Spirits, come from "table tipping", or from "basket with beak" (Ngọc Cờ) seances.

In California, there are now at least three small Caodaist Temples: One in San Jose, one in Perris, and one in Anaheim.

As an outsider, I was non-plussed by its existence. I didn't know why there are now so many religions in the world, and God still likes to create a new one. Therefore, I liked to spend some time studying this new religion. I began first to study all the spiritual messages given through the mediums. I tried to meet all

of them. They are girls or boys from 13 to 17 years old. They are very simple people. But all the messages are given mostly in poems surpassing by far their intellectual level. These messages were obeyed in earnest by all the elders, and carefully kept in the archives. So, I ruled out cheating. I never attended any seances, but I read all their contents and tried to find out the best teaching in them.

I marveled also at the rapid spreading of the new religion: 2 million in 66 years! Gradually, I found that Caodaism tries to make a synthesis of all religions. Caodaists are taught to study all the religions existing in the world, to find out what is best in them.

In Caodaism, there is a slogan: "All religions derive from one Principle."

Confucius said: "My doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity." [1]

Mencius also said: "When we examine those sages, both the earlier and the later, their principles are found to be the same." [2]

Ramakrishna said: "All jackals have the same cry; All the sages have the same teaching." [3]

What is this one principle? It is the Monistic Theory.

What is the highest of man's attainment? It is Mysticism.

Buddhism calls it Nirvana, Confucius calls it Union with God (Doctrine of the Mean, Ch. 26), Lao-tzu calls it Possession of the Tao, or Union with God (Tao Te Ching, Chap. 68).

As a man who has spent already almost 40 years in the study of comparative religion, I am convinced that the Monistic Theory and Mysticism are the two facets of a true religion. I tried therefore to investigate if Caodaism has these two main facets. I will present my findings afterward.

Actually, we can say that there are three kinds of philosophy leading the world.

### 1.- The spiritualist philosophy or the Creationism philosophy

The Creationism philosophy is based on the Bible, and teaches that this world was created ex nihilo by an eternal God. And the Creation roughly began on 4004 B.C. (this date is calculated by Bishop James Usher (1581-1656) of the diocese Armagh (Scotland) and by Dr. Lightfoot of Cambridge, a contemporary with Usher).

After 1701, the King James version of the Holy Bible has put the year 4004 in the middle of the first page of Genesis.

The Bible predicts also that the world will come to an end soon.

In Europe, some hundred years ago, any writer or scientist who liked to conserve his honor endeavored to have his findings fit with the teachings of the Church. In 1744, Buffon, in his *Histoire Universelle*, sustained that the world was created 70,000 years ago. This was considered a blasphemous action, and his book was put in the Index and barred from circulation by Catholic authorities.

When Darwin died (1809-1882), people still declared that this world was created in 4963 B.C., and the Larousse Dictionary declared that this date was the only one accepted in all schools.

As for the end of the world, the Bible emphatically declared that it would happen very soon: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you. There be some standing here which shall not taste the death,

till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Mat. 16, 27-28).

Or: "For verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come." (Mat. 10: 23)

Or ; "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light. And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven...Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away. (Mark 13: 24-32; Mat. 24: 29-35 and Mat. 24: 6-30).

All the great Apostles such as Peter, Paul and John professed the same thing. In I Peter, 4:7, it is written: "But the end of all things is at hand..." (See also, II Peter, 3:10)

In I Thessalonians 4:16-18 it is written: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive, and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

In Revelation 6: 12-17, the end of the world is described in a vivid manner: "And I beheld when he had open the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the Kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? "

In the last chapter of Revelation, it is written: "And, behold, I come quickly..." (Rev. 22: 12), and: "Surely I come quickly..." (Rev. 22:20).

But now, science has demonstrated that the world has existed at least 10 billion years. And man has made his appearance about 1 million years ago.

Now, few Christians dare to say that the world will end soon, except the followers of Seventh Day Adventists and of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Christianity is now on the defensive, and is very embarrassed.

We see also that, now, one finds many errors in the first 8 Chapters of Genesis, concerning the Creation and the Flood. We can see that the cosmogony of the Bible is geocentric. The Earth stands immobile in the midst of everything (terra in aeternum stat. Ecclesiaste, 1: 4), while the Sun is turning around it. Galileo (1564-1642) was solemnly condemned for saying the contrary.

It is said in Genesis that God had spent the whole second day to create the firmament. What is then the firmament? It is a solid vault, provided with gates which can be opened in case of the Flood, for instance. (Cataractoe coeli apertoe sunt: and the windows of heaven were open: Biblia Sacra, Vulgata, and King James, Gen. 7:11). All of us now know that there is no such vault in the sky. According to Job, the firmament is made of something which is strong and as a molten glass. (Job, 37: 18). In the version of

the Vulgata, the same phrase is translated as: Tu forsitan cum eo fabricatus es coelos, qui solidissimi quasi aere fusi sunt. The firmament is then made up with solid brass. The Revelation compared it to a scroll that can be departed at the end of the world. (Rev. 6: 14). Sun, Moon and stars are under this vault. The throne of God is above it. (Ps. 11:4) It is called the sky (Gen. 1, 18). It is sustained by many columns (Job 27: 11). The earth stood firmly on water (Ps. 136), and has also many columns (Job 9, 6).

One can't understand, also, what the Light created on the first day is, nor why trees and grass etc can be created before the Sun and the Moon.

Furthermore, if we compare the first Chapter of Genesis with the Second one, we will see that the order of the creation is totally different.

Adam, instead of being created on the sixth day at the same time with Eve, now appears as the first creature. Afterwards, God created a garden for him, and did then only he create trees. Then all mammals, all birds were created, and God brought them to Adam to give them a name. As Adam was not satisfied with all the mammals, and can't find any mate among them, God then created Eve with one of Adam's ribs etc (Gen. 2: 1-23)

As for the Flood, we run also into many unsolved problems. It is strange to see that there are two stories of the Flood: one version is now called version P, another is called version J. According to version P, Noah must bring in the Ark a couple of animals for each species (Gen. 6: 19-20), and the duration of the Flood is 150 days (Gen. 8:3).

According to version J, Noah must bring in the Ark, 7 couples for each clean species, and a couple for each unclean species (Gen 7:2), and the duration of the Flood is only 40 days (Gen 7: 17. 7:4).

One never can understand also why Noah can roam through the five continents (?) to bring all the species in the Ark. The number of species is now around 5,000,000. And we know that the Ark was only 150 yards long, 25 yards wide, and 15 yards high with three stories (Gen 6:16). The Ark had only one small window (Gen. 6:16). How could all these animals live in so small a place for 150 days. How they could be fed, and why didn't they die?

Since 1960, there have been many scientific associations in the States that believe in Creationism. To be members of these Associations, one must be a post-graduate from some University. Members must firmly believe that all the teachings of the Bible, concerning the Creation and the Flood are true. They militate to have the Creation taught in school. These associations are:

The American Scientific Association (ASA) founded in 1941, having 3000 members.

The Creation Research Society, founded in 1963, at Ann Arbor Michigan. It has around 500 members.

The Creation Science Research Center (CSRC). It organized many trips to Mount Ararat, Turkey, hoping to find the Ark.

The Institute for Creation Research (ICR), founded in 1970, in San Diego. It has published 55 books, and has a magazine called Acts and Facts sent to 60,000 readers.

The Genesis School of Graduate Studies at Gainesville, Florida.

The Bible Science Association.

The Scientific Creationism Association of Southern New Jersey.

The Creation Research Science Education Foundation Inc. in Ohio.

The Triangle Association for Scientific Creationism in the Research Triangle, close to Raleigh, North

Carolina.

The Missouri Association for Creation.

In England, there are also some of such Associations:

The Evolution Protest Movement (EPM) founded in 1932, in England.

The Newton Scientific Organization 1973 in England etc.

The aim of these organizations is to advocate the teaching of Creationism at school, parallel with the Evolution theory. They like also to control all the teaching material so that Evolution can't be taught crudely.

Since 1921 to 1929, they maneuvered to have 37 States ban evolutionism from school. We have for instance the Mississippi Law (1926), the Arkansas Law (1928), the Texas Law (1929), but the Supreme Court based on the Separation of the State from the Church declared that these laws are unconstitutional.

On the side of the government, we have these committee having the responsibility to prepare the teaching program:

The National Science Foundation (NSF),

The Biological Sciences Study (BSCS),

Man: a course of study (MACOS),

The Education Development Center (EDC),

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS),

The National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT),

Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS) [\[4\]](#)

Besides, we have also The American Civil Liberty Union aimed to defend Americans' liberty etc.

Both sides are against each other, and the Creationists have brought suits many times against the Board of Education, but the Creationists lose the suit all the time. Once, the Creationists in California filed a suit against the Board of Education because it had offended the liberty of creeds of their children. They brought their children to Court to testify that they are taught to be descendants of the ape. The Board of Education invited eminent scientists to defend them and the Evolution Theory. The judge at this time, Mr. Irving Pertliss, advised the Board of Education to be flexible and careful in dealing with the genesis of man. The Creationists consider this as one of their advantages etc. [\[5\]](#)

And the battle will continue for ever.

The Spiritualist Philosophy sustained that man has only a Soul and a Body. At death, Soul departs from Body, and goes to Hell, Purgatory or Paradise. At the end of the world, every body will be resurrected, and the Body will again be united to the Soul, for everlasting happiness or misery.

For it, God is exterior to all creatures, infinitely different from them, and transcendent to them. He is in the sky and is there to derogate any natural laws. He created the Flood and sent many tribulations to Egyptian people, for instance.

Man can't be united with God, can't be divinized. They can only communicate with God. After death, a holy soul can only contemplate God. This is called Beatific Vision.

All souls are created by God, and are immortal from conception. They will go to Paradise, Purgatory or

Hell according to their deeds.

The spiritualist philosophy teaches love of our neighbors. As for other creatures, we can dispose of them at will, because we are created to be their Kings.

The spiritualist philosophy is upheld by exoterist Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam.

The spiritualist philosophy practices Monotheism.

## 2.- The Materialist Philosophy, or the Atomic Theory

The Materialist Philosophy accepts only Matter as the root of everything. It denies God, Spirits and Souls. It claims that this world is made of atoms. These atoms in their revolution, meet other atoms by pure hazard, act upon each other, and gradually create sun, moon, stars, inorganic and organic elements. Organic beings must adjust themselves with the environment, and in their struggle for life and in their adaptation to the environment, evolve from invertebrates to vertebrates and finally end up in mankind.

We see that the main key of this philosophy is the Theory of Evolution by natural selection.

This Theory is elaborated by Darwin (1809-1882) in his famous book On the Origin of Species,

It was also expounded by Lamarck (1744-1829) with his theory that adaptive responses to environment cause structural changes capable of being inherited, by De Vries (1848-1935) with his Theory of Mutation, by Mendel, Weissmann (1834-1945), Morgan (1866-1945), and Spiemann with their works on heredity, and is propagated by Spencer (1820-1903) and Haeckel.

It is worth noting that the Evolution Theory is also used to explain the origin of all the stars, of the solar system, and of the new stars. And we can refer to the works of famous astronomers, such as Laplace, Lemaître, Eddington, Faye, Ligondes, Seeliger, Ham, See, G. H. Darwin, Norman Lockyer, Arrhenius, Belot, etc.

The best that Evolution Theory has given us is that it has extended by far the length of time for the existence of the world. Instead of 6000 years, the world is now at least 10 billion years old; living things appeared on earth in the Cambrian period, about 6 billion years ago. Man appears on earth as prehistoric man, such as Pliocene man, one million years ago, and as Homo Sapiens, about 30,000 years ago. These figures are only approximate. So, instead of Adam and Eve living somewhere in the Mesopotamia, we have now new ancestors, very much older, and coming perhaps from Africa. And many Christian dogmas, such as the Original Sin, the coming of Jesus Christ to save the world from the Original Sin, are no more valid.

After strong opposition to the Evolution Theory, the Church became suppler in its attitude. In one encyclical letter, in August 1950, the Pope Pius XII declared that it is permissible to study the evolution theory in so far of finding the origin of the body in a preexisting matter existing before it. [6]

Many exegetists begin to explain that the six days of creation are six geological periods, and pretend that the word Yom in Hebrew means not only a day but also a long period. But other exegetists, such as Louis Pirot, or Georges Crespy are against this interpretation. [7]

Leo XIII, in his Encyclical Letter Providentissimus Deus asserts that: "The sacred writers had no intention to teach people what is not necessary for their salvation; therefore, instead of pursuing a scientific work, they describe things with metaphors or talk according to the common language in use at

their time. [8]

The Biblical Committee, in its decision of the 30th of June, 1909 pertaining to the historical characters of the first three chapters of Genesis, affirms that "the intention of the sacred author is not to teach in a scientific manner the intimate constitution of things and the order of the creation, but to talk according to the popular knowledge in conformity with data given by the senses, in the language of his time." [9]

It is strange enough that the Church waited until 1909, to declare these things. Before, it solemnly affirmed that the teachings of the Bible are historical truths.

We can refer to the trial of Galileo (1564-1642), to know the attitude of the Church at that time

We can say that for many centuries, the European people and people in the Mediterranean area have considered the Creationist tales and the Flood as the very exact history of the world. Now, most of the people who venerate the Bible, Christians, Jews, or Islamic, see in the Genesis only divine allegories. [10]

We can say that the Evolution Theory has now many scientists as its proponents, and is now taught in schools, while the Creation Theory is not. But The Evolution Theory has many vulnerable points:

It can't explain why life appeared on earth.

There are still many "missing links" in the long chain of living things.

One can't understand why there are now so many insects, micro-organisms and bacteria. If the Theory is true, micro-organisms must disappear and not dinosaurs.

One doesn't know why tortoises and crustaceans have skeletons outside their bodies, while fish and mammals have them inside, and their habitat is the same sea.

Only mammals can give some verification to the Evolution Theory, but we know nothing about their derivation, if there is any, from Reptilians, from Fish and from Invertebrates.

It is very hard to sustain that everything happens by hazard or by pure chance.

We can say that the Evolution Theory is only a Theory and not a truth.

The Evolution Theory sustains that there is no God (atheism), no souls, no after-life.

They declare themselves agnostic, or skeptical or atheist.

For them, man has only Body and no Soul. Soul is a product of the Body, as bile is produced by gall-bladder.

The Communist party is partisan of The Materialist Philosophy, it tries to destroy all religions in the world, but in vain.

If we take time to think it over, we see immediately that the Parts cannot create the Whole, hazard can't create order, hierarchy, and a sense in the Evolution. The struggle for life, the survival of the fittest can't explain the existence of the organs of sense, of the blood, the complicated system of nerves, and all our internal organs such as liver, lung, heart and kidneys. The Evolution theory can't explain why there are reproduction organs, nor why some species lay eggs why others give birth directly .

One can't imagine, also, why micro-organism without brain, lungs, without nostrils, without ears and eyes can evolve into a human being with a very complicated nervous systems of 14 billion neurons.

In the States, there were some lawsuits against the Evolution Theory: The lawsuit of John Thomas Scopes in Tennessee in 1925, and the lawsuit of Susan Epperson in Arkansas in 1966. First,

fundamentalist people like to bar the teaching of the Evolution Theory in school, but their attempt fails, and very soon, their claim is declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

Jean Serviers, professor of ethnology and sociology at the Faculty of Montpellier (France) declares: "I believe that the Evolution Theory is a creed, a philosophy of white people, aimed to give them good records of their aggression, oppression and crimes. In fact, nothing comes to support the Evolution Theory presented as a dogma. We are in the midst of a great scientific falsehood." [\[11\]](#)

In the French Encyclopedia published in 1938, Paul Lemoine, a famous geologist and director of the Museum, declared that the Evolution Theory would be soon abandoned. It is like a dogma in which the priests had no more belief but still conserved for the masses. [\[12\]](#)

Bertrand Russell declares that the Universe is made of fragments, and of leaps; there is no unity, nor continuity, nor order, nor cohesion in it. [\[13\]](#)

### 3. The Monistic Theory

This Theory sustains that this world and all its beings derive from one Cosmic Stuff, that All is One and One is All. This Cosmic Stuff can be compared with a central Sun, while all beings are its rays. We can't call the One as spiritual nor materialist, but Spirit and Matter are only aspects of It. It pervades the world, gives birth to everything, but is immanent in everything. The One is then the Essence of everything, and everything is phenomena that reveal this Essence. Beings are garments, or skins protecting the One.

Everything proceeds from the One, always in the mood of perpetual change, but at the end will return to the One. The Theory, therefore, can be summed up as: "From the One, proceeds everything, and to the One everything returns." Oriental people talk about the Return to the Root, or the Return to the Ground.

We can say that all Saints and Sages in this world, since time immemorial, have professed this theory. The four great Religions in Asia: Brahmanism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism develop it. The Yi Jing promotes it also. Kabbalah, Freemasonry, Rosicrucians, Alchemy, Theosophy, Plotinus, Pythagoras, Hermes Trismegistus in the West deal also with the same subject.

Interestingly enough, many scientists such as Fritjof Capra, begin to profess the same idea. The spiritualist and materialist philosophy declare that Spirit and Matter are different entities; the Monistic Theory propounds that Spirit and Matter are two aspects of the same thing and can derive from each other. Einstein in his famous equation  $E = mc^2$  has demonstrated that Spirit and Matter are interchangeable.

But, we must admit that this theory has not many proponents. Few people are on the level to understand it. But its proponents are the most famous: We have for instance, Buddha, Lao-tzu, Confucius, Mencius, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Hermes Trismegistus, Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, Boehme etc

This theory, if well developed, will become the most complete and the most advanced philosophical theory in the world.

For it, the One initially can't be a God, separated from all beings. All the names that we give to God are not his own names but only human terms superimposed upon the Ultimate Reality, each term coined in accordance with the linguistic, social, cultural and personal properties of a respective social group or person.

The One is Immanent in everyone and can be found only by introspection and contemplation. It is

everywhere, therefore The Monistic Theory can be labeled as Pantheistic, meaning that God is everywhere and in everything.

The world is not created "ex nihilo", but emanates from one Essence by emanation and by division. So, in the West, the Theory is called The Emanation Theory.

The Monistic Theory is linked with Mysticism. So the highest level that man can obtain is Union with God.

It sustains that man has Body, Soul, and Spirit. The Soul is not immortal, only Spirit is immortal. The Soul must reincarnate, to become purer and purer, and finally can become united with God.

So, the Spiritualist Philosophy sustains that man is only Body and Soul, the Materialist Philosophy maintains that man is only Body, while the Monistic Theory affirms that man has Body, Soul and Spirit.

### Caodaism and the Monistic Theory

My research revealed that the Monistic Theory is inherent in Caodaism. As said previously, Caodaism was spread mostly by medium messages. In Vietnam, I had a collection of almost all these messages. A few of them shall be used to prove my view.

In the Book *Đại Thừa Chân Giáo* it is said:

Why we must adore the Celestial Eye?

Because it represents The Root of everything.

It is a Perfect Being,

The Principle that gives birth to every being by transformation.

It is said in the Collection of Holy Teachings in the year of 1966-1967, p. 39: (Thánh Giáo Sưu Tập)

Before the existence of Heaven and Earth,

There is a Rotating Primordial Globe,

Endowed with great mysterious power,

We can reluctantly call it The Great Tao .

This is the Purest Energy,

Invisible, nameless,

And is in fact the Tai Ji, the Principle,

It creates the Yin and the Yang,

And gradually, the world takes form.

This Principle gives birth to Heaven and Earth,

And the Five Elements that evolve,

And create the four seasons, and all the changes.

All beings participate to the same law of change,

And multiply themselves by eggs, by fetuses, by humidity, and by mutation,

Therefore, in the world we see everlasting pictures,

And Heaven, Earth, and every being,  
That belong only to the same Principle.

We see immediately that this is a paraphrase of the Yi Jing in that it said: "Therefore there is, in the Change, the Great Primal Being (Tai Ji). This generates the two primary forces (Yin and Yang). The two primary forces generate the four images. The four images generate the eight trigrams." [14]

Therefore, all beings in their essence are similar to the Tao, and all men partake of the Essence of the Tao.

In the Collection of the Holy Teachings in the year of 1968-1969, on page 35, it is said: "The Tao is the Primordial Point and the Master of everything. It is also of the same essence with everything."

In the Collection of the Holy Teachings in the year 1968-1969, on page 200, it is said: "Because you are one of all beings, and all beings partake to the essence of the Tao, and the essence of the Tao is my own essence. Therefore, if you love each other, you, in fact, love me."

In page 186, it is written: God says only one thing: "I am you, and you are me, it means that every one has the same essence. Although the external appearance and the calling are different, everyone is One, without exception.

In the Đại Thừa Chân Giáo, p. 65, it is written: "This is indeed mysterious: God and Man are one in essence. There is no difference."

In the Collection of the Holy Teaching 1966-1967, on p. 36, it is written:

"You are a Spiritual Being on Earth,  
Sharing with me my spiritual light essence,  
Thus you are given the key of the kingdom,  
So you can be in the mundane plane, or in the Celestial kingdom, at will.

On page 229, it is written:

Man and God being of the same essence,  
If we persevere in our endeavor,  
We can become as God.

Therefore, the goal of Caodaism is to show us that we have God in our self.

In the Collection of the Holy Teachings, 1968-1969, on page 86, it is written:

"I have my residence in the heart of every one,  
Let each of them be aware of this, and know how to cultivate them.  
Let them love each other, without distinction."

It is repeatedly said in the Collection of Holy Writings that under the cover of Human Nature, man has also a Divine Nature.

This Divine Nature is called:

Holy Heart, Spiritual Heart (Thánh Tâm, Linh Tâm) (Collection of Holy Teachings, 1972, p. 48).

Celestial Nature, Buddha-Nature (Thiên Tính, Phật Tính) (Ib, p. 72)

The King of the Heart (Tâm Vương) (Ib. p.137-138)

The Heart of the Tao (Đạo Tâm) (lb. p. 99)

The Heart of Buddha (Phật Tâm) (lb. p. 112)

The Golden Body (Kim Thân) (lb. p. 128)

The Golden Body, The Body of Buddha (Kim Thân, Phật Thân) (lb. 129)

The Original Body of Tathagata (Như lai Bản Tạng) (lb. 118)

The Original Body (Căn Nguyên Bản Tâm) (lb. p. 24)

The Real Self, The Bhutatatatha (the Immutable) Original Body (Chân Ngã, Chân Như Bản Thể)  
(Collection of the Holy Teaching 1970-1971, p. 83-87)

This Self is to be distinguished from the Common Self, the Ego (Phàm Tâm), that is the Limited and Narrow Self, existing on the surface of our thoughts and feelings. This is called also The False Self (Giả Ngã). (Collection of the Holy Teachings 1970-1971, p. 83, 87 and 134; 1972-1973, p. 99 and 105)

"It means that our New Born Baby's Heart (Tâm Xích Tử),

Is perfect and enlightened, and is under all phenomena..."

(Collection of the Holy Teachings, 1972-1973, p. 130).

Oriental philosophers considered the New Born Baby Heart as the ideal moral condition of humanity.

[\[15\]](#)

Chu Hsi (Chu Hi) said: "The mind of the great man comprehends all changes of phenomena, and the mind of the child is nothing but a pure simplicity, free from all hypocrisy. Yet the great man is the great man, just as he is not let astray by external things, but keeps his original simplicity and freedom from hypocrisy. Carrying this out, he becomes omniscient and omnipotent in the highest degree." [\[16\]](#)

Interestingly enough, Jesus Christ has also said: "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." (Mat. 18, 3,4; Mk, 10:15; Lk 18: 7; Jn 3:5)

In the Collection of The Holy Teachings, 1972-1973, on p. 130, it is said: "Bearing visible features, you forget that inside you, you have already the Creator."

It is also said: "The Tao not born and Immortal, is already in our Golden Body." (Collection of the Holy Teachings, year 1972-1973, p. 128)

Illumination happens when the Common Self finds the Celestial Self. "And what is the Real Self? It is the Celestial Self under the Common Self. If the Common Self can't find out the Celestial Self, then until when one can understand what is said: I am You, and You are me?" (Collection of the Holy Teachings, 1970-1971, p. 134.

Therefore, Religion and Philosophy aim only toward the finding out of our Real Self. Our Real Self is the pivot of man, and of the universe. To find our the Real Self is to find the Cosmic Consciousness, or the Cosmic Center.

"To become Immortal or Buddha, is to die for mundane affections,

We are then above right and wrong, I and Thou,

There is then only one Heart, the Cosmic Heart,

Apart from all visible features, and we return to our Original Spirit.

"The Original Spirit is eternal and devoid of all storm,

It radiates as a pearl in the bottom of the water,  
 When our mind is without any thought, then we are illuminated,  
 And we will see our Original Self, the Root of everything.  
 "This Self is common to everyone,  
 It is great, immense, and omnipresent,  
 It seems to be non-existent, but exists in fact,  
 It exists as a Point in the Circle."

(The Collection of the Holy Teachings, 1972-1973, p. 78.)

Caodaism sustains that we must return to our Root, to our Origin, that is, the One.

In the Đại Thừa Chân Giáo, p. 124, it is written:

"The Principle is split into two ways: Introvert and extrovert.  
 If we follow the introvert way, we can attain immortality,  
 Few understand the Great Way of God,  
 If it is understood, man will reach The Celestial Palace."

As we have demonstrated, Tao or God or Celestial Eye, or Buddha-Nature is already hidden in our Heart, to serve as pivot, as the original essence of man. Then being introverted or going back to our Root is going deep in our Soul to find the Tao or God. This is also one main assertion of Caodaism.

In the Collection of the Holy Writings, 1972-1973, on p. 67, it is said that going back to our Root is being introvert.

In the Collection of the Holy Writings, 1970-1971, on p. 53, it is written:

"The Tao is in your heart, Buddha is in your heart,  
 If you search it outside, you are in error,  
 Everyone has in him the Tathagata Nature,  
 To possess this Nature, you must be very powerful."

In the Collection of the Holy Writings 1965, on p. 51, it is said: "The Tao is always present in our Soul, but because we are lacking in our endeavor, we do not study enough so we can't find out the clue of it."

In The Đại Thừa Chân Giáo, on p. 118, it is written:

"All of you must understand and remember  
 That the Tao is within you,  
 Who has good luck and good fate,  
 Will encounter a teacher who will show him this mystery."

In the Collection of the Holy Writings, 1972, on p. 165, it is written:

"The Tao resides in the middle of your heart, and is not far,  
 If you are determined, you can find It.  
 Buddha or Immortal or God are then very close,  
 The distance depends only on you."

Caodaism has shown us very clearly, the residence of God in our body.

In the Collection of the Holy Writings, 1968-1969, on p. 5, it is written:

"The key to unlock all the mysteries, God has put in the highest place in each of you, dear Disciples."

Where is the highest place in us? It is our Third Ventricle, our Ni Wan Gong (Nê Hoàn Cung) situated in the middle of our head. The Celestial Gate is there, God is there, the Celestial Eye is there. The Paradise is there.

In the Đại Thừa Chân Giáo, on p. 61. it is written: "What is the Mysterious Gate? It is The Celestial Eye situated in the Ni Wan Gong, and is in fact the True Religion..."

In p. 56, it is said: "What is Caodai? It is the summit of the Mount Kun Lun (Côn Lôn Đĩnh), or the Ni Wan (Nê Hoàn)... It belongs to the Celestial Realm...What is the Celestial Gate? It is the Ni Wan Gong (Nê Hoàn Cung).

When the Soul can break through the Celestial Gate, it will come into the realm of the Original Spirit."

If The Celestial Eye resides there, then The Tagathata Buddha is also there, Paradise is there. The King of the Heart is there. It is then the meeting point of God and man...

It is said in the Đại Thừa Chân Giáo, p. 66:

"Everyone has the Bhutatatatha nature (The self existent pure Mind; Tính Như Lai),

If it is found, one will see that Paradise is in one self."

In the Collection of the Holy Writings, p. 138, it is said:

" The King of the Heart resides in man,

This is also the place that God and Man meet together."

Caodaists believe that men come from The Great Spiritual Light, and that they must cultivate themselves to return to their original seats, to their original native land.

It is said in the Collection of The Holy Writings, 1970, p. 87, 185, 195, 198, 199, 200:

"You are Spiritual Beings coming in this Transitory Realm,

To transcend the position of Buddha and Immortal,

Man is not destined nor withstanding all his attractions,

To stay eternally in the earth."

Caodaism therefore accepts Reincarnation, or Metempsychosis because everyone should evolve to return at last to the One.

To evolve, the Soul must pierce the Shell of Ignorance, called Avidya, or Maya that surrounds the Spirit, and separate the Soul from the Spirit. The opacity of this Shell vary with each individual.

Caodaism, being monist, believes that everything proceeds from the One, therefore proclaims universal love. A Caodaist must love man, and all other beings. (Collection of the Holy Writings, 1972-1973, p. 24)

In the Collection of the Holy Writings, 1972-1973, it is written:

"The Tao being everywhere in the world,

It proclaims only one word: Love,

Love of other people, of oneself, and of everything,

In that case only, true religion can thrive."

A true Caodaist is strictly vegetarian, for the same reason.

Caodaim and mysticism.

What is then the highest attainment of self-cultivation? It is the deep insight of the spiritual void inside and the regaining of the perfect religion. (Collection of the Holy Writings, 1972-1973, p. 157)

The highest attainment of self-cultivation is then to become Immortal, Buddha or God.

"Tao is nothing but God,

God is Immortal, Buddha and Man,

Man when illuminated become Immortal and Buddha,

Immortal and Buddha, having Small Self, will be again on Earth."

(Collection of the Holy Writing, 1972, p. 170)

According to Caodaism, self-cultivation aims toward becoming Immortal, Buddha, or God.

In the Collection of the Holy Writing, 70-71, on p. 134, it is said:

"Self-cultivation aims toward becoming God,

We are not destined to be men indefinitely..."

Therefore being in possession of the Tao, is to return to the Point of the Tao in man.

"When we look at all beings, we see that they are different in forms and names, but all of them possess the Point of the Tao. This is God omnipotent, this is the Root of mankind, this is Saint, Sage, Immortal, Buddha." (Collection of the Holy Writings, 1970, p. 95)

This is called also 'possession of the One ', or 'union with God '... (Collection of the Holy Writings, 1970, p. 207-208).

This is what we call using the One to explain everything. The One is then the essence of the world, the mechanism of all changes, and at the end of the world, man must return to the One. This is the quintessence of the Monistic Theory...

"One is All, dear Son,

If you know how to sum it up: Everything pertains then only to one Principle,

Then you can apply it to everything,

If not this becomes only a kidding."

(Collection of the Holy Writings, 70-71, p. 210).

Caodaism aims toward bringing Vietnam back to this Root.

"Where are you going, Vietnam?

You must go back to your God, your Original Root."

(Collection of the Holy Writings, 1970-1971, p. 215)

In dealing with Caodaism, I study only its esoteric side, and neglect purposely all its exoteric features.

Different aspects of religion.

Religion is in fact a very complicated phenomenon. But we can decompose it in many factors and study it accordingly.

Every religion has its own Ceremonies or Rites. Ceremonies are always based on prayer, incense, music, and gesture. We can also consider all Sacraments as Ceremonies. They are everything that pertains to our Five Sense organs. They are therefore very childish.

Every religion has its own Dogma. These Dogma try to satisfy our Intellect. They try to give us the truth. They explain why we are here, and where we will go, after death. Dogmas are false or true. But for the followers they are true.

Every religion has its own morale...It deals with our ethical sense, or with our Soul... It tries to give us a sense of right and wrong. It varies with all religions we study. Christians for instance, keep Sunday as holiday, Islamic people have their Friday. Buddhists show respect to the First and the Fifteenth of a lunar moon and so on. If a Catholic doesn't attend mass on Sunday, he commits a mortal sin, and goes to Hell, if he dies in this condition, without being absolved by Penitence etc ... Morale pertains to the Soul. Because it varies with the religion in question, it can't be the truth.

Every religion has its own Esthetic. It aims to bring Beauty to religion. Each religion has its own architecture. It talks to our esthetical sense.

Every religion has its Mystical Life. It consists of a purest life, a life united with God or in communion with God. It pertains to our Spirit. Mysticism varies with religion. The true mystical life is a life in unison with God and nature. A lesser degree talks only about communion with God, and not Union. Some consider it as a long pilgrimage, some say that it is not far from us, and is already in our self.

Caodaism has all these different aspects of religion. Here, I try to emphasize only on its Mystical aspect. All other aspects can be deduced because they are artificial.

I study Caodaism on its Monistic Theory and on its Mystical aspect, hoping that these two main features englobe what is highest, noblest, and purest in its doctrine. I have tried also to show that the Monistic Theory, and Mysticism are two beams of the scale leading us to a true religion.

I hope, also, that the Monistic Theory, because it can unify many religions and sects in the world, will be used as the link between East and West and will show what is the true religion for man.



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[1] See James Legge, Confucian Analects, Book Four, Ch. 15.

[2] James Legge, The Work of Mencius, Li Lau, Part II, Chap. II, 4, p. 317.

[3] L'Enseignement de Ramakrisna, p. 256.

[4] Dorothy Nelkin, The Creation Controversy, W. W. Norton and Company, New York, London, 1982, p. 73-83.

[5] Ibid. pp. 100-102.

[6] Que Dieu soit reconnu pour vrai, p. 95.

[7] Louis Pirot, La Sainte Bible, texte latin... avec un commentaire exgénétiq ue et théologique, p. 127.

[8] Ibid. p. 127.

[9] Ibid. p. 127.

[10] Larousse, Pour connaître la nature, p. 10.

[11] Revue Planète, Edition Retz, No 18, p. 10.

[12] Rene Sudre, Les Nouvelles Enigmes de l'univers, Payot, Paris, p. 220.

[13] Andre Lamouche, La destinée humaine, p. 174.

[14] Wilhelm/Baynes, The I Ching, Bollingen Series XIX, Princeton University Press, p. 318.

[15] James Legge, The Work of Mencius, Book IV, Part II, ch. 16.

[16] Ibid. Book IV, part II, Ch. 16, p. 322.

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