

The Vision of Unity *And its Retrieval**

By Dylan Esler

I

It has become commonly accepted as fact that science and religion are divided by what seems to be an unbridgeable gulf, the one dealing with matter and the other with the invisible world of the spirit.

However, this assumption rests on a conception which is a fundamentally distorted view of reality.¹ For reality is not to be split into distinct entities, which can be neatly separated from each other, as the Cartesian worldview would have us believe. What we call ‘matter’ and ‘spirit’ are by no means discreet entities, but different facets of one whole, or, in other words, different levels of vibrations in the endless energetic fluctuations of Being.²

‘Being’ is a whole. Any attempt to divide this whole is a more or less conscious violation of truth (truth as the correct, namely holistic, perception of reality), which stems from the inability to accept reality as it is. From this results existential insecurity,³ which manifests in frantic attempts to construct conceptual models. Through these we try to capture glimpses of an essentially dynamic process into rigid positions that we can analyse according to our prejudices.

It is not, however, that these models are necessarily wrong. The problem lies in mistaking these models for truth itself, when in reality they only provide us with a particular glimpse of truth. Thus we become enslaved by what should be but useful tools. As the Buddhist parable

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¹ The origin of this dichotomy between matter and spirit and of the subsequent split between science and religion may be said to lie with Descartes, who, in more ways than one, ushered in the modernist worldview. See Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, p.41.

² Being-as-such lies beyond the limiting categories of discursive thought and may hence at times be spoken of in terms which appear contradictory. Seen in its more essential aspect, Being is immutable, adamant (Skt. *vajra*) – this is its transcendent dimension. At the same time, it pervades the world of becoming and change (which could not even exist were it not grounded in Being) and appears, on a relative level, to partake in its fluctuations – this is its immanent dimension. However, in reality Being-as-such always remains totally unaffected by what amounts to mere illusion (Skt. *māya*). To attune oneself to the rhythms of becoming by resting in the unmoved stillness of Being is the central theme of the *Yi King*, the famous *Book of Changes*. See *Yi King : Le Livre des Transformations*, Version allemande de Richard Wilhelm, Préfacée et traduite en français par Etienne Perrot, Orsay : Librairie de Médicis, 1973.

³ ‘Existence’, which literally means ‘to stand outside’, is a mode of being already far removed from (because, relatively speaking, outside) Being-as-such. Therefore, let us note in passing, all discussions concerning the existence (or non-existence) of God are pointless; God does not exist, but *is*.

goes, after crossing the river we carry the raft which took us to the other shore on our shoulders.⁴ We end up being burdened by what might have originally been a useful asset! In this way we begin to worship the models which we created to understand reality, thereby becoming idolaters, instead of using them as windows open onto reality.

Traditionally speaking, being and knowing are intimately linked: to know something fully, one must be what one knows.⁵ Hence, our inability to appreciate the wholeness of Being has had far-reaching implications for the domain of knowledge, which, in the modern age, has become completely depleted of its sacred character:

The unifying vision which related knowledge to love and faith, religion to science, and theology to all the departments of intellectual concern is finally completely lost, leaving a world of compartmentalization where there is no wholeness because holiness has ceased to be of central concern, or is at best reduced to sentimentality.⁶

II

The times in which we live are particularly ripe: the present age is characterized by the desecration of the earth, by the alienation of man from his sacred origin and indeed by utter chaos in all domains of life (whether intellectual, spiritual or social). The abnormality and perversity of the modern epoch is well illustrated by the following remark:

The outlook that governs the modern civilization [...] may be considered as a negative extreme in that it represents no less than man's capitulation to the exact opposite of truth as regards what concerns him most, that is, the nature and function of the human being – a capitulation that is all the more total for being unconscious. That is indeed the crux of the matter, for instead of being bent on regaining what was lost, the loser has come to believe that he has suffered no loss whatsoever, and that mankind, having evolved from next to nothing, is now better than it has ever been.⁷

Nonetheless, because at the end of a cycle of time all the possibilities of the cycle in question must be, as it were, summed up,⁸ there is, for those capable of *waking up* and of opening the eye of the heart by following one of the authentic religious traditions, also a great potential for spiritual elevation.⁹

⁴ Rahula, Walpola, *What the Buddha Taught*, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 1996, pp.11f.

⁵ Cf. Schuon, Frithjof, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, Wheaton: Quest Books, 1993, p.152.

⁶ Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p.48.

⁷ Lings, Martin, *The Eleventh Hour: The Spiritual Crisis of the Modern World in the Light of Tradition and Prophecy*, Cambridge: Archetype, 2002, p.16.

⁸ Guénon, René, *Le Règne de la Quantité et les Signes des Temps*, Paris: Gallimard, 1972, p.271.

⁹ This paradoxical situation of a heightened potential for spiritual awakening at a time which is the most grossly materialistic and anti-spiritual may be likened to a luminous kernel of wisdom enveloped by a husk of decrepitude. See Lings, *The Eleventh Hour*, p.70, n.27. It is, moreover, this paradoxical nature of the present degenerate age which justifies the disclosing of esoteric truths at a time when the majority of men are so far removed from any appreciation of the sacred. See Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, p.xxxiii.

In particular, we face the possibility of freeing ourselves from the dichotomy between spirit and matter to which our modern mental habits have enslaved us, and which has caused and still causes so much suffering in our personal lives and in the life of humanity as a whole. How is this possible? Firstly, science has come to realize that the static dualistic worldview it adhered to dogmatically since Descartes fails to give us an adequate picture of reality.¹⁰ In particular since Einstein, the paradigm which sees light as either particles or waves is no longer applicable. Scientists have come to appreciate that light is both particle and wave at once. This means that what once seemed to be two irreconcilable positions have come to be accepted simultaneously, and it is only by unifying both perspectives that the true nature of light could be understood.¹¹

In a similar vein, scientists are beginning to realize that the alleged dichotomy between spirit and matter, as well as between subject and object, is on the verge of collapsing. Science has been forced to accept that its claim to absolute objective knowledge is untenable. We cannot refrain from being participants in our study of a given phenomenon, and we, as human beings, can only have a particular perception of that phenomenon, depending on the angle from which we view it – unless, of course, we are capable of reawakening the Intellect, or eye of the heart, within us, where the subject and object coalesce in a perfect unity of being and knowing.¹²

This realization has, it may be said, pulled the ground from underneath the feet of the modernist's claim to absolute scientific truth. But the unfortunate corollary of this discovery has taken shape in postmodernism, which has come to the conclusion that because science has failed to give us the absolute certainty we longed for, there is no such thing as absolute knowledge, and that reality is ultimately unintelligible.¹³ Now, in academic circles, any claim to knowledge is circumscribed with so many apologies that one begins to question the use of institutions claiming to serve the purpose of knowledge, when they seem to question the possibility of knowledge itself.

¹⁰ See Kuhn, Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

¹¹ It is perhaps not insignificant that the partial recovery in scientific circles of a more holistic perspective was ushered in by a discovery bearing on the nature of light, even though the far-ranging repercussions of this discovery have hardly been recognized. In any visionary outlook, the nature of man, of knowing and of the world is recognized to be pervaded by light. This profoundly luminous perspective has been restated in various historical and geographical contexts by the greatest visionaries of traditions as far removed from each other as are Sufism and Tibetan Tantra and rDzogs-chen; see Corbin, Henry, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, New York: Omega Publications, 1994; and Guenther, Herbert V., *The Teachings of Padmasambhava*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996. In more recent times, if we turn to the poetry and paintings of William Blake, we can see that for this great visionary "light does not shine *down* on the objects of sensory perception so much as from within, *out* of Being itself." See Keeble, Brian, 'William Blake: Art as Divine Vision', in *Temenos Academy Review*, vol. 9, 2006, pp.176-88, p.181.

¹² "Knowledge can attain the Sacred both beyond the subject which knows and at the heart of this very subject, for finally that Ultimate Reality which *is* the Sacred as such is both the knower and the known, inner consciousness and outer reality, the pure immanent Subject and the Transcendent Object, the Infinite Self and Absolute Being which does not exclude Beyond Being." See Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p.3.

¹³ Smith, Huston, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, Wheaton: Quest Books, 1996, p.7, p.233.

Thus those whose avowed profession is the search for knowledge now busy themselves more with the production of theories of knowledge than with the search for truth itself.¹⁴ Philosophy in particular, whose original meaning is love of wisdom, has degenerated into a profession of thinkers whose only aim is to outwit each other by producing vain and shallow arguments which are neither beneficial spiritually nor even useful materially.

III

In this state of affairs, it may be asked, where does religion stand? Does it still have any relevance in the modern world? The obvious answer given by the pragmatist historian of religion is that a mere cursory glance at the world around us will show that for a large section of people, religion, in its diverse forms, continues to play a vital role in their life and understanding of themselves and the world, and that the demise of religion predicted by Nietzsche and others has certainly not occurred so far. This is clear both in its worst manifestation of religious fundamentalism of every kind, which daily fills our headlines, and in its most sublime embodiment in saintly human beings, who still grace the earth's face. That religion and religious aspirations are still very much part of the modern, or even postmodern, world is also obvious from the rise of the so-called new religions, the various cult-groups whose often charismatic leaders attract large numbers of wide-eyed, naïve followers.¹⁵

However, this answer, although correct as far as it goes, is rather superficial. In order for us to go deeper, we must probe the very nature of religion.

Religion, in its essence, is that aspect of human endeavour that seeks to *relate* man back to his sacred origin. And what is this sacred origin? It is essentially a unity, what we have hinted to above by speaking of 'Being', which is the ground and source for all more limited expressions of being. In other words, any being exists solely by virtue of Being, which at once embraces all while transcending the finiteness of particular beings. And every being takes part in and expresses on the individual plane the unlimited and transcendent qualities of Being, or Being-as-such.

Now religion is that link which *relates* man, as a particular being, to Being-as-such, so that, from naturally being its manifestation (as everything, without the slightest exception, is), he becomes its conscious embodiment. And, as he realizes to an ever fuller extent his participation in and embodiment of Being, the human being *relates* to other human beings in that capacity, respecting them as much as himself for this potential. Thus we arrive at the embodiment in human society of the sacred configuration of individuals totally conscious of their spiritual origin and role.

¹⁴ Guénon, René, 'Oriental Metaphysics', in Neddleman, Jacob (ed.), *The Sword of Gnosis: Metaphysics, Cosmology, Tradition, Symbolism*, Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1974, pp.40-56, p.43.

¹⁵ It is important, nevertheless, to realize that the form religious aspirations take in our contemporary world is changing. In particular, in modern societies religion no longer governs the public sphere of life as it did in the past, becoming increasingly relegated to the private sphere. In a way, this situation itself contains a huge potential, for it can enable man to go beyond the often politicized forms of religions to penetrate their mystical essence; but it can also leave him stranded in an amorphous vacuum without the regulating function of religion, as we witness everywhere in contemporary society.

What has here been termed Being, or Being-as-such, has received, as the history of religion tells us, numerous names. It has been termed the Godhead, God, Allah, Yahweh, the Brahman, the Ātman, the non-Ātman, the Dao, the Buddha-nature, and there are many, many more such names. The reason the term Being has here been chosen, is that it is neutral as regards religious doctrine and does not oblige us to incorporate into our discussion exotic terms or religiously loaded concepts. Moreover, the word Being itself expresses a very fundamental truth, namely that the world's and man's nature is *to be* before it is *to have* and *to do*. We cannot do the slightest thing whatsoever, or have an iota of dust, before we are.¹⁶

And, it should be understood, this is not a level where Hamlet's question "to be or not to be" has any relevance. This type of questioning only arises when man has become alienated from Being-as-such, and finds himself in the isolated state of a being. In this state, he is in the fearful situation of a small, limited being versus the seemingly infinite vastness of non-being; the latter is all that which threatens to put an end to his sense of being alive.

The irony of this situation is that it is totally self-inflicted. The state of being (in the sense of any isolated being) cannot exist in isolation to that of non-being. And both arise from a being's alienation from Being. It is only through attunement (this is, let us note in passing, the true sense of *yoga*) to Being-as-such, that this helpless sense of smallness and isolation can be overcome and that we can again embody wholeness and holiness.

Now, it may be objected, especially by those who are familiar with the Study of Religions, that the equation of the above terms, taken from very different religious contexts, with what I here have named Being, is questionable and indeed presumptuous. Who am I to say that what the Christians mean by God, the Hindus by Brahman, the Buddhists by the Tathāgatagarbha and the Daoists by the Dao, is one and the same Reality? How can this be upheld when we know from history how many of these various groups slaughtered each other brutally, or at least debated violently, each with the hope of establishing its God or Absolute as the only and supreme?

Many modern scholars of religion are likely to claim that it is more reasonable and cautious to accept that various religious and mystical traditions merely produce local narratives about reality, discourses on truth, of which nothing can be said regarding their content, and of which it can only be said with certainty that they do indeed compete.

To such doubts it can only be replied that if we are to take the various mystical traditions' narratives as representing absolute differences, then we must arrive at the conclusion that there are competing Absolutes corresponding to these various traditions. Of course this is a contradiction in terms, one that the postmodernists are likely to accept with a complacent shrug since they are so accustomed to the deadening waters of relativism. The absurd

¹⁶ The primacy of Being has been stated in philosophical terms by Heidegger. See Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p.23, p.26; and Heidegger, Martin, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, New Translation by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, New Haven: Yale Nota Bene, 2000, p.85.

conclusion that each spiritual tradition has its own paradise, each striving to attain it, is a polite way of saying that because they differ from each other they all are false.¹⁷

Now, it is one thing to assert that the various spiritual traditions have differing conceptions of Ultimate Reality, which no one in his right mind could deny. It is quite another thing to affirm that because this is the case, none of these traditions has actually come to glimpse that Reality and each is a victim of its own fantasy. The latter view is untenable for the simple reason that it is illogical and also contradicts the evidence before us.

Let us first explain the statement that it is illogical. Each of the great mystical traditions expounds in its own way that the Ultimate Reality is beyond the confines of language and ordinary human discursive thought. For instance, the Islamic tradition does this by affirming that God is at once totally transcendent while being immanent, enveloping man in spiritual experience;¹⁸ the Buddhist tradition does the same by stating that the Buddha is beyond birth and death, coming and going, saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.¹⁹

Each mystical path, at the same time, seeks to provide a means whereby Ultimate Reality can be approached, experienced and embodied by the practitioner, and allows for differing levels of participation in that Reality, depending on the temperament and commitment of the individual. In providing such a means of approach, which includes linguistic descriptions of the path itself as well as (to some extent) of Ultimate Reality, no one tradition can provide a full account for the simple reason that what it seeks to describe is truly ineffable.²⁰ Each religious tradition has a particular genius for approaching Reality from a particular angle, for opening a particular perspective onto Truth, while developing, on the human plane, particular traits of saintliness.

IV

All religious traditions are bridges from the human to the transcendent. As such they incorporate features of human limitations together with aspects of transcendent infinity. It is quite illogical to expect anything else. To expect them to each provide the same approach to Ultimate Reality would be to want a relative phenomenon to take on an absolute character. If there were only one MAN, there would be but a single PATH. But as things are, humanity is diverse, and corresponding to these different temperaments are various religious traditions; within these, corresponding to various aptitudes and levels of commitment are differing paths, ranging from the exoteric to the esoteric modes of approach; and these again open up to ever deeper and subtler dimensions of Reality.²¹

¹⁷ For a critique of the modernist and postmodernist approaches to the Study of Religion, see Esler, Dylan, 'The Light of "Perennial Philosophy" on the Study of Religion', in *Sophia*, vol.13:1, Spring/Summer 2007, pp.81-113.

¹⁸ Schuon, Frithjof, *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom*, Middlesex: Perennial Books, 1990, p.13.

¹⁹ Cf. Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*, ch.22: v.14, in Inada, Kenneth K., *Nāgārjuna: A Translation of his Mūlamadhyamakakārika with an Introductory Essay*, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1993, p.135.

²⁰ Cf. Guénon, René, *Orient et Occident*, Paris : Editions Véga, 2006, p.152; Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, p.19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.26f.

At the same time, the transcendent dimension on which each mystical tradition opens is also present at the outset and becomes manifest in the mystical vision of Ultimate Reality at the path's culmination, as well as in the ever unfolding embodiment of holiness in the practitioner's life. Here, we arrive at our second objection, namely that the view that each religious tradition produces its own fantasy, apart from being illogical, also contradicts evidence. That evidence is none other than sacred art and holiness. None who has spent but a few moments of contemplation in any of the great religions' sanctuaries, or who has heard inspired sacred music or stood before visionary art, can fail to notice that here something of the transcendent is transpiring in the world of matter.²²

And, for those who are privileged to so witness, there is no more moving embodiment of transcendence than in the saint, the human being whom spiritual practice has made holy, and whose very flesh has become translucent.²³

Now, such things are not wonders, nor are they coincidences, nor accidents. For such inspired art to be created, or for such saints to be alive in both past and present, there must be a cause, and that cause is none other than the recognition of Ultimate Reality; sacred art and holiness could not exist if they did not stem from Truth. If the various religious traditions were but the fantastic edifices of idle dreamers, they would never in a thousand years have been able to inspire transcendent art or saintliness. Such beauty cannot stem from a lie.

And it is irrelevant to object that religious traditions have also produced and still continue to instigate much hatred and violence. "The corruption of the best is the worst." This corruption, moreover, is accidental, not essential, that is, it stems from the limitedness of man.²⁴

V

Moreover, in order to comprehend the unity of religions, it is of absolute necessity to recognize that any given religious tradition is not a monolithic whole, but rather that, as was hinted at above, it incorporates numerous levels of participation and commitment, which open up to varying degrees or dimensions of spiritual experience.²⁵ In other words, each religion includes both an exoteric shell and an esoteric kernel, the latter being not an accidental addition to the tradition in question, but its very essence. This is true even at times when the

²² To understand such sacred art, "it is necessary to appreciate the fact that it is the sensible form that, symbolically, corresponds most directly to the Intellect, by reason of the inverse analogy connecting the principial and manifested orders. In consequence of this analogy the highest realities are most clearly manifested in their remotest reflections, namely, in the sensible or material order [...]. Sensible forms therefore correspond with exactness to intellections, and it is for this reason that traditional art has rules that apply the cosmic laws and universal principles to the domain of forms [...]." See *Ibid.*, p.62.

²³ Lings, *The Eleventh Hour*, p.64.

²⁴ Lings, Martin, *Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions*, Cambridge: Archetype, 2001, p.48.

²⁵ This is because if we look merely at the exoteric dimension of religion, we will of course fail to discover the unity in question. This unity is not to be found on the level of forms. It is only by turning to the esoteric kernel and penetrating the outward forms to an ever greater extent until we reach the mystical dimension that it can be discovered. On the relationship between the exoteric and mystical dimensions of religion, see Alhaq, Shuja, *A Forgotten Vision: A Study of Human Spirituality in the Light of the Islamic Tradition*, Two volumes, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1997, Volume I, pp.24-7.

exotericists are unaware of, or even shun and persecute the representatives of the tradition's esoteric and mystical dimension.²⁶

A religion's exoteric dimension includes the rules of moral conduct which are incumbent on the mass of believers, and which they are to follow in the hope of gaining salvation after death. For the majority of Christians, this means the observance of the Church's moral code and the taking of the sacraments, with the faith that one will be forgiven one's sins and will gain entry to paradise.²⁷ In a similar way, for most Buddhists the goal of nirvāṇa is so far-fetched that they prefer to observe their moral precepts, accomplishing virtuous deeds such as donating money to their local monastery, in the hope of obtaining a good rebirth as a god or human after death.

This dimension of a religion is of course an important one, and in all traditional societies across the world it was incumbent on religion to regulate social interaction between human beings and to ensure that the greatest possible number of people could participate, at least passively and indirectly, in the particular religion's hue of grace.

However, social control is not the only purpose of religion. If it were, there would be no dimension of grace whatsoever, and religion's activity would stop short at this outer level. The truth is that a religion's essence is its mystical dimension or esoteric kernel. This dimension, of course, is only accessible to an elite among a religion's believers, because it requires, as a pre-condition, the acutest abilities, and, for its actualization, complete dedication. It requires nothing short of death, this meaning an initiatory dying to worldliness, so as to be reborn among those who seek to realize transcendence in this very life.²⁸

This means that those seeking the mystical dimension are not satisfied with gaining salvation after death. They want to experience transcendence as immanence, and seek to come face to face with Ultimate Reality while still alive. To do this, they must die to their limited individuality, to their clinging to the world, in order to be freed from all that which stands between them and Ultimate Reality.²⁹ Of course, this path is much more demanding than that of the exotericist. While the outer obligations laid out by the religion, through their symbolical and regulatory value, can be an aid on this path, they are also, at some point, transcended, either outwardly, by casting them away, or at least by inwardly becoming free of their limitations.³⁰

²⁶ Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, pp.9-11.

²⁷ For the mystic, these same observances may be seen as aids on the spiritual path. For instance, by penetrating the symbolism of the Eucharist, the Holy Mass becomes a vehicle for mystical realization. See Pallis, Marco, *A Buddhist Spectrum: Contributions to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue*, Varanasi: Indica, 2006, pp.60f.

²⁸ Cf. Eckehart, Meister, *Schriften und Predigten*, Aus dem Mittelhochdeutschen übersetzt und herausgegeben von Hermann Büttner, Zwei Bänder, Jena: Eugen Dietrichs, 1923, Volume I, p.204.

²⁹ From the perspective of Ultimate Reality Itself, there is of course nothing which could stand between It and the mystic. In a sense it is from the individual point of view only that there is such an obstacle, as, ultimately, everything is a manifestation of, and, for the *accomplished* mystic, a pointer to Ultimate Reality.

³⁰ Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, p.31.

VI

Every mystic is to some extent conditioned by his or her upbringing, religion, and even mystical path. In particular, although various mystics experience the same Ultimate Reality, they speak of it according to the terms in which they have been taught to think of it. For instance, some will talk of the unification of Ātman with Brahman, others of the extinguishing of the lover in the Beloved, others of the shining forth of the Buddha-nature. There will obviously be differences in their way of understanding this experience. But, it should be remembered, the mystical experience is so overwhelming that it is truly impossible to describe it fully in any terms. That experience is totally unconditioned by and beyond the limits of language.

Nonetheless, the mystic is also a human being, and it is through understanding that he reflects on the mystical experience and through language that he seeks to express it to others. However much the mystical experience is beyond conditioning, the mystic as a person is not: his understanding of the experience in its aftermath, and the language he uses to point it out to others are conditioned, even if the mystic be unaware of it.³¹

Therefore, the mystic's very vocation is one that embodies paradox, because he seeks to fathom the unfathomable and express the inexpressible; and yet he knows, beyond the least trace of doubt, that what he has experienced is infinitely more real and valuable than what is known to the common man. So, in his very person the mystic unifies the conditioned with the unconditioned, the limitedness of being human with the infinity of his realization. Especially if he is an accomplished mystic, he is not content with a one-off experience which has no relation whatsoever with his ordinary life. The difference between the ordinary and the accomplished mystic is that for the latter his experience is totally integrated to his life, and his every breath is imbued with its power.³² He becomes an instrument leading others to the same accomplishment, or at least to benefit from the grace which naturally surrounds anyone in constant attunement to Ultimate Reality.

VII

Having said this much about religion and mysticism, if we turn to science, we will come to realize that while for long it rejected the entire religious worldview, it is now coming to appreciate that any understanding of the world which is true must take account of the whole of reality and be holistic. Thus, surprisingly to some, many of the foremost scientists are coming to very similar conclusions about reality that the world's great mystics reached centuries before. It is an irony that, as pointed out by Nasr,

³¹ On the relationship of mystical experience to language see, for example, Bharati, Agehananda, *The Light at the Centre: Context and Pretext of Modern Mysticism*, London and The Hague: East-West Publications, 1976, pp.66f.

³² In Sanskrit, the difference between the ordinary and the accomplished mystic is expressed with the terms *sādhaka* and *siddha*.

[The] scientific philosophers are much more dogmatic than many scientists in denying any metaphysical significance to the discoveries of science. But the physicists themselves, or at least many of the outstanding figures among them, have often been the first to deny scientism and even the so-called scientific method.³³

For centuries man has endeavoured to free himself from the gravity of matter, transcending his given condition through elevation of the spirit. In relatively recent times (that is, since the Copernican revolution), we have sought to transcend that gravity not through elevating ourselves above matter, but by penetrating it to ever greater depths through understanding and mastery of its laws. But by penetrating the atom scientists have come to realize that every atom contains the information-structures of galaxies, so that the smallest microcosm reflects the macrocosm as a whole. The universe reflects itself endlessly like a gallery of mirrors, and we, as observers, are also mirrors interdependently linked to all other mirrors, whether animate or inanimate. And what all this reflects is Reality, in its unfathomable mystery and endlessly enchanting beauty.

³³ Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p.114.

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