

KNOWLEDGE
AND THE
SACRED



Seyyed Hossein Nasr



Knowledge and the Sacred

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يَا مَرْيَمُ عَلَيْكَ السَّلَامُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*Yā Maryam^u ‘alayka’l-salām
Bismi’Llāh al-rahmān al-rahīm*

Preface

Since the Gifford Lectures were first delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1889, they have been associated with the names of some of the most celebrated theologians, philosophers, and scientists of Europe and America, and have resulted in books which have wielded extensive influence in the modern world. Moreover, most of these works have been associated with specifically modern ideas which have characterized the Western world since the Renaissance and which have been also spreading into the East since the last century. When, therefore, some four years ago we were invited to deliver these prestigious lectures, it marked for us not only a singular honor but also an occasion to present the traditional perspective of the millennial civilizations of the Orient where we first received and accepted the invitation to deliver them. Being the first Muslim and in fact the first Oriental to have the occasion to deliver the Gifford Lectures since their inception at the University of Edinburgh nearly a century ago, we felt it our duty to present to the Western audience not a secondhand version of certain modern ideas or *isms* in pseudo-Oriental dress as happens so often these days, but in conformity with the world view which is our own, to expound some aspect of that truth which lies at the heart of the Oriental traditions and in fact of all tradition as such whether it be of the East or the West.

In the Orient knowledge has always been related to the sacred and to spiritual perfection. To know has meant ultimately to be transformed by the very process of knowing, as the Western tradition was also to assert over the ages before it was eclipsed by the postmedieval secularization and humanism that forced the separation of knowing from being and intelligence from the sacred. The Oriental sage has always embodied spiritual perfection; intelligence has been seen ultimately as a sacrament, and knowledge has been irrevocably related to

the sacred and its actualization in the being of the knower. And this relation continues wherever and whenever tradition still survives despite all the vicissitudes of the modern world.

During the past two centuries, countless Western students of the Orient have been, whether intentionally or unintentionally, instrumental in the process of the secularization of the East through the destruction of its traditions by interpreting its sacred teachings through historicism, evolutionism, scientism, and the many other means whereby the sacred is reduced to the profane. The study of the East by the majority of those so-called orientalist who have been themselves influenced by the various waves of secularism in the West, far from being simply a harmless, objective exercise in scholarship, has played no small role in the transformation of the subject of their studies. Moreover, these scholarly efforts have hardly been carried out through either love for the subject or charity, despite many notable and honorable exceptions which have been labors of love and which have produced valuable studies of various aspects of Oriental civilization. Most modern scholarly works concerned with the East are in fact the fruit of a secularized reason analyzing and studying traditions of a sacred character.

In the present study our aim has been in a sense the reverse of this process. It has been to aid in the resuscitation of the sacred quality of knowledge and the revival of the veritable intellectual tradition of the West with the aid of the still living traditions of the Orient where knowledge has never become divorced from the sacred. Our aim has been to deal first of all with an aspect of the truth as such which resides in the very nature of intelligence and secondarily with the revival of the sapiential perspective in the West, without which no civilization worthy of the name can survive. If in the process we have been severely critical of many aspects of things Western, our view has not been based on disdain and hatred or a kind of "occidentalism" which would simply reverse the role of a certain type of orientalism that has studied the Orient with the hope of transforming its sacred patterns of life, if not totally destroying all that has characterized the Orient as such over the ages. In criticizing what from the traditional point of view is pure and simple error, we have also tried to defend the millennial tradition of the West itself and to bring to light once again that perennial wisdom, or *sophia perennis*, which is both pe-

rennial and universal and which is neither exclusively Eastern nor Western.

When the invitation to deliver the Gifford Lectures first reached us, we were living in the shades of the southern slopes of the majestic Alborz Mountains. Little did we imagine then that the text of the lectures themselves would be written not in the proximity of those exalted peaks but in sight of the green forests and blue seas of the eastern coast of the United States. But man lives in the spirit and not in space and time so that despite all the unbelievable dislocations and turmoil in our personal life during this period, including the loss of our library and the preliminary notes for this work, what appears in the following pages has grown out of the seed originally conceived when we accepted to deliver the lectures and represents a continuity of thought with the intellectual genesis of this work even if the material and human conditions altered markedly during the period of the realization of its original idea.

Since this work seeks to be at once metaphysical and based on scholarship, it consists of a text upon which the actually delivered lectures were based as well as extensive footnotes which both complement the text and serve as a guide for further research for those who are attracted to the arguments and theses presented in the text. Upon delivering the lectures in the stately capital of Scotland during the spring when the city of Edinburgh blooms with flowers of great beauty, we became convinced even more than before of the necessity of these rather extensive footnotes. The lively reaction of the audience and many meetings with its members after the lectures brought to light the keen interest displayed by many of them in pursuing the arguments presented in this work despite the fact that its point of view is that of tradition and different from most of what has been the concern of most of the other Gifford lecturers over the years.

In preparing this work we are indebted most of all to all of our traditional masters in both East and West who over the years have guided us to the fountainhead of sacred knowledge. We wish to express our gratitude especially to Frithjof Schuon whose unparalleled exposition of traditional teachings is reflected, albeit imperfectly, upon many of the pages which follow. We also wish to thank Miss Kathleen O'Brien who aided us in many ways in preparing the manuscript for publication.

CHAPTER ONE

Knowledge and Its Desacralization

هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

Are those who know and those who do not know equal?

Quran

Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest Thou
Thyself in times of trouble?

Psalms

In the beginning Reality was at once being, knowledge, and bliss (the *sat*, *chit*, and *ānanda*¹ of the Hindu tradition or *qudrah*, *ḥikmah*, and *rahmah* which are among the Names of Allah in Islam) and in that “now” which is the ever-present “in the beginning,” knowledge continues to possess a profound relation with that principial and primordial Reality which is the Sacred and the source of all that is sacred. Through the downward flow of the river of time and the multiple refractions and reflections of Reality upon the myriad mirrors of both macrocosmic and microcosmic manifestation, knowledge has become separated from being and the bliss or ecstasy which characterizes the union of knowledge and being. Knowledge has become nearly completely externalized and desacralized, especially among those segments of the human race which have become transformed by the process of modernization, and that bliss which is the fruit of union with the One and an aspect of the perfume of the sacred has become well-nigh unattainable and beyond the grasp of the vast majority of those who walk upon the earth. But the root and essence of knowledge continues to be inseparable from the sacred for the very substance of knowledge is the knowledge of that reality which is the Supreme Substance, the Sacred as such, compared to which all levels

of existence and all forms of the manifold are but accidents.² Intelligence, which is the instrument of knowledge within man, is endowed with the possibility of knowing the Absolute. It is like a ray which emanates from and returns to the Absolute and its miraculous functioning is itself the best proof of that Reality which is at once absolute and infinite.

In paradise man had tasted of the fruit of the Tree of Life which symbolizes unitive knowledge.³ But he was also to taste of the Tree of Good and Evil and to come to see things as externalized, in a state of otherness and separation. The vision of duality blinded him to the primordial knowledge which lies at the heart of his intelligence. But precisely because this unitive vision resides at the center of his being as well as lying at the root of his intelligence, knowledge continues to be a means of access to the Sacred and sacred knowledge remains as the supreme path of union with that Reality wherein knowledge, being and bliss are united. Despite the tasting of the fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil and all the subsequent falls of man recorded in different manners by the various religions of the world, knowledge remains potentially the supreme way to gain access to the Sacred, and intelligence a ray which pierces the density and coagulation of cosmic manifestation and which, in its actualized state, is none other than the Divine Light itself as it is reflected in man and, in fact, in all things in different manners and modes.

It is, however, human intelligence which, despite the fall and all the resulting impediments and obstacles existing within the human soul which prevent intelligence from functioning fully in most instances, remains the central theophany of this Divine Light and the direct means of access to that Original Reality which "was" at once the source of cosmic reality "at the beginning" and is the origin of all things in this eternal "now," in this moment that always is and never becomes, the "now" which is the ever-recurring "in the beginning."⁴

Today modern man has lost the sense of wonder, which results from his loss of the sense of the sacred, to such a degree that he is hardly aware how miraculous is the mystery of intelligence, of human subjectivity as well as the power of objectivity and the possibility of knowing objectively. Man is oblivious to the mystery that he can turn inwardly upon the infinite world within himself and also objectivize the world outside, to possess inner, subjective knowledge as well as knowledge of a totally objective order. Man is endowed with

this precious gift of intelligence which allows him to know the Ultimate Reality as the Transcendent, the Beyond and the objective world as a distinct reality on its own level, and the Ultimate Reality as the Immanent, as the Supreme Self underlying all the veils of subjectivity and the many "selves" or layers of consciousness within him. 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. Despite the layers of the dross of forgetfulness that have covered the "eye of the heart" or the seat of intelligence, as a result of man's long journey in time, which is none other than the history of forgetfulness with occasional reversals of the downward flow through divine intervention in the cosmic and historical process, human intelligence continues to be endowed with this miraculous gift of knowledge of the inward and the outward, and human consciousness continues to be blessed with the possibility of contemplating the Reality which is completely other and yet none other than the very heart of the self, the Self of oneself.

Consciousness is itself proof of the primacy of the Spirit or Divine Consciousness of which human consciousness is a reflection and echo. The very natural propensity of the human intelligence to regard the Spirit as having primacy over the material and of consciousness as being on a higher level of reality than even the largest material object in the universe is itself proof of the primacy of the substance of knowledge over that which it knows, for the *raison d'être* of intelligence is to know reality objectively, totally, and adequately⁵ according to the famous principle of adequation of the medieval Scholastics.⁶ Human consciousness or subjectivity which makes knowledge possible is itself proof that the Spirit is the Substance compared to which all material manifestation, even what appears as the most substantial, is but an accident. It is in the nature and destiny of man to know and ultimately to know the Absolute and the Infinite through an intelligence which is total and objective and which is inseparable from the Sacred that is at once its origin and end.

Man is, of course, from a certain point of view the rational being defined by the philosophers, but the rational faculty which is at once an extension and reflection of the Intellect can become a luciferian

force and instrument if divorced from the Intellect and revelation which alone bestow upon knowledge its numinous quality and sacred content. Therefore, rather than defining him only as a "rational animal," one can define man in a more principal manner as a being endowed with a total intelligence centered upon the Absolute and created to know the Absolute. To be human is to know and also to transcend oneself. To know means therefore ultimately to know the Supreme Substance which is at once the source of all that comprises the objective world and the Supreme Self which shines at the center of human consciousness and which is related to intelligence as the sun is related to its rays. Despite the partial loss and eclipse of this properly speaking intellectual faculty and its replacement by reason, the roots of knowledge remain sunk in the ground of the Sacred and sacred knowledge continues to be at the heart of the concern of man for the sacred. It is not possible in fact to rediscover the sacred without discovering once again the sacred quality of principal knowledge. Moreover, this process can be facilitated by tracing the trajectory which knowledge followed in its fall from being the fruit of the Tree of Life to becoming limited to the realm of profane knowledge, which in its expansion and even totalitarianism only hastens man's fall from the state of wholeness and the abode of grace, resulting finally in the desacralization of all of human life to an ever greater degree. To reinstate man to his position of humanity cannot occur without the rediscovery of the basic function of intelligence as the means of access to that which is central and essential, to the Reality from which issues all religion and all wisdom but also the nonsapiential modes of perfection such as the way of good works and love.

The reduction of the Intellect to reason and the limitation of intelligence to cunning and cleverness in the modern world not only caused sacred knowledge to become inaccessible and to some even meaningless, but it also destroyed that natural theology which in the Christian context represented at least a reflection of knowledge of a sacred order, of the wisdom or *sapientia* which was the central means of spiritual perfection and deliverance. Natural theology which was originally *sapientia* as understood by Plato in the *Republic* and *Laws*,⁷ and which was later relegated by Saint Augustine and other Christian authorities to an inferior but nevertheless valuable form of knowledge of things divine, was completely banished from the citadel of both

science and faith as the process of the desacralization of knowledge and the reduction of reason to a purely human and "this-worldly" instrument of perception reached its terminal point with the last phases of development of modern Western philosophy. To reinstate the supernaturally natural function of intelligence, to wed reason (*ratio*) to the Intellect (*intellectus*) once again, and to rediscover the possibility of attaining to sacred knowledge include therefore also a return to the appreciation of the importance of natural theology on its own level, which is of a lower order than what could be called *scientia sacra*, but which has nevertheless been of much importance in the traditional intellectual landscape of the Western world.

The eclipse of natural theology has also been accompanied by the casting into oblivion of the essentially sacred character of both logical and mathematical laws which are aspects of Being itself and, one might say, the "ontology of the human microcosm."⁸ What is the origin of this logical and mathematical certitude in the human mind and why do these laws correspond to aspects of objective reality? The origin is none other than the Divine Intellect whose reflection on the human plane constitutes the certitude, coherence, and order of logical and mathematical laws and which is, at the same time, the source of that objective order and harmony which the human mind is able to study through these laws. Logical laws, in contrast to subjective limitations and individual idiosyncracies associated with the luciferian tendencies of rationalism, are rooted in the Divine⁹ and possess an ontological reality. They, as well as principial knowledge traditionally associated with wisdom, are essentially of a sacred character whatever certain antirational theologians, anxious to prevent rationalism from overrunning the citadel of faith, may claim. As a result of the loss of the sapiential perspective in modern times and the desacralization of knowledge, however, not only has natural theology been cast aside as irrelevant but logic and mathematics have been so divorced from concern with the sacred that they have come to be used as the primary tools for the secularization and profanation of the very act and process of knowing. Many a theologian has taken a defensive position before the achievements of the mathematical sciences, unaware that in the certitude which the propagators of such sciences claim lies a reflection of that Intellect¹⁰ which is the grand path to the Sacred and which itself is of a sacred nature, the Intellect without

whose reflection there would be no logical and mathematical laws and all operations of the mind would be reduced to sheer arbitrariness.

The depleting of knowledge of its sacred character and the creation of a "profane" science which is then used to study even the most sacred doctrines and forms at the heart of religion have led to a forgetting of the primacy of the sapiential dimension within various traditions and the neglect of the traditional doctrine of man which has envisaged him as a being possessing the possibility of knowing things in principle and the principles of all things leading finally to the knowledge of Ultimate Reality. In fact, the sapiential perspective has been so forgotten and the claims of rationalism, which reduces man's intellectual faculty to only the extroverted and analytical function of the mind that then turns against the very foundations of religion, so emphasized, that many a religiously sensitive person in the West has been led to take refuge in faith alone, leaving belief or doctrinal creed to the mercy of ever-changing paradigms or theories caught in the process of relativization and constant transformation.¹¹ Without in any way denying the central role of faith and the crucial significance of revelation to actualize the possibilities inherent within the micro-cosmic intellect, a point to which, in fact, we shall turn later in this work, it must be remembered that in the sapiential perspective faith itself is inseparable from knowledge so that not only does the Anselmian dictum *credo ut intelligam* hold true from a certain perspective but that one can also assert *intelligo ut credam* which does not mean to reason first but to "intellect" or use the intellectual faculty of which the rational is only a reflection and extension.

Moreover, the basic teachings of the religions which are both the background and the goal of faith contain in one way or another the sapiential perspective which views knowledge as ultimately related to the Divine Intellect and the Origin of all that is sacred. Even a rapid glance at the different living traditions of mankind proves the validity of this assertion. In Hinduism, that oldest of religions and the only echo of the "primordial religion" to survive to this day, the sacred texts which serve as the origin of the whole tradition, namely the Vedas, are related to knowledge. Etymologically *veda* and *vedānta* derive from the root *vid* which means "seeing" and "knowing" and which is related to the Latin *videre* "to see" and the Greek *oida* "to know."¹² The Upanishads which are hymns of the primordial soul of

man yearning for the Absolute mean literally "near-sitting," which the master of Hindu gnosis¹³ Śāṅkara explains as that *science* or *knowledge* of Brahma which "sets to rest" or destroys what appears as the world along with the ignorance which is its root. The cause of all separation, division, otherness, and ultimately suffering is ignorance (*avidyā*) and the cure knowledge. The heart of the tradition is supreme knowledge (*jñāna*),¹⁴ while the various "schools" usually called philosophy, the *darśanas*, are literally so many perspectives or points of view. The Hindu tradition, without of course neglecting love and action, places the sacred character of knowledge at the heart of its perspective and sees in the innate power of man to discern between *Ātman* and *māyā* the key to deliverance. Hinduism addresses itself to that element in man which is already divine and which man can come to realize only by knowing him-Self. The Sacred lies at the heart of man and is attainable most directly through knowledge which pierces the veils of *māyā* to reach the Supernal Sun which alone is. In this tradition where the knowledge of God should properly be called autology rather than theology,¹⁵ the function of knowledge as the royal path toward the Sacred and the ultimately sacred character of all authentic knowledge is demonstrated with blinding clarity over and over again in its sacred scripture and is even reflected in the meaning of the names of the sacred texts which serve as the foundations for the whole tradition.

Although Buddhism belongs to a very different perspective than Hinduism and, in fact, began as a rebellion against many Brahmanical doctrines and practices, it joins Hinduism in emphasizing the primacy of knowledge. The supreme experience of the Buddha was illumination which implies knowledge. The beginning of Buddhism is *Bodhisattvayāna* which means "birth of awareness that all things are void." At the heart of Buddhism, therefore, lies knowledge that was to lead later to the elaborate metaphysics of the Void which is the foundation of the whole of Buddhism and which was championed by Nāgārjuna.¹⁶ Also all the virtues of the Bodhisattva, the *pāramitās*, culminate in wisdom or *prajñā*. They all contribute to the dawning of this knowledge which liberates and which lies as a possibility within the being of all humans. The Buddha image itself reflects inward knowledge and that contemplation of the Void which is the gate through which inner peace flows and inundates even external manifestation while, from another point of view, this contemplation serves

as the support and "seat" for supreme knowledge.¹⁷ One can hardly conceive of Buddhism without becoming immediately aware of the central role of knowledge, although of course the way of love and mercy could not be absent from such a major religion as can be seen in Amidhism and the figure of the Avalokiteśvara or Kwan Yin itself.

As far as the Chinese tradition is concerned, here again in both Confucianism and Taoism the role of knowledge as the central means for the attainment of perfection reigns supreme. This is to be seen especially in Taoism where the perfect man is seen as one who *knows* the Tao and lives according to this knowledge which means also that he lives according to his own "nature."¹⁸ As Chuang-Tzū says,

The man of virtue . . . can see where all is dark. He can hear where all is still. In the darkness he alone can see light. In the stillness he alone can detect harmony.¹⁹

It is the principal or sacred knowledge which allows the sage to "see God everywhere," to observe harmony where others see discord, and to see light where others are blinded by darkness. The man of knowledge goes beyond himself to reach Heaven and through this process the Tao of his own self which is none other than the sacred ground of his own being, the original "darkness" which is not dark because of the lack of light but because of the excess of luminosity, like the sacred dark grotto of medieval tales from which flows the spring of life.

The divine man rides upon the glory of the sky where his form can no longer be discerned. This is called absorption into light. He fulfils his destiny. He acts in accordance with his nature. He is at one with God and man. For him all affairs cease to exist, and all things revert to their original state. This is called envelopment in darkness.²⁰

Turning to Western Asia, we discern the same concern for knowledge as the key to the attainment of the sacred and the doctrine that the substance of knowledge itself is sacred in Zoroastrianism and other Iranian religions such as Manichaeism which bases the whole of religion on the goal of freeing, through asceticism and knowledge, the particles of light scattered through the cosmos as a result of the sacrifice of the primordial man.²¹ Besides mystical tales of the quest of

the gnostic after knowledge which abound in Mazdaean literature, the whole of Mazdaean angelology is based on the doctrine of illumination of the soul by various agencies of the Divine Intellect. All religious rites are an aid in creating a closer link between man and the angelic world, and man's felicity resides in union with his celestial and angelic counterpart, the *Fravarti*.²² The religious life and all contact with the sacred are dominated by angelic forces which are elements of light whose function it is to illuminate and to guide. Concern with knowledge of the sacred and sacred knowledge is at the heart of Zoroastrianism while the more philosophical Mazdaean religious texts such as the *Dēnkard* have dealt in greater detail with the question of knowledge, thereby developing more fully the doctrine of innate and acquired wisdom and their complementarity and wedding which leads to the attainment of sacred knowledge.²³

Nor is this concern in any way absent from the Abrahamic traditions although because of the desacralization of the instrument of knowing itself in modern times, modern interpretations of Judaism and Christianity have tended to neglect, belittle, or even negate the sapiential dimensions of these religions. This process has even taken place to some degree in the case of Islam which is based completely on the primacy of knowledge and whose message is one concerning the nature of Reality.

In Judaism the significance of *hokhmah* or wisdom can hardly be overemphasized even in the legal dimension of the religion which is naturally concerned more with correct action than with knowledge. In Genesis (3:22) knowledge is considered as an essential attribute belonging to God alone, and the wisdom writings emphasize praying to the "Lord of Wisdom." The Jewish people accepted the Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes as books of wisdom to which the Christians later added the Psalms and the Song of Songs. In the Jewish wisdom literature although wisdom belonged to God, it was also a divine gift to man and accessible to those willing to submit to the discipline of the traditional teaching methods consisting of instruction (*musar*) and persuasion (*‘eṣah*). This means that Judaism considered the attainment of wisdom or sacred knowledge as a possibility for the human intellect if man were to accept the necessary discipline which such an undertaking required. This doctrine was to be elaborated by later Jewish philosophers, Kabbalists, and Hasidim in an elaborate fashion, but the roots of all their expositions are to be found in the Bible

itself where, in the three books of Job, the Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, the term *hokhmah* (later translated as *sophia*) appears nearly a hundred times.²⁴ Long before these later elaborations were to appear, the *maskilim* of the Qumran community were considered as recipients and dispensers of sacred knowledge of the Divine Mysteries like the *pneumatikoi* mentioned by Saint Paul.

The Jews also believed that the Torah itself was the embodiment of wisdom and some works like the Wisdom of Ben Sira identified the Torah with the preexistent wisdom of God while the Kabbalists considered the primordial Torah to be the *Hokhmah* which is the second of the *Sephiroth*. The whole Kabbalistic perspective is based on the possibility for the inner man to attain sacred knowledge and the human mind to be opened to the illumination of the spiritual world through which it can become sanctified and united with its principle.²⁵

The famous Chabad Chassidus text, the *Liqqutei Amarim* [*Tanya*], says, "Every soul consists of *nefesh*, *ruah* and *neshamah* [the three traditional elements of the soul]. Nevertheless, the root of every *nefesh*, *ruah* and *neshamah*, from the highest of all ranks to the lowest that is embodied within the illiterate, and the most worthless, all derive, as it were, from the Supreme Mind which is the Supernal Wisdom (*Hokhmah Ila'ah*)."²⁶ The same text continues,

In like manner does the *neshamah* of man, including the quality of *ruah* and *nefesh*, naturally desire and yearn to separate itself and depart from the body in order to unite with its origin and source in God, the fountain-head of all life, blessed be He.²⁷

This propensity to unite with the One is "its will and desire by nature," and "this nature stems from the faculty of *hokhmah* found in the soul, wherein abides the light of the blessed *En Sof*."²⁸

No more explicit expression of the presence of the spark of divine knowledge in the very substance of the soul of man and the attainment of the sacred through this very supernaturally natural faculty of intellection within man could be found in a tradition which, although based on the idea of a sacred people and a divine law promulgated by God for this people, possessed from the beginning a revelation in which the primacy of wisdom was certainly not forgotten. This doctrine was, however, emphasized sometimes openly as in the Proverbs and sometimes symbolically and esoterically as in the Song of Songs where the verses "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine" and "I am black, but comely. . . ." certainly

refer to esoteric or sapiential knowledge (to Sophia identified later with the Virgin Mary) and its transmission, although other meanings are not excluded. In the day of profane knowledge certainly sacred wisdom appears as dark, and it is through the mouth that the Name of God is uttered, the Name whose invocation is the key to the treasury of all wisdom, the Name which contains within itself that sacred knowledge whose realization is accompanied by that supreme ecstasy of which the ecstasy of the kiss of the earthly beloved is but a pale reflection.²⁹

As for Islam, which like Judaism remains in its formal structure within the mold of Abrahamic spirituality, the message of the revelation revolves around the pole of knowledge and the revelation addresses man as an intelligence capable of distinguishing between the real and the unreal and of knowing the Absolute.³⁰ Although the earthly container of this message, that is the Semitic Arab mentality, has bestowed upon certain manifestations of this religion an element of emotional fervor, impetuosity, and a character of inspirationalism which on the theological plane have appeared as an "antiintellectual" voluntarism associated with the Ash'arites, the content of the Islamic message remains wed to the sapiential perspective and the primacy of knowledge. The testimony of the faith *Lā ilāha illa'llāh* (There is no divinity but the Divine) is a statement concerning knowledge, not sentiments or the will. It contains the quintessence of metaphysical knowledge concerning the Principle and its manifestation. The Prophet of Islam has said, "Say *Lā ilāha illa'llāh* and be delivered" referring directly to the sacramental quality of principal knowledge. The traditional names used by the sacred scripture of Islam are all related to knowledge: *al-qur'ān* "recitation," *al-furqān* "discernment," and *umm al-kitāb* "the mother of books." The Quran itself refers in practically every chapter to the importance of intellection and knowledge, and the very first verses revealed relate to recitation (*iqra'*) which implies knowledge and to science (*'ilm*—hence *ta'lim*, to teach—*'allama*, taught),

Recite [iqra']: In the name of thy Lord who createth,
Createth man from a clot.

Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous,
Who teacheth [*'allama*] by the pen,
Teacheth man that which he knew not.

[XCVI; 1-5, Pickthall translation, slightly modified]

Even the etymology of the Arabic word for Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is related to intellection or knowing. In Islam and the civilization which it created there was a veritable celebration of knowledge³¹ all of whose forms were, in one way or another, related to the sacred extending in a hierarchy from an "empirical" and rational mode of knowing to that highest form of knowledge (*al-ma'rifah* or *'irfān*) which is the unitive knowledge of God not by man as an individual but by the divine center of human intelligence which, at the level of gnosis, becomes the subject as well as object of knowledge. That is why the gnostic or illuminated sage is called *al-ʿārif biʾLlāh*, the "gnostic who knows through or by God" and not only the gnostic who knows God. The Arabic word for intellect *al-ʿaql* is related to the word "to bind," for it is that which binds man to his Origin; etymologically it could be compared to religion itself, for in this case *religio* is also what binds and relates man to God. Even the Arabic word for poetry (*al-shiʿr*) is related to the root meaning consciousness and knowledge rather than making as is the case with *poiēsis*. The Islamic tradition presents blinding evidence of the ultimately sacred character of knowledge and the centrality of the sapiential perspective in the spiritual life, a perspective which remains faithful to and aware of the saving function of knowledge and the nature of intelligence as a precious gift from God which, once actualized by revelation, becomes the most important means of gaining access to the Sacred, intelligence being itself ultimately of a sacred character.

Before turning to the Christian tradition which is of special concern in this study because of the rise of a purely secular concept of knowledge within a civilization which was Christian, a word must be said about the Greek tradition. Usually this tradition is seen today either from the point of view of modern rationalism or of the mainstream of early Christianity which, having to save a whole humanity from the excesses of rationalism and naturalism, emphasized more the contrast between Greek wisdom as knowledge of a this-worldly nature and love and redemption associated with and issuing from the grace of Christ and his incarnation in human history. A reevaluation of the meaning of the Greek *sophia* and *philo-sophia* as sacred knowledge in contrast to the sophistic and skeptical forms of rationalism during the later life of Greek civilization and religion will be carried out later, as will the Christian appreciation of this aspect of the Greek legacy. Here suffice it to say that the Orphic-Dionysian dimension of the Greek

tradition, which was to become crystallized later in the Pythagorean-Platonic school, and also Hermeticism, which resulted from the wedding between certain aspects of the Egyptian and the Greek traditions, must be studied as sacred knowledge much like the metaphysical doctrines of Hinduism, and not only as profane philosophy.³² These forms of wisdom are related to the Greek religious tradition and should be viewed as such and not only in opposition to "revealed truth."³³ In the more universal sense of "revelation," they are in fact the fruit of revelation, that is, a knowledge which derives not from a purely human agent but from the Divine Intellect, as in fact they were viewed by the long tradition of Islamic, Jewish, and Christian philosophy before modern times. There is an aspect of Greek philosophy which is *sapientia* without whose appreciation one cannot understand those sapiential schools within Christianity and even Judaism which were based on a unity above and beyond the current dichotomy between so-called Greek "intellectualism" and Hebrew "inspirationalism." A major problem in the rediscovery of the sacred root of knowledge and knowledge of the sacred is the type of interpretation of Greek philosophy which has dominated the mainstream of Western thought in modern times and which has caused an eclipse of the sapiential quality of certain aspects of the Greek intellectual heritage and obliterated the real nature of the content and meaning of the message of many Christian and Jewish sages who are simply excused away as being "Neoplatonic," as if this term would somehow magically annul the inner significance of doctrines of a sapiential character.

As far as the Christian tradition is concerned, it is often referred to as a way of love; especially in modern times its sapiential dimension is, for the most part, forsaken as if it were simply an alien intrusion into a purely ethical religious message based on divine and human love and the central element of faith. To be sure, Christianity is more than anything else a way of love; but being a total and integral religion, it could not be completely divorced from the way of knowledge and sapience. That is why the Johannine "In the beginning was the Word" was interpreted for centuries as an affirmation of the primacy of the Logos as source of both revelation and knowledge before the surgical knife of so-called higher criticism, itself the product of a purely secularized reason, anathemized the particular sapiential Gospel of John into a gradual accretion of statements influenced

by alien modes of thought somewhat removed from the message and meaning of the "original" historical Christ. Moreover, the Christian tradition, in accepting the Old Testament as part of its sacred scripture, not only inherited the Hebrew wisdom tradition but even emphasized certain books of the Bible as source of wisdom even beyond what is found in the Judaic tradition.

In the Proverbs, chapter 8, Wisdom personified speaks in a famous passage as follows:

I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions . . . I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance: and I will fill their treasures. The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth; where *there were* no fountains abounding with water . . . While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I *was* there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: . . . Then I was by him, *as* one brought up *with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him; . . . Now therefore harken unto me, O ye children: for blessed *are they that keep my ways*.³⁴

The Christians meditated upon this and similar passages as the revealed sources of a sapiential path leading to the knowledge of God and *theosis*. As late as the last century even a philosopher such as Schelling was to call this passage "a breeze from a sacred morning dawn." In early ante-Nicene Christianity charity itself was considered by a figure such as Saint Maximus the Confessor as "a good disposition of the soul which makes it prefer the knowledge of God above all things," as well as the bliss inhering in this knowledge and the love of God as the source of the illumination of knowledge.³⁵ Also the earlier forms of Christology emphasized the role of Christ in illuminating the human mind and bestowing divine knowledge upon the qualified.³⁶

The early Christians, moreover, viewed Sophia as an almost "divine being" unto herself, a "complement" to the Trinity. The Orthodox revered her especially and built perhaps the most beautiful sacred structure of early Christianity, the Hagia Sophia, in her honor. Sophia appeared in the vision of saints and illuminated them with

knowledge. She often manifested herself as a woman of celestial beauty and was identified by many sages and saints with the Virgin Mary in the same way that among some of the Muslim sages wisdom appeared as a beautiful celestial figure identified with Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet, and a "second Mary" within the more specific context of the Islamic tradition. For Christians wisdom was at once related to the Son, to the Christ figure itself, and to the feminine principle which was inseparable from the inviolable purity and beauty of the Virgin. One should not forget that that supreme poet of Christian spirituality, Dante, who was so profoundly devoted to the Virgin, was guided in *Paradiso* by a woman, by Beatrice, who symbolizes the feminine figure of Sophia, without this fact detracting in any way from the role of Christ as dispenser and also embodiment of wisdom. In Christianity as in other traditions there is complementarity of the active and passive, or masculine and feminine elements, in wisdom as well as in love.

Returning to the origins of the Christian tradition, we must remember that the emphasis upon the sapiential dimension of Christianity is to be seen in Saint Paul himself who saw Christ as the new Torah identified with Divine Wisdom. The letters of Saint Paul contain references to the possessors of sacred knowledge, the *pneumatikoi*, who speak the wisdom (*sophia*) of God and who possess inner knowledge (*gnosis*), *sophia* and *gnosis* being "pneumatic" gifts imparted to the pneumatics by God. Although modern scholars have debated extensively about the meaning in 1 Corinthians (12:8) of "a word of wisdom . . . and a word of knowledge,"³⁷ even profane methods based only on historical and philological evidence, and ignoring the oral tradition, have not been able to prove a Greek or some other kind of foreign origin for the Pauline doctrine of divine knowledge.³⁸ There is a *gnosis* in these texts of a definitely Christian origin not to be confused with second-century gnosticism of a sectarian nature, for as Saint Paul asserted, sacred knowledge is one of Christ's most precious gifts, to be sought earnestly by those qualified to receive and to transmit it. Had there not been such a Christian *gnosis*, the Christian tradition would have been able to integrate Greek wisdom and adopt Graeco-Alexandrian metaphysical formulations for the expression of its own teachings.

The nearly two thousand years of Christian history were to be witness, despite all obstacles, to the survival of this sapiential dimen-

sion of the Christian tradition as well as its gradual eclipse, this latter process leading to the secularization of the concept of knowledge itself. To trace the history of this long tradition from the early Church Fathers to recent times would require a separate study of monumental proportions. Here it suffices to refer briefly to some of the representatives of the sapiential perspectives within the Christian tradition, figures who considered it possible for man to attain the knowledge of the sacred and who saw the root of knowledge itself as being sunk in the soil of the sacred and the holy. To reassert and rediscover the sacramental quality of knowledge in the contemporary West, it is certainly helpful to recall this long-neglected dimension of the Christian tradition, a dimension which is either cast aside and deliberately ignored in the more easily accessible works on Western intellectual life or, when mentioned in such sources, treated in such a way as to reduce it to a harmless borrowing, of interest only for the history of thought. Of course, there is little wonder in the observation of such a spectacle for only the like can know the like. How can a mind totally depleted of the sense of the sacred grasp the significance of the sacred as sacred?

The sapiential current in Christian spirituality, distinct from what came to be known as gnosticism, is found among many of the major figures of early Christianity such as Saint Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus as well as the early desert fathers and the community which produced the Nag Hammadi texts. But it is especially strong among the Alexandrian fathers whose writings are a fountainhead of Christian gnosis and who stress the central role of sacred knowledge and knowledge of the sacred in the attainment of sanctity. Among them none is more important than Clement of Alexandria (140–c.220) who saw Christianity as a way to wisdom.³⁹ In his teachings Christ is identified with the Universal Intellect which God has also placed at the center of the cosmos and in the heart of man.⁴⁰ Clement, who spent much of his life in Alexandria, was well acquainted with Greek wisdom which he did not oppose to Christianity but which he considered to have issued from the same Intellect to which the Christians had full access through Christ. For him true philosophy was not a “profane knowledge” to be opposed to Christian faith but a knowledge of an ultimately sacred character derived from the Intellect which God had revealed in Christ and through sacred Scripture. The true sage, the person who has attained sacred

knowledge, is he who has first become pure and achieved moral perfection,⁴¹ and subsequently become a "true gnostic."⁴² Concerning such a person, "one can no longer say that he has science or possesses gnosis, but he is science and gnosis."⁴³

As far as the possibility of an actual initiatic path within Christianity based on knowledge is concerned, the case of Clement presents evidence of unusual interest, for Clement did not only possess sacred knowledge, but writes that he received it from a human dispenser of such knowledge. While in Alexandria, he met a master named Pantaeus who, according to Clement, "deposited pure gnosis" in the spirits of men and who had in turn received it from those who had transmitted the esoteric knowledge handed down to them orally and secretly by the apostles and ultimately by Christ himself. Through this regular chain of transmission of a "divine wisdom," Clement had received that gnosis which implied knowledge of God and the angelic world, science of the spiritual significance of sacred Scripture, and the attainment of total certitude. Clement was in turn to become a spiritual master as revealed by such works as the *Protrepticus* and *Stromateis*, which are treatises of spiritual guidance, as well as the resumé of his *Hypotypsis* as summarized by Photius. But it is significant, as far as the later history of the Christian tradition and the place of gnosis in it is concerned, that he was not canonized as a saint and that the regularity of transmission of sacred knowledge did not continue for long, although Clement did train Origen, another of the important figures of early Christianity who was concerned with sapience and the role of knowledge in gaining access to the sacred.

Like Clement, Origen (185–253 or 254) was well acquainted with Greek philosophy which he studied in Alexandria.⁴⁴ In fact, his teacher was the mysterious Ammonias Saccas, the teacher of Plotinus, and the philosophical education of Origen paralleled closely that of Plotinus who represents the most universal and central expression of the esoteric and metaphysical aspects of Greek wisdom. As for Clement so for Origen, Christianity itself was "philosophy" in the sense of wisdom, and Greek philosophy a depository of that sacred knowledge which was to be found in its fullness in the Christian message. Origen, in a sense, continued the teachings of Clement as far as the relation between Christianity and philosophy was concerned, although emphasizing more the importance of asceticism.

The central depository of sacred knowledge for Origen is sacred

Scripture which nourishes the soul of man and provides for his need to know. But Scripture is not only the literal text. Like man, sacred Scripture is composed of body, soul, and spirit or the literal, moral, and sapiential or spiritual dimensions.⁴⁵ Not all readers can understand the inner meaning present in the text, but even those who cannot grasp this wisdom are aware that there is some kind of message hidden in the Book of God.⁴⁶ Origen relates sacred knowledge directly to sacred Scripture and believes that it is the function of spiritual beings to discover this inner meaning of revealed truth and to use their intelligence in the contemplation of spiritual realities. The spiritual life of man is none other than the gradual development of the power of the soul to grasp the spiritual intelligence of Scripture which, like Christ himself, feeds the soul.

It is the presence of the Logos in the heart of man and at the root of his intelligence that makes it possible for man to grasp the inner meaning of sacred Scripture and to become illuminated by this knowledge. The Logos is the illuminator of souls,⁴⁷ the light which makes intellectual vision possible. In fact, the Logos which exists *in divinis* is the root of intelligence in man and is the intermediary through which man receives sacred knowledge.⁴⁸ In as much as the Logos is the origin of human intelligence and the source of the human instrument of knowledge, knowledge of the sacred is the ultimate ground of knowledge as such, as well as its goal.

As one of the outstanding representatives of those who composed sapiential commentaries upon the Bible, Origen wrote extensive spiritual and esoteric commentaries upon various parts of both the Old and the New Testaments, wherein he sought to reveal the sacred knowledge which a person whose intellect is already sanctified and illuminated by the Logos can grasp. In Origen there is that harmonious wedding between a sacramental conception of knowledge and study of sacred Scripture, which became rather rare in later phases of Christian history with the result that hermeneutics, as the science of penetration into the *inner* meaning of sacred Scripture on the basis of a veritable *scientia sacra* and with the aid of an intelligence which is already illuminated by the Word or Logos, became reduced to the desacralization of the Holy Book itself by a mentality which had lost the sense of the sacred. Origen's perspective is, therefore, an especially precious one if the meaning of the sapiential perspective in the Christian tradition is to be understood in conjunction with the central

reality of a revealed book. Origen's commentaries include many direct allusions to the esoteric nature of scriptural passages and the sacred knowledge which they convey to those capable of grasping their message. For example, concerning the already cited verse from the Song of Songs, "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth" (which is also of paramount importance in Jewish esoterism), Origen writes,

But when she has begun to discern for herself what was obscure, to unravel what was untangled, to unfold what was involved, to interpret parables and riddles and the sayings of the wise along the lines of her own expert thinking, then let her believe that she has now received the kisses of the Spouse Himself, that is, the Word of God.⁴⁹

Here again, the "kiss of his mouth" is seen as none other than the transmission of inner knowledge through that organ which is endowed with the power to invoke His Name and to utter His Word.

Although the crystallization of Western Christianity in the various credal and theological formulations tended to emphasize the fall of man and his sinfulness and to outline a type of Christology which did not bring into focus the role of Christ as the source of knowledge and the illuminator of the human mind but rather as the savior of man from his sins, the significance of knowledge as a means of attaining the sacred was not completely forgotten. Even Saint Augustine, whose anthropology was rather pessimistic and who limited the nature of man to a fallen creature immersed in sin, nevertheless accepted the innate power of the intellect as given by God to man to receive divine illumination.⁵⁰ To think the truth, according to Saint Augustine, man needs the illumination which proceeds from God.⁵¹ Augustine, therefore, despite his emphasis upon faith as the key to salvation, preserves the essentially sacramental function of intelligence, even if it is envisaged in a somewhat more indirect manner. In him one does not encounter the same antithesis between knowledge and faith that was to characterize much of later Western Christian thought.

The sapiential dimension in Christianity was to find one of its most eloquent and profound expositors in that mysterious figure, Dionysius the Areopagite, whom an Indian metaphysician of the stature of A. K. Coomaraswamy was to call the greatest of all Europeans with

the possible exception of Dante. This sage, who traced his lineage to Saint Paul and whose writings are considered by modern scholars as belonging to the fifth and sixth centuries, appears more as an intellectual function than an individual. Translated into Latin by Hilduin and later by Scotus Erigena, Dionysius was to influence not only the Christian sapiential tradition through Erigena himself, the Victorine mystics, and the German theosophers but also Christian art.⁵² The two hierarchies to which Dionysius was to devote two of his works, namely the celestial or angelic order and the ecclesiastical, are themselves related to degrees of the sacred (*taxis hiera*) and of science *epistēmē*. For him sacramental action leading to *theosis* or divinization of the being of man is inseparable from progress in knowledge which, finally, in union reaches that "unknowing" of the Ultimate Reality, that, although possessing many names, is "Nameless" (*anonymous*). In Dionysius is to be found the root of that sapiential perspective which based its method on "unknowing" but which in reality is knowledge as rooted in the Sacred in its highest sense and leading to the Sacred, the "unknowing" being the dissolution of all limited and separative knowledge, of all vision of the periphery that would blur the Center which is the Sacred as such.

The detailed exposition of the important elements of the teachings of Dionysius, as they bear upon the destiny of the sapiential tradition within Christianity, was to come in the ninth century in the work of his Latin translator, John the Scot or Scotus Erigena, who was born in Ireland and who wrote his major opus *De divisione naturae* (*Periphyseon* in its Greek title) between 864 and 866.⁵³ In this majestic statement of Christian gnosis, long neglected and even feared because of its later association with Albigensian and Cathari circles, is to be found a clear statement of the central role and function of knowledge as rooted in the sacred and as the means of gaining access to it. The Erigenian statement remains of singular importance in the sapiential dimension of the Christian tradition despite all the attempts to reduce it to a simple Neoplatonist or pantheist position, as if the import of any truth could be destroyed by simply characterizing it by a currently pejorative or harmless title.⁵⁴

Erigena was devoutly Christian but also one who saw at the heart of Christianity a sacred knowledge or wisdom which for him was none other than authentic philosophy. "True religion is true philosophy," Erigena would assert.⁵⁵ In wisdom philosophy and religion

become united, and wisdom is a virtue common to man and angel.⁵⁶ The source of this wisdom lies in Christ in whom is to be found not only the divine Scripture but even the liberal arts which are an image of Christ and which reflect his wisdom.⁵⁷

As would be expected, Erigenian teachings emphasize the role of the Logos not only as the origin of revealed truth but as the source of sacred knowledge here and now. The *erat* of *in principio erat verbum* is interpreted by Erigena as *est* or "is," for not only "In the beginning *was* the Word" but also "In the beginning," which as stated above is none other than the present "now," is the Word. Although the Logos is ever present man, however, has become separated from God and as a result divine knowledge is no longer immediately available to man. The men of this age can no longer "speak to God" and see things *in divinis* as did Adam in paradise or as did men in the Golden Age. Yet, this light remains accessible through Scripture and nature, the two grand books of divine knowledge and it can become available to man even now, if he would and could only benefit from the grace of the Light of God which resides within the very substance of man.⁵⁸ In a manner more typical of Greek theology which emphasizes the presence of the Light of God in nature than of Western theology which focuses upon the presence of God in history, Erigena saw in the book of nature the means of discovering that sacred knowledge which lies within the very substance of the human microcosm.⁵⁹

According to Erigena, human perfection and the quest for the attainment of sacred knowledge, which is in fact the end and final goal of this perfection, begins with the awareness of the human mind that all causes come from God. After this stage, *scientia* becomes transformed into *sapientia*, and the soul of man becomes illuminated by God who, in fact, contemplates Himself in those whom He has illumined.⁶⁰ This illumination in turn enables man to realize that the very essence of things is God's knowledge of them⁶¹ and that there is a reciprocity and, finally, identity between knowing and being. The intellect becomes transformed into what it knows, the highest object of that knowledge being God. But the knowledge of the Divinity is not immediately accessible to man in his present state. Before the fall man possessed knowledge of everything *in divinis*, in an inward manner as reflected in and reflecting God. But after the fall his knowledge became externalized. To regain that sacred knowledge, the soul must pass through the eight stages consisting of the earthly

body passing into vital motion, vital motion into senses, sense into reason, reason into soul, soul into knowledge, knowledge into wisdom, and finally the supernatural passage (*occasus*) of the purified soul into God.⁶²

The final goal is *theosis*, the attainment through gnosis comprised of the stages of *epheſis*, *erōs*, and *agapē* of that Reality which neither creates nor is created. The human intellect can reach this goal which is the knowledge of God through the rediscovery of its own essence. This rediscovery in turn cannot be achieved save through that "negative way" which is a "cosmolytic" process that reverses the cosmogonic one. Intelligence is already a gift of God (*datum*) which, through special grace (*dotum*), is able to reach *theosis*, the very goal of human existence and the very substance of intelligence itself.⁶³

Although singularly neglected, Erigena's doctrines were nevertheless to influence such major figures as Richard and Hugo of Saint Victor, Raymond Lull, and later Nicholas of Cusa. But he was not at the center of the arena of European intellectual life which, after a period of intense debate on the relation between faith and reason, turned toward the formation of those major theological syntheses associated with the names of Saint Bonaventure, Saint Thomas, and Duns Scotus. These masters developed languages and systems of discourse which are perfectly adequate for the exposition of traditional metaphysics, and all were aware of the sapiential dimension of the spiritual life—Saint Bonaventure having developed a theology which rests upon the primacy of contemplation and Saint Thomas having left his pen for contemplative silence which crowns his vast theological and metaphysical edifice. Yet, these syntheses, especially the Thomistic one, tended to become overrationalistic in imprisoning intuitions of a metaphysical order in syllogistic categories which were to hide, more than reveal, their properly speaking intellectual rather than purely rational character. In fact, the purely sapiential aspect of medieval Christianity is reflected perhaps more directly in the medieval cathedrals and that central epiphany of Christian spirituality, the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, itself a literary cathedral, than in the theological syntheses which, while containing Christian Sophia, also tended to veil it. These theologies, therefore, although belonging in a certain sense to the sapiential dimension of the Christian tradition, characterize the crucial intermediate stages of the process whereby knowledge became desacralized and philosophy gradually divorced from wis-

dom, despite the very synthesis in which such elements were wed together by the powerful mind and pen of a figure such as Saint Thomas.⁶⁴

The great medieval theologians were men of both faith and knowledge and cannot be blamed for the reaction of reason against faith which was to follow soon after their syntheses saw the light of day. Yet, the philosophical agnosticism which was to surface in Europe within two centuries after Saint Thomas himself could not have come about had the intellectual life of Christianity remained impregnated by gnosis; had not the reality of knowledge as *theosis* become transformed into the question of using rational knowledge to preserve faith from being corroded or weakened by the attacks of rationalism; and had not the type of intellectuality characterized by Saint Thomas's contemporary, Meister Eckhart, remained more or less peripheral as far as the main line of development of theology and philosophy in Christian Europe was concerned.

The most powerful and majestic expression of Christian gnosis in the medieval period is in fact associated with Meister Eckhart. His teachings have attracted a great deal of attention during the past few decades in a Western world in search of some doctrine of Western origin which would correspond to the grand metaphysical teachings of the Orient that are now becoming increasingly better known in the West. More and more the German sage is becoming for many the authority par excellence of Christian gnosis.⁶⁵

For Eckhart the root of the intellect is grounded in the Divinity, for the intellect is *increatus et increabilis*; in fact, God is first and foremost *intelligere* and only secondarily *esse*. There exists within the soul of man a spark which Eckhart calls *Seelenfünklein*.⁶⁶ This spark is the seat of consciousness through which man can reach knowledge of the Divinity or the *Grund*. The soul has access to levels of knowledge leading from sensual to "abstract" forms and, finally, the "spark" which is both the heart or root of intelligence and the means whereby God is known. This possibility lies in the nature of intelligence itself, although there is need of grace for this knowledge to be actualized *per speculum et in lumine*.⁶⁷ For Eckhart, the eye with which man sees God is the eye with which God sees man. And this eye is none other than that supernal intellect or intelligence which relates man to the sacred in a direct manner and which enables knowledge to become the central means of access to the sacred. There is no more explicit

formulation of the sacramental nature of intelligence and of knowing in Western Christianity than that of Meister Eckhart who, thanks to the functioning of the *Fünklein* at the center of his own soul, was able to present one of the most remarkable expositions of that *scientia sacra* which is and has always been the heart of traditional knowledge in both East and West.

Although the Renaissance marked the beginning of the process of the radical secularization of man and knowledge, resulting in the humanism which characterizes this epoch, there is nevertheless a definite reassertion, at this time, of the sapiential perspective—this being almost as a cosmic reaction to the rapid disappearance of the traditional world view in the West. From the efforts of Gemistus Plethon and especially Marsiglio Ficino there grew a new appreciation of Graeco-Alexandrian wisdom in its Pythagorean, Platonic, Neoplatonic, and Hermetic forms, although much of this appreciation took place outside the framework of the dominant tradition in the West which was Christianity. But there were also specifically Christian forms of gnosis such as Christian Hermeticism, doctrines of illumination which such figures as Francesco Patrizzi called *Cognitio matutina*, and Christian Kabbala of a definitely sapiential nature. The Renaissance was also witness to one of the most outstanding masters of Christian sapiential doctrines, namely, Nicholas of Cusa. He expounded a traditional metaphysics of remarkable profundity based on an essentially gnostic perspective, although emphasizing again the process of unknowing and the doctrine of "ignorance" at the very moment when the newly discovered humanism, which was ignorance of another kind, was about to dominate the European scene.⁶⁸

Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464), who was a cosmologist, physicist, and mathematician as well as metaphysician and theologian, felt obliged to "dissolve" and "undo" the excessively confining and rationalistic categories in which late medieval theology had dealt with the Divine, before being able to expound metaphysics.⁶⁹ He was also forced to take into consideration the effect of the nominalism which preceded him without his falling into the pitfall of doubt and nihilism. Although nominalism was definitely a major factor in destroying the basis of certitude upon which the earlier medieval philosophy had rested,⁷⁰ more recent research has tried to point to its positive features as a theology which sought after divine immediacy.⁷¹ Be that as it may, Cusa had to remove the conceptual limitations placed upon

the notion of the Godhead which were attacked by various forms of rationalism, theological and otherwise, in order to be able to expound a knowledge of a truly gnostic and metaphysical order, following at the same time upon the wake of the earlier pre-Scholastic Christian masters such as Dionysius and the members of the Victorine school. Cusa therefore emphasized that "the highest wisdom consists in this, to know . . . how that which is unattainable may be reached or attained unattainably."⁷² Cusa explains in the following lines what he means by knowledge as ignorance in commenting upon the saying of Solomon that "the wisdom and the locality of understanding lie hidden from the eyes of all the living":

. . . we may be compared to owls trying to look at the sun; but since the natural desire in us for knowledge is not without a purpose, its immediate object is our own ignorance. Nothing could be more beneficial for even the most zealous searcher for knowledge than his being in fact most learned in that very ignorance which is peculiarly his own; and the better a man will have known his own ignorance, the greater his learning will be.⁷³

This *docta ignorantia* is, however, directed toward that partial form of knowledge which would seek to replace sacred knowledge as such. It applies to reason not to the intellect which *can know* the *coincidentia oppositorum*. Cusa in fact distinguishes rigorously between the power of knowing identified as *ars coincidentiarum* and that relative and desacralized knowledge which, according to him, is no more than conjecture and which he identifies as *ars conjecturarum*.⁷⁴ Man's ignorance which parades as knowledge and which Cusa's learned ignorance seeks to cure belongs to man's fall. Otherwise, Cusa, like the Christian sages before him, believes in Divine Wisdom which is accessible to man and which is identified with the Divine Word. This knowledge cannot, however, be attained except through being experienced and tasted. It is *sapientia* according to the etymological sense of the term (from the Latin *sapere* meaning "to taste").⁷⁵ Certainly the Cusanian ignorance does not lead to agnosticism or nihilism or to the denial of sacred knowledge. On the contrary, it is a means of opening a path for the ray of gnosis to shine upon a space already darkened by excessively rationalistic categories which seemed to negate the very possibility of unitive knowledge and which were leading to skepticism and even nihilism. That is why, while emphasizing the impor-

tance of the process of "unknowing" and the realization that our so-called positive knowledge is ignorance, he confirms the reality and centrality of that wisdom with respect to which all limited and limiting knowledge is ignorance.⁷⁶ There is no doubt that the teachings of Nicholas of Cusa which in a sense crown the school based on "unknowing" or "ignorance" represent a major stand of the sapiential dimension of the Christian tradition.⁷⁷

The century which followed Cusa and which was to lead to the modern period, properly speaking, was marked by the major event of the rise of Protestantism with its opposition to the Scholastic syntheses of the Middle Ages as well as the types of mysticism associated with Catholicism. There is no doubt that the later growth of Protestantism was not unconnected to the process of the secularization of knowledge, but it is also certain that the teachings of, at least, Luther possessed certain aspects which are closely related to the sapiential dimension of Christianity. Needless to say, Luther emphasized faith above everything else as Catholicism has emphasized love. But in the same way that Christian love is, or at least can be, related to knowledge through union which is the goal of both love and knowledge, so is faith related to knowledge through the fact that without some knowledge there cannot be faith, for were there no knowledge one could have faith in just anything and the object of faith would not matter.

In any case, Lutheran spirituality, with all of its emphasis upon faith and negation of Catholic theology and the Christian sapiential tradition as interpreted by the medieval Christian sages, nevertheless allowed the possibility of a mysticism of an essentially sapiential nature.⁷⁸ It is known that there were many Lutheran Hermeticists and Rosicrucians—the coat of arms of Luther himself having been the cross and the rose. The evangelical movement begun by Luther included such figures as Sebastian Franck, Paracelsus, V. Weigel, Jacob Boehme, G. Arnold, G. Gichtel, F. C. Oetinger, and many other theosophers, mystics, and spiritual alchemists and created a climate of a kind of "Abrahamic quality" in which the wedding between faith and knowledge was a definite possibility. The whole phenomenon of the existence of a theosophy, which in its traditional sense is none other than sacred knowledge, in the bosom of Lutheranism is a matter of great significance as far as the question of the presence of a sapiential tradition in the West is concerned.⁷⁹ Even some of the

music associated with the Lutheran movement is of a contemplative quality in conformity with the sapiential perspective.⁸⁰ Therefore, although the breakup of the unity of the Christian church during the Renaissance played a crucial role in the secularization of the Western world, a spirituality based upon sacred knowledge and knowledge of the sacred continued to survive even within the Lutheran tradition with all its emphasis upon faith at the expense of everything else.

With Jacob Boehme (1575–1624), who wrote that as a child he was loved by the Divine Sophia, the sapiential dimension of the Christian tradition reaches one of its peaks in recent history.⁸¹ Boehme was an avid reader of the Bible upon which he wrote a commentary in his *Mysterium Magnum* in 1623, just before his death. Moreover, he considered himself to have been illuminated by the Divine Sophia and enabled to penetrate into the inner meaning of the sacred text by virtue of inner illumination (*innere Erleuchtungen*). All that he wrote and said was from the point of view of this *sapientia* received from both sacred Scripture and inner illumination, or the objective and subjective modes of revelation.

Boehme sees man not only as the fallen being depicted in most works of Christian theology but also as a creature in whom there is still an element which is unaffected by the fall and which yearns for the Infinite and the Eternal since it comes from that Divine Ground which is both Infinite and Eternal.⁸² It is the state of purity and innocence which he calls *Tempratur*. Likewise, there is an aspect of creation which is still pure and paradisal, unaffected by that force of evil which is personified in Satan, the aspect which Boehme calls "the holy or paradisal element" (*heiliges or paradiesische Elemente*). But this element remains inaccessible to most men except those who remain aware of their own paradisal and primordial nature which seeks wisdom and the Eternal spontaneously and naturally. This search for the Eternal is related to the possibility of attaining perfect knowledge of God not only in Himself but also in both nature and the human soul.⁸³ The mission of man in this world is in fact the attainment of this knowledge with the aid of which he is able to decipher the various "signatures," the sum of which comprise the universe.⁸⁴

While in paradise, man possessed the "natural language" which was at once the language of paradise and the essential knowledge of all things. The root of both human language and knowledge was identical with the sacred or quintessential knowledge of creation

itself. But consequent upon the fall he lost the knowledge of this language, at least in that part of his being which is identified with the consequences of the fall. Yet, this primordial knowledge of a sacred order remains in the depth of man's being, in that very aspect of his being which is still in the state of paradisaal innocence.⁸⁵

This doctrine of language is closely associated with the role and function which Boehme accords to intelligence as the instrument for the attainment of knowledge of the sacred, an intelligence which becomes operative only upon man's receiving inner illumination. Boehme also reasserts the primary significance of wisdom or Sophia as the "fullness of God's Universe"⁸⁶ and an ontological reality of blinding splendor which is the means of access to the Divine Presence in a universe dominated by the sapiential perspective.

At the end of the Renaissance and in the face of seventeenth-century rationalism, another branch of the tree of the Christian sapiential tradition was to grow on the other side of the European continent in England where the so-called school of Cambridge Platonists, whom Coleridge called Plotinists, saw the light of day. There such figures as Benjamin Whichcote, Ralph Cudworth, Henry More, and John Smith were to express important elements of traditional wisdom especially as it concerned knowledge of the "intermediate world," the *mundus imaginalis*,⁸⁷ which More, one of the foremost members of this school, calls *spissitudo spiritualis*. As far as sacred knowledge is concerned, this school was also important in emphasizing the possibility of a knowledge which is immediate like that of the senses but not sensuous in the usual meaning of this term, thereby negating the epistemological dualism of Cartesian origin which was so important in the secularization of knowledge in the seventeenth century and also the empiricism which was becoming prevalent in England. John Smith, in fact, speaks of "spiritual sensation" meaning thereby immediate, concrete knowledge of the sacred as against the "abstract" knowledge which the philosophy of that period posited against the "concrete" seen only as that which is related to external, sensual knowledge.⁸⁸ He also reasserts the traditional doctrine of sacred knowledge being attainable not through the mind but the heart once it is purified and the "eye of the heart," as the Sufis would call it, opened.⁸⁹ Through the purification of the heart, according to John Smith and quoting Plotinus, "Contemplative man knits his own center unto the center of Divine Being."⁹⁰ The school of Cambridge Platonism represents a precious restatement of certain aspects of

sapience in a northern European climate, influenced in the religious sphere by the kind of voluntarism associated with Calvin and, more particularly, in an England which was turning nearly completely in the direction of an empiricism in which the sanctifying function of intellection possessed no meaning at all. It is worthwhile to remember that, despite what was to occur later both philosophically and theologically, the influence of this school, as well as other forms of traditional doctrines, remained to some degree alive in England, although at the periphery of the main arena of philosophical and what today is called intellectual activity.

Although the influence of Boehme was to be felt far and wide, ranging from French and German theosophers and esoterists to Russian contemplatives, perhaps the most artistically powerful expression of purely sapiential teachings deeply influenced by him are to be found in those hymns of Christian gnosis which compromise the *Cherubic Wanderer* (*Der Cherubische Wandersmann*) of Angelus Silesius (1624–1677), which are also among the most remarkable works of German literature.⁹¹ This collection, so close in both form and content to Sufi poetry, is based upon the central theme of return to God through knowledge. The path of the wanderer is none other than the path of knowledge;⁹² it is the *al-ma 'rifah* of Islam or *jñāna* of Hinduism and very much in accord with works of such nature whether they be in Arabic and Persian or Sanskrit.⁹³

For Silesius, man is the mirror in which God reflects Himself, His other "self."

*I am God's other self. He findeth but in me
That which resembleth him eternally.*⁹⁴

This function man fulfills through sacred knowledge which is none other than wisdom.

*Eternal Wisdom builds:
I shall the palace be
When I in wisdom rest
And Wisdom rests in me.*⁹⁵

To attain this knowledge man must brush aside all accidents and return to his center and essence which is pure consciousness and knowledge, the eternal essence which survives all change and becoming.

*Man should essential be;
For, when this world is gone
All accident is past
The essence still lives on.⁹⁶*

Moreover, the attainment of this center which means also the opening of the "eye of the heart" and the vision of God is not to be postponed to the posthumous state. The beatific vision must be attained here and now through that spiritual death which makes of the gnostic "a dead man walking" even in this life. The beatific vision belongs to the eternal now which opens unto the Infinite at this very present moment.

*"In good time we shall see
God and his light," ye say.
Fools! Ye shall never see
What ye see not today!⁹⁷*

It is the function of man to know God here and now through the knowledge which comes from God Himself. The grandeur of man and what places him even above the angels is this possibility of unitive knowledge through which he becomes the "bride" of God and attains beatific union.

*The angels are in bliss.
But better is man's life
For no one of their kind
Can ever be God's wife.⁹⁸*

Despite the ever-tightening circle of rationalism and empiricism the sapiential tradition expounded by Boehme and Silesius continued to survive on the margin of European intellectual life, while the center of the stage became occupied to an even greater degree by those who prided themselves in being enlightened while denying to the mind all possibility of illumination by the inner Intellect. As a matter of fact, during the eighteenth century the teachings of such masters as Boehme were revived in opposition to the so-called enlightenment by those who sought to combat the stifling influence of the new all-encompassing rationalism. As a result, one can observe alongside the

well-known philosophers of the Enlightenment or the *Aufklärung*, the appearance of illuminism on the Continent and an attempt made from several quarters to stem the tide of rationalism, empiricism, mechanism, secularism of science and the cosmos, and other prevalent ideas and *isms* of the day through recourse to various types of esoteric teachings.⁹⁹

In France and Germany numerous figures appeared whose significance is only now being realized and who are gradually being brought out of oblivion resulting from almost systematic neglect by later academic scholarship. In France itself, which was the citadel of the new rationalism associated with Descartes and Wolf, the eighteenth century was witness to Martines de Pasqually, reviver of certain of the traditional sciences and a Christian and Freemason at the same time; Claude Saint-Martin, master of French prose and reviver of Boehme in France; Joseph de Maistre, at once a Catholic and Freemason who saw Christianity as an initiatic path; Fabre d'Olivet, a student of ancient languages and wisdom and resuscitator of Pythagoreanism in which there was much interest at that time; and Höné Wronski, of Polish origin but residing in France, like Fabre d'Olivet attracted especially to traditional mathematical doctrines and what has been called "arithmasophy."

In Germany there was even greater activity in the resuscitation and continuation of esoteric and theosophic teachings centering around the works and thought of Boehme. There was Friedrich Oetinger, initiated into the Kabbala, who left Malebranche to study Boehme and who sought to synthesize the teachings of Boehme and Lurian Kabbala; Jakob Obereit who opposed esoteric knowledge to the skepticism of the *Aufklärung* and wrote against many of the theses of Kant; Karl von Eckartshausen, scientist and theosopher who sought to overcome the opposition created by Kant between phenomena and noumena and to unite all levels of knowledge, and numerous other figures.¹⁰⁰ Boehmian doctrines even influenced well-known literary and philosophical figures such as Novalis, whose fiancée, Sophie von Kühn, who died as a youth, was identified by the poet with Sophia; and Friedrich Schelling, the celebrated philosopher, who in his later works, such as the *Ages of the World*, was influenced by earlier German theosophers, especially Boehme.

In northern Europe the enigmatic figure of Swedenborg, both scientist and visionary, was to cast much influence in England as well as

in Scandinavia and to propagate certain theosophic theses especially in relation to the "spiritual body" (*Geistleiblichkeit*) which were to lead to the founding of a new Protestant church and which contained a strong polemical aspect.¹⁰¹ In England itself, although the influence of Boehme was less marked than in continental Europe, there were a few figures like John Hutchinson who were deeply immersed in Bohemian teachings. But perhaps the most notable figure who should be mentioned in this connection is Sir Isaac Newton. The father of classical physics not only composed the *Principia* which, despite the wishes of its author, had such a major role to play in the secularization of the world and in propagating scientific rationalism but also wrote the *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel* and works on alchemy¹⁰² and is considered by some scholars to have been a follower of Boehme.¹⁰³ But as can be gauged from the study of such figures, the influence of earlier masters of wisdom no longer amounted to a continuation of a total and complete knowledge of a sacred character but a partial and segmented one.

It is of interest to note in passing that the sapiential teachings of the remarkable German cobbler were also to influence certain figures in Russia which was now turning toward the West. Ivan Lopouchine, who was both a Freemason and attracted to the Hesychast tradition within Orthodox Christianity, was related to esoteric circles in France and Germany, while Alexander Labzine translated Boehme into Russian. Although the Orthodox world has possessed a rich tradition concerning Sophia, which we cannot treat in this survey concerned mainly with the West, it is of much interest to note that many of the followers of sapiential teachings in the Occident were interested in bringing Western Christianity closer to Orthodoxy and that the most notable influence of Boehme in modern times has been on such Russian figures as P. Florensky, V. Soloviev, and S. Boulgakov.

Of particular interest among the later representatives of the sapiential perspective in Europe is Franz von Baader (1765–1841), perhaps the last gnostic and theosopher in the West in the full sense of these terms before the segmentation and obscuring of the sapiential tradition in the nineteenth century, the figure whom A. W. Schlegel called *Boehmius redivivus* and who, besides reconfirming Bohemian theosophy, sought without success to bring the Catholic and Orthodox churches closer together on the foundation of a common sapiential spirituality. Von Baader was at first a student of medicine, mineral-

ogy, and even engineering but later turned to the study of philosophy and metaphysics.¹⁰⁴ He opposed the main theses of modern European philosophy of his day, including both the *cogito* of Descartes and the "agnosticism" of Kant,¹⁰⁵ and sought to bestow once again upon knowledge its sacramental quality. He asserted that, since God is reflected in all things, all knowledge is in a sense the knowledge of some aspect of the Divinity and has a sacred quality.¹⁰⁶ Attracted deeply to the study of nature, he considered his early philosophy as natural wisdom (*Naturweisheit*) which was to lead directly to the theosophy he was to develop later in life. In fact, in accordance with the sapiential perspective he did not make an absolute distinction between the natural and supernatural and saw in nature a reflection of the sacred which the official theology had confined strictly to the supernatural realm.

Von Baader emphasized the sapiential aspect of both religious practice and thought. Like Boehme, he identified Sophia with the Virgin Mary to whom he was especially devoted. He also spoke of wisdom as the "image of the Father" and emphasized the sacramental character of knowledge. For him all authentic knowledge led ultimately to God, and he did not fail to point to the positive function of reason and logic as channels through which the light of the Intellect shines upon the human state and which can lead man to the precinct of sacred knowledge.¹⁰⁷ Yet, despite his influence upon the rise of neo-Scholasticism, his voice as a spokesman for the sapiential perspective was a lonely one in the spiritual wilderness of the nineteenth century. Although there were a few figures here and there such as Antonio Rosmini in Italy, who wrote the *Theosophia* in the nineteenth century¹⁰⁸ upon the wake of and in a perspective akin to von Baader's works, the main arena of European thought was now reaping the fruit of the secularization of knowledge in the form of the antirationalistic philosophies which soon began to deny even to reason the possibility of attaining some degree of knowledge and certitude. As for sapiential teachings, what remained of them became more and more of a fragmentary nature, separated from the grace of the living Christian tradition, an "esoterism" which was properly speaking an "occultism" and a knowledge which, although originally of a sacred character, had become a body without a soul. It was the cadaver of sacred knowledge depleted of sacred presence and confined mostly to the cosmological rather than the purely metaphysical

level. As for Christian mysticism, it had become nearly completely emptied of intellectual and metaphysical content, becoming a passive way of love which, although precious from the general religious point of view, could not stem the tide of the total desacralization of knowledge any more than could the existing occultisms, some of which possessed partial knowledge of traditional doctrines while others were impregnated with antitraditional forces which stood opposed to all that the sacred signifies. But to understand why such a phenomenon took place in the West, it is necessary to return to the earlier centuries of European history and to trace the process by which knowledge became gradually desacralized.

The process of desacralization of knowledge in the Occident begins already with the ancient Greeks among whom the first instance of the rise of an antitraditional society is to be seen in this cycle of human history. The loss of the symbolist spirit already decried by Plato, the emptying of the cosmos of its sacred content in the Olympian religion leading to Ionian natural philosophy, the rise of rationalism as independent of intellection, and many other important transformations mark this process of desacralization. The Greek tradition, instead of developing various intellectual perspectives like the *darśanas* of Hinduism, was witness to the rise of Sophism, Epicurianism, Pyrrhonism, the New Academy, and many other schools based on rationalism or skepticism which eclipsed almost totally the sacramental function of knowledge and reduced knowledge to either ratiocination or simple mental acrobatics, thus making it necessary to distinguish between knowledge and wisdom,¹⁰⁹ as well as bringing about the reaction against Greek philosophy as a whole which was to come with Christianity. What the post-Renaissance came to call the "Greek miracle" is, from the traditional point of view, a miracle in reverse because it substituted reason for the intellect and sensuous knowledge for inner illumination.¹¹⁰

There was, however, a veritable Greek miracle in the appearance in Greece of those sapiential doctrines and systematic metaphysics deriving from the Orphic and Dionysian mysteries. These were associated with such figures as Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, the Neoplatonists, especially Plotinus and Proclus, and even Aristotle, all of whom provided doctrines of a veritable metaphysical nature, although Aristotle hid intellection in a syllogistic mode and in a sense forms the link between metaphysics and philosophy in its later

sense.¹¹¹ Certain Muslims have called Plato a prophet and he, as well as figures such as Pythagoras and Plotinus, must be considered as metaphysicians and seers like the *rşis* of India rather than as profane philosophers. Their doctrines are based on the Intellect which illuminates rather than on simple ratiocination. With them knowledge is still impregnated with its sacred quality and is the means of attainment of *theosis*. These sages are gnostics whose teachings were to provide providentially the doctrinal language for many of the sapiential schools of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. The rediscovery of the sacred character of knowledge today would lead, almost before anything else, to a rediscovery of Greek wisdom, of Plato, Plotinus, and other Graeco-Alexandrian sages and writings such as Hermeticism, not as simply human philosophy but as sacred doctrines of divine inspiration to be compared much more with the Hindu *darśanas* than with philosophical schools as they are currently understood. The belief of Muslim philosophers that the Greek philosophers had learned their doctrines from the prophets, especially Solomon, and that "philosophy derives from the niche of prophecy,"¹¹² if not verifiable historically, nevertheless contains a profound truth, namely, the relation of this wisdom to the sacred and its origin in revelation, even if this revelation cannot be confined in the strictly Abrahamic sense to a particular figure or prophet.

Christianity expanded in a world already suffering from a rationalism and naturalism which had stifled the spirit and hardened the heart as the seat of intelligence, dividing reason from its ontological root. It therefore had to present itself as a way of love which had to sweep aside completely all the "ways of knowing" that lay before it, not distinguishing in its general theological formulations between intellection and ratiocination and preferring quite rightly a true theology and a false cosmology to a false theology and a true cosmology.¹¹³ In trying to overcome the prevalent danger of cosmolatry, Christianity, in its widely accepted theological formulations, not only drew an excessively tight boundary between the supernatural and the natural, leading to an impoverished view of nature, but also caused the eclipse of the supernaturally natural function of the Intellect. In the dialogue between the Hellenist and the Christian in which both sides presented an aspect of the truth and in which Christianity triumphed, from a certain point of view, precisely because it was a new dispensation from Heaven destined to save a whole world from the loss of

religious faith, the sapiential dimension of Greek wisdom was criticized and dismissed along with skepticism and rationalism.¹¹⁴ All knowledge appeared to a large number of Christian theologians as "pride of intelligence" and a climate was created which, from early days, was not completely favorable to the sapiential perspective. Although as described earlier, Christian gnosis existed from the beginning and continued through the centuries, the role and function of the Intellect was never considered as central as in certain other traditions such as Hinduism and Islam. As a result, the mainstream of Christian theology, especially after the early centuries, insisted upon the *credo ut intelligam*, a formula later identified with Saint Anselm, while limiting the function of intellection to that of a handmaid of faith rather than the means of sanctification, which of course would not exclude the element of faith. What the prevalent medieval Christian theology did exclude was the ecstatic or "rhapsodic intellect";¹¹⁵ the ecstasy resulting from intellection was dismissed as a possibility and disdained religiously along with sexual ecstasy whose spiritual significance was left outside of the perspective of the official theology and which found its exposition in Christian Hermetic writings as well as in the Kabbala.

As far as the early centuries are concerned, it must be remembered that in the *Acts of the Stone and the Twelve Apostles* belonging to the Nag Hammadi collection, which contains the oldest form of Christology, Christ is described as the *Christos Angelos*, at once messenger and angel.¹¹⁶ He is the celestial figure, the angel-man, the celestial archetype of the human soul who, like the *Fravarti* of Zoroastrianism, illuminates the soul and the mind and bestows upon it knowledge of a sacred order. There is moreover a direct relation between this Christology and alchemical and mineral symbolism and direct reference to the pearl which is also found in the "Hymn of the Soul" in the *Acts of Thomas*. The pearl is the universal symbol of the gnosis which purifies, sanctifies, and delivers, the pearl which Christ instructed his followers not to cast before swine. Throughout these early documents one finds constant reference to a type of Christology which emphasizes the gnostic character of both Christ himself as the bestower of wisdom and of his message as containing an inner significance of a gnostic and esoteric nature. To overcome the danger of various kinds of schisms associated with gnosticism, an official Christology was formulated which hid to some extent this aspect of the

Christ nature and thereby relegated the sapiential dimension of Christianity to a more marginal and secondary function, without of course obliterating or destroying it altogether.

A further eclipse of the sapiential dimension and the secularization of knowledge was to come in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with the spread of Aristotelianism and Averroism in the West and their wedding with various forms of Christian theology, especially those schools which followed upon the wake of Saint Thomas. Until this period Augustinianism had still preserved the primacy of illumination in the act of knowledge, whereas Saint Thomas, trying to preserve the primacy of Scripture, denied the possibility of the illumination of the mind by the Intellect and considered all knowledge as having a sensuous origin. Despite the imposing theology created by Saint Thomas, his adoption of Aristotelian categories for the expression of Christian doctrines and emphasis upon the sensual origin of knowledge played a role in the further desacralization of knowledge, although Saint Thomas himself did not accept the separation of faith and reason which he in fact sought to harmonize.¹¹⁷ But the harmony of faith and reason is one thing and the sanctifying function of knowledge another. Had Thomism continued to be interpreted by a Meister Eckhart, the intellectual destiny of the West would have been very different. But as it happened, the excessively positive categories of theology (or kataphatic theology) combined with a dimming of intellectual intuition, which caused the very meaning of realism to be soon forgotten, led to the nominalism that marked the swan song of medieval Christianity and destroyed the harmony which had been established between reason and faith in a world dominated by the sacred.

Thomism was certainly religious philosophy at its highest level and Christian theology in a most mature and all-embracing form. But it was not the pure *sapientia* based on the direct illumination of reason by the Intellect, although even in this respect it provided a perfectly suitable language and a world view which could lead to a purely sapiential vision of things as one can in fact observe in Dante. But the excessive emphasis upon reason at the expense of the Intellect in Scholasticism combined with the destruction or disappearance of the Order of the Temple, the *fedeli d'amore*, and other depositories of Christian esoteric and gnostic teachings certainly helped to create an atmosphere which was more conducive to the rise of rationalism and

the eclipse of a perspective of a truly intellectual nature. In the intellectual life of a religious civilization such as that of Christianity or Islam or for that matter in the Jewish tradition, one can detect three and not just two major schools or ways of thinking: philosophy, theology, and gnosis or metaphysics (or theosophy) in its traditional sense. Saint Thomas was a great philosopher and certainly an outstanding theologian. But even if he himself may have also been a Christian gnostic when he put his pen down and chose silence, his works provided the West more with traditional philosophy and theology than with the kind of sapiential doctrines based directly on the sanctifying function of the Intellect. In any case, men who criticize Saint Thomas today are, for the most part, not those who are of such lofty intellectual realization and metaphysical insight that they must simply move beyond the confines of Thomistic categories but are usually those who simply fail to comprehend what Saint Thomas is saying. A true gnostic would be the first to realize the immense importance of Thomism, as in Islam figures like Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā, who based their epistemology on the sacramental function of knowledge and its illumination by the Intellect, were the first to point to the importance of Muslim Peripatetics (*mashshā'īs*) whose perspective was in many respects close to that of Saint Thomas and whom the Angelic Doctor quotes so often.

To understand the process of the gradual desacralization of knowledge in the West the role of the teachings of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd in the Latin world are of some importance.¹¹⁸ Avicennian philosophy which was to serve in the Islamic world as the basis for the restatement of the sacramental function of knowledge and intellection by Suhrawardī and many later sages reached the West in only a truncated version and under a much more rationalistic garb.¹¹⁹ But even what did reach the West and led to what has been called Latin Avicennism¹²⁰ never enjoyed the same popularity or influence as the more rationalistic Latin Averroism. Furthermore, even in the case of Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who was much more rationalistic than Ibn Sīnā and did not emphasize illumination of the mind by the angel as did the latter, there is no doubt that again the Latin Averroes is more of a secularized and rationalistic philosopher than the original Ibn Rushd when read in Arabic. The study of the destiny of these two masters of Islamic philosophy in the Islamic and Christian worlds reveals to what extent the West was moving toward a more rationalistic inter-

pretation of this philosophic school while the Islamic world was moving in the other direction to reaffirm the primacy of intellection over ratiocination. The appearance of Suhrawardī and the school of illumination (*al-ishrāq*) testifies to a new assertion of the sacred quality of knowledge and the ultimately "illuminative" character of all knowledge in the Islamic intellectual universe.¹²¹

In the Occident, however, it was not the doctrine of illumination of a Suhrawardī which came to the fore but the nominalism which reacted against the positive theology of the thirteenth century. Although as already mentioned, a certain aspect of nominalism was instrumental in preparing the ground for the type of apophatic and mystical theology identified with Nicholas of Cusa, the movement as a whole marked the final phase of cutting reason off from certitude. It thereby created a philosophical agnosticism which even in the world of faith implied an impoverishment of the power of reason and the function of knowing as related to the sacred, causing a vacuum which had dire consequences for the Christian world. Although religious faith was still too strong to permit an open type of agnostic rationalism which was to appear during later centuries, nominalism, in combination with certain other forces, helped to eclipse the type of sacred knowledge which every religion needs if it is to be total and complete and able to cater to the mental and intellectual needs of all of its followers. The result was the attempt on the part of certain Christians of an intellectual bent to seek outside of Christianity for answers to quench their thirst for causality and the explanation of the nature of things, answers which in many cases only esoterism and veritable metaphysics can supply. This quest in turn led to the breakup of the homogeneous and integral Christian world view which had dominated the Middle Ages. Men then sought certitude and a firm foundation for knowledge on another basis and level; hence the establishment of modern philosophy, properly speaking, with Descartes.¹²²

During the Renaissance there was certainly a quest for primordial wisdom, for lost knowledge, for a new foundation for certitude. Gemistus Plethon whose influence was deeply felt in the Italian Renaissance had spoken of Plato and Zoroaster as fathers of a sacred Sophia, while Ficino set about to revive the whole corpus of Platonic wisdom and translate it into Latin. There was renewed interest in Hermeticism and even the ancient Oriental mysteries, but despite

figures such as Ficino and Cusa, much of the search for sacred knowledge was in reality being carried out outside of the mainstream of the Christian tradition in forms which were "pagan" in the theological sense of the term. The subject studied was sacred knowledge but the mind which set out to carry out this study was in many cases being affected to an ever greater degree by an individualism and humanism which could not but result in the total rationalism that soon followed. Although there was a great deal of interest in Orphism and the *Orphica*, which, like the *Hermetica*,¹²³ was widespread during the Renaissance, the "Orphic Christ" who was such an important figure of the Latin literature of the earlier period¹²⁴ ceased to be a central influence as in days gone by. One could say that Orpheus went one way and Christ another. Ancient wisdom based on the doctrine of the sanctity of the Intellect began to appear independent of the living tradition of the West which was Christianity. And since only a living tradition can convey and bestow the quality of the sacred in an operative manner, the very process of resuscitation of ancient wisdom had, to a large extent, the result of further weakening what remained of the traditional Christian intellectuality. As a result, despite the presence of groups and circles which possessed authentic knowledge of a sacred character, groups such as the Rosicrucians, the Kabbalists, the Hermeticists, and the school of Paracelsus, the revival of ancient wisdom during the Renaissance and even later and the opposition of most followers of this "newly found" wisdom to Scholasticism did not result in the integration of Scholasticism into a higher sapiential perspective within Christianity,¹²⁵ but in the destruction of Scholasticism from "below" leading to the nearly complete secularization of knowledge in the main currents of European philosophy in the seventeenth century. The profusion of teachings of an esoteric and sapiential nature during the Renaissance, much of which in fact was an externalization and profanation of what had been known and preserved secretly during the Middle Ages, did not lead to the reestablishment of the sapiential dimension at the heart of the Christian tradition but to a further breakup of the Christian intellectual world and the secularization of reason resulting in the more or less radical separation of philosophy from theology, reason from faith, and mysticism from gnosis, which has characterized the main current of Western intellectual history since the Renaissance.

Since man is by nature a being in quest of certainty, the philosophical agnosticism following the nominalist attack against medieval phi-

losophy had to be overcome in one way or another. This feat was in fact achieved, as far as later European history is concerned, not by the revival of the ancient wisdom during the Renaissance, which in reality contained all the necessary teachings if only their true nature had been fully understood, but through recourse to the radical individualism and rationalism which mark modern European philosophy as such. Descartes has been quite rightly called the father of modern philosophy for it is he more than his contemporaries, Spinoza and Leibniz, who epitomizes what lies at the heart of modern philosophy and even modern science, namely, the reduction of knowledge to the functioning of the individual reason cut off from the Intellect, in both its microcosmic and macrocosmic aspects.

In seeking a new basis for certain knowledge Descartes appealed neither to the Intellect as it functions in the heart of man and as the source of reason nor to revelation, but to the individual consciousness of the thinking subject. The famous *cogito* could possibly have referred to the primacy of the subject over the object in the sense that the Vedantists consider *Ātman* to be the primary reality compared to which all externalized existence and objectivization is *māyā*. The *cogito ergo sum* in fact contains a profound metaphysical significance if understood in this Vedantic sense. But in saying "I think, therefore I am," Descartes was not referring to the divine I who some seven centuries before Descartes had uttered through the mouth of Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj,¹²⁶ "I am the Truth" (*ana' l-Ḥaqq*), the Divine Self which alone can say I. It was Descartes's individual, and therefore from the gnostic point of view "illusory" self, which was placing its experience and consciousness of thinking as the foundation of all epistemology and ontology and the source of certitude. Even being was subordinated to it and considered a consequence of it, hence the *ergo*. Even if he did begin with the act of thinking, Descartes could have concluded with *est* rather than *sum*, asserting that my thinking and consciousness are themselves proofs that God is, not that "I" as individual am.¹²⁷ Had he done so, he would have joined a particular perspective of traditional philosophy and preserved the central role of ontology in philosophy.

As it was, he made the thinking of the individual ego the center of reality and the criterion of all knowledge, turning philosophy into pure rationalism and shifting the main concern of European philosophy from ontology to epistemology. Henceforth, knowledge, even if it were to extend to the farthest galaxies, was rooted in the *cogito*. The

knowing subject was bound to the realm of reason and separated from both the Intellect and revelation, neither of which were henceforth considered as possible sources of knowledge of an objective order. Knowing thus became depleted of its sacred content to the extent that anything that partakes of reality *can* become divorced from the sacred which is ultimately inseparable from reality, the Ultimate Reality being the Sacred as such. But to the mentality of those who were caught in the web of the newly established rationalism, this most intelligent way of being unintelligent, knowledge and science were henceforth totally separated from the sacred even if the sacred were to be accepted as possessing a reality. To this mentality the very concept of a *scientia sacra* appeared as a contradiction in terms and, in fact, it still appears as either contradictory or meaningless not only to those who either consciously or unconsciously follow the rationalism inherent in Cartesian epistemology but also to those who have rebelled against this rationalism from below with the kinds of irrationalism which characterize so much of modern thought.

After the seventeenth century, there was but a single step to Humean doubt and the Kantian "agnostic" position which in a characteristically subjective fashion denied to the intellect the possibility of knowing the essence of things, as if to say that since my rational faculties cannot know the noumena, reason as such is incapable of such knowledge, and since my reason is not illuminated by the Intellect which would permit me to know the noumena through intellectual intuition, no one else can possess such an intellectual faculty either.

In the case of both Descartes and Kant, however, the functioning of reason as such is at least still accepted and the knowledge that it can attain is considered to have an immutability which characterizes that which is of an intellectual order. Although these philosophers did not recognize the ultimately sacred character of the very categories of logic which enables man to know even on the level of ordinary logic, they still preserved a vision of permanence and immutability of logical categories which, despite their own unawareness of its real nature, is seen from the metaphysical point of view as a reflection of the sacred, which is in fact the permanent and the eternal in itself and in its reflections into the domains of change and becoming.

In the unfolding of this process of secularization, however, even this reflection was to disappear with those nineteenth-century philos-

ophies such as Hegelianism and Marxism which based reality upon dialectical becoming and change itself and transformed an immutable vision of things into a constantly changing one, whether this process was taken as being spiritual or material. Hegel has been, of course, interpreted in many ways, and his complicated thoughts allow interpretations ranging all the way from those of conservative theologians in nineteenth-century Germany to agnostic leftists. But what characterizes the whole dialectical thought process in its nineteenth-century development, and in contrast to many traditional philosophies of change, is not its concern with becoming or process but the reduction of reality to the temporal process, of being to becoming, of the immutable categories of logic, not to mention metaphysics, to ever-changing thought processes. This loss of the sense of permanence in schools of philosophy standing in the mainstream of modern Western thought marks, along with the crass positivism of an Auguste Comte, a more advanced phase of not only the desacralization of knowledge but also of the loss of the sense of the sacred which characterizes modern, but not necessarily contemporary, man as such. All that follows, either in the form of irrational philosophies reacting against Hegelianism or various later forms of positivism or analytical philosophy, carry out the final phases of the program to destroy completely the sacred quality of knowledge by either totally separating religion and the quest for the sacred from rationality and logic or by depleting both language and thought processes, that are of course related to language, from any significance of a metaphysical order which may still lurk in some recess from days when man's concern with knowledge was inseparable from his attachment to and quest for the sacred.¹²⁸ The result has been the creation of philosophies which, from the traditional point of view, could only be called monstrous and which can only be characterized as what the German scholar H. Türck has called "misosophy," that is, the hatred rather than love of wisdom and which others have considered as "antiphilosophy."¹²⁹

Since only the like can know the like, the secularized reason which became the sole instrument of knowing in modern times could not but leave its mark and effect upon everything that it studied. All subjects studied by a secularized instrument of knowledge came out to be depleted and devoid of the quality of the sacred. The profane point of view could only observe a profane world in which the sacred did not play a role. The quest of the typically modern man has been in

fact to "kill the gods" wherever he has been able to find them and to banish the sacred from a world which has been rapidly woven into a new pattern drawn from the strands issuing from a secularized mentality.

The effect of desacralized knowledge was to appear first of all in the domain of thought itself. In contrast to the Christian Platonists and Aristotelians, Renaissance Hermeticists like Ficino, who sought to revive Hermetic gnosis to which Pico della Mirandola was to add a Christianized version of the Kabbala,¹³⁰ or even certain later theosophers and esoterists, most of those who have studied such subjects in the modern world have failed to distinguish between a sacred wisdom based upon intellection and profane philosophy. The grandeur of metaphysical doctrines has been reduced to the triviality of profane thought, the conceptual category of "thought" like "culture" being itself a modern invention which one is forced to use in contemporary discourse. The most sublime form of wisdom has been transformed into simple historical borrowing, Neoplatonism, as mentioned already, playing the role of the ideal historical tag with which one could destroy the significance of the most profound sapiential doctrines. It has been and still is simply sufficient to call something Neoplatonic influence to reduce it, spiritually speaking, to insignificance. And if that has not been possible, then terms such as pantheistic, animistic, naturalistic, monistic, and even mystical in the sense of ambiguous have been and still are employed to characterize doctrines whose significance one wishes to destroy or ignore. Plato, Plotinus, and Proclus are presented as simple philosophers as if they were professors of philosophy in some nearby university; and those among Christians who had adopted their metaphysical formulations as people who went astray from "pure" Christianity and therefore fell under the influence of Greek thought. How different is the appreciation of Pythagoras, Plato, or even Aristotle in al-Fārābī and even in the works of Thomas Taylor or K. S. Guthrie than among those for whom all philosophy is the fruit of a reason divorced from its roots and depleted of the sense of the sacred. The rediscovery of tradition and the reconfirmation of the sacred quality of knowledge would make possible not only the reappraisal of the whole of philosophy and the reevaluation of Greek wisdom and philosophy, but also enable contemporary man to understand the significance of the providential role played by this philosophy in the three monotheistic

religions which were spread throughout the Mediterranean world and Europe following the demise of Graeco-Roman civilization. The reevaluation of the Greek intellectual heritage in the light of tradition is one of the most important tasks which must be achieved in the contemporary world, a task which if carried out fully would affect profoundly the present state of the study of not only philosophy but also theology and even comparative religion.

The secularization of the cosmos was also related to the secularization of reason. Although there are numerous intellectual and historical causes for the desacralization of the cosmos,¹³¹ the reduction of the knowing mind or the subject of the Cartesian *cogito* to the purely rationalistic level was certainly one of the main ones. It is not accidental that the mechanization of the cosmos and the emptying of the substance of the world of its sacred quality took place at the same time as the desacralization of knowledge and the final divorce between the reason which "knows" scientifically from the world of faith on the one hand, and the Intellect which knows principally and essentially on the other. Some have even attributed the spiritual chaos of modern times to this mechanization of the world in seventeenth-century science.¹³² It is of singular interest to note that nearly all those philosophers and theologians who were opposed to the reduction of knowledge to only the level of reason also opposed the mechanistic conception of the world,¹³³ and that those, such as the followers of Boehme in Germany, who sought to continue his teachings based on the illumination of the mind by the Intellect were also the foremost proponents of the *Naturphilosophie* which opposed violently the mechanistic point of view.¹³⁴ In any case there is little doubt that the desacralization of knowledge was related directly to the desacralization of the cosmos.

Nor was history and the temporal process spared the fate which befell the cosmos. Reason cut off from its root in the permanent could not but reduce reality to process, time to pure quantity, and history to a process without a transcendent entelechy and, at the same time, the mother and progenitor of all that the modern mentality considered as reality. Time rather than eternity became the source of all things. Ideas, rather than being considered as true or false in themselves, were relegated completely to the domain of historical change and considered significant only as historical events. A historicism was born which resulted in the same kind of desacralization of history and

the temporal process itself that one finds in philosophy and science. Although many contemporary critics have realized the poverty of historicism¹³⁵ and sought to envisage the historical process from other points of view, historicism has continued to survive as a prevailing mode of thought in a world where, for many people, reason remains divorced from the twin source of permanence, namely, the Intellect and revelation, and all permanence is reduced to becoming. Both the destruction of the qualitative aspect of time and the reduction of all realities to their reflection upon the stream of becoming are the result of the turning away of man's mental faculties from his immutable Center to the fluctuating periphery of his existence. Cut off from the heart which is the seat of the Intellect, reason could not but become engrossed in transience and change which then began to usurp the role and function of the permanent. In reducing the Absolute to the relative and the permanent to the changing, the profane point of view also depleted the relative and the changing of the sacred quality which they possess on their own level.

Since formulated knowledge is inseparable from language, the desacralization of knowledge could not but affect the use of language. If European languages have become less and less symbolic and ever more unidimensional, losing much of the inward sense of classical languages, it is because they have been associated with thought patterns of a unidimensional character. The antimetaphysical bias of much of modern philosophy is reflected in the attempt made to divest language of all metaphysical significance, a process which, however, is impossible to achieve completely because language like the cosmos is of an ultimately divine origin and cannot be divorced totally from the metaphysical significance embedded in its very roots and structures. Nevertheless, already in the seventeenth century the rise of rationalism and the mechanization of the world began to affect European languages almost immediately in the direction of secularization. Galileo still accepted the traditional idea that nature is a great book to be deciphered,¹³⁶ but for him the language of this book was no longer the sacred language of Saint Bonaventure, Dante, or the Kabbalists, associated with symbolic and anagogical meaning, but mathematics understood in its purely quantitative and not Pythagorean sense.¹³⁷ Kepler also thought that "quantity was the mode of God's expression" in the universe (*Dico quantitatum Deo propositam*),¹³⁸ although in contrast to Galileo he never lost sight of the symbolic and qualitative

aspect of mathematics, itself associated with the Pythagorean philosophy of harmony and the symbolism of numbers and geometric forms to which he was in fact deeply devoted.

Henceforth, many European philosophers even tried to create a language based upon mathematics, and in the case of Mersenne upon music. It was in fact this movement that underlaid the symbolic logic of Leibniz who sought to connect thought to calculation whereas in the traditional perspective it is thought and language which are inseparable from each other. In many traditional sources *logos* and *ragione* (discourse) are interconnected and in certain contexts refer to the same thing.

Be that as it may, the secularization of language and the attempt to substitute pure quantity for the symbolic significance of language in the reading of the cosmic text also reflected upon the language of sacred Scripture itself, which until now had been considered as a gift from God and which had been connected by certain Catholic and also Protestant theologians with the book of nature. But now that human language had become degraded and mathematics considered as the proper language of nature, the language of sacred Scripture began to appear as "more the slipshod invention of illiterate man than the gift of omniscient God."¹³⁹ The link between divine language and human language broke down,¹⁴⁰ leaving the latter to undergo the successive "falls" or stages of secularization which have resulted in the various forms of bastardization of languages today and also, on another level, to the sacrifice of the liturgical art connected with Latin in favor of vernacular languages which have already moved a long way from their sacred prototypes and become only too familiar as the everyday languages of an already secularized world filled with experiences of triviality. There is an almost one to one correspondence between the depleting of knowledge of its sacred content and the desacralization of the language associated with it; and also vice versa the attempt to elevate language once again to its symbolic and anagogical level whenever there has been a revival or reconfirmation of sacred knowledge or *scientia sacra* which would then seek to have itself expressed in the language available, but also appropriate, to it.¹⁴¹

Finally, the process of desacralization of knowledge has reached the citadel of the sacred itself, that is, religion. As a result of the final step taken by Hegel to reduce the whole process of knowledge to a dialectic inseparable from change and becoming, the world of faith

began to appear as something totally separated by a chasm from the ground upon which "thinking" men stood. The reaction to Hegel was Kierkegaard, and from him grew both existential theology and existential philosophy whether theistic or atheistic. For such figures as Jaspers, Marcel, and even Heidegger there is despair in man's attempt to understand and make sense of reality so that he must make a leap in order to make sense of things. In theology likewise the thought of Karl Barth requires a leap into "the upper story of faith."¹⁴² Theology ceases to have contact with either the world of nature or human history.¹⁴³ 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. In such a world those with spiritual and intellectual perspicacity sought, outside of the confines of this ambience, to rediscover their traditional roots and the total functioning of the intelligence which would once again bestow upon knowledge its sacramental function and enable men to reintegrate their lives upon the basis of this unifying principle, which is inseparable from both love and faith. For others, for whom such a criticism of the modern world and rediscovery of the sacred was not possible but who, at the same time, could not be lulled to sleep before the impoverished intellectual and spiritual landscape which was presented to them as modern life, there was only lament and despair which, in fact, characterizes so much of modern literature and which the gifted Welsh poet Dylan Thomas was to epitomize in the poem that was also to become his elegy:

*Too proud to die, broken and blind he died
The darkest way, and did not turn away,
A cold kind man brave in his narrow pride
Being innocent, he dreaded that he died
Hating his God, but what he was was plain.
An old kind man brave in his burning pride.*

But because God is both merciful and just, the light of the Intellect could not be completely eclipsed nor could this despair be the final hymn of contemporary man.

NOTES

1. The Hindu expression *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* is one of the Names of God. *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* is usually translated as "Being-Consciousness-Bliss," but the most "essential" translation—the one that makes most clear the metaphysical meaning of these terms—is "Object-Subject-Union." At the highest level this ternary may also be expressed as "Known-Knower-Knowledge" or "Beloved-Lover-Love." This ternary also has an operative or spiritual meaning related to invocatory prayer, such as the Prayer of Jesus (Christianity), *japa* (Hinduism), and *dhikr* (Islam). Here it takes the form of "Invoked-Invoker-Invocation" (in Islamic terms *madhkūr-dhākir-dhikr*).

2. "The substance of knowledge is Knowledge of the Substance; that is, the substance of human intelligence, in its most deeply real function, is the perception of the Divine Substance." "Atmā-Māyā," *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Summer 1973, p. 130.

3. Gen. 2:17 and 3:24.

St. Bonaventure describes man in the state of unitive knowledge as follows, "In the initial state of creation, man was made fit for the quiet of contemplation, and therefore God placed him in a paradise of delights (Gen. 2:15). But turning from the true light to changeable good, man was bent over by his own fault, and the entire human race by original-sin, which infected human nature in two ways: the mind with ignorance and the flesh with concupiscence. As a result, man, blinded and bent over, sits in darkness and does not see the light of heaven unless grace with justice come to his aid against concupiscence and unless knowledge with wisdom come to his aid against ignorance." *Bonaventure, The Soul's Journey into God*, trans. and introd. by E. Cousins, New York, 1978, p. 62.

4. The Muslim sages, when discussing metaphysical subjects, especially if they concern the nature of God, state that it was so as so and then add, often abruptly, *al-ān kamā kān* ("And it is now as it was then."), confirming the identity of the present "now" with that "then" or moment "in the beginning" which was the origin of things in time yet stood itself outside of time.

5. "Ce qui est naturel à la conscience humaine prouve *ipso facto* sa vérité essentielle, la raison d'être de l'intelligence étant l'adéquation au réel." F. Schuon, "Conséquences découlant du mystère de la subjectivité," *Sophia Perennis* 4/1 (Spring 1978): 12; also in the author's *Du Divin à l'humain* (in press).

6. The well-known Scholastic principle is *adaequatio rei et intellectus* which St. Thomas comments upon in his saying, "knowledge comes about in so far as the object known is within the knower."

7. Plato used *theologia* as the highest form of philosophy which was to know the Supreme Good through the intellect. St. Augustine adopted the term *theologica naturalis* in his *De civitas Dei*, basing himself on M. Terentius Varro's distinction between natural theology and ideas related to myths and the state. From Augustinian teachings there issued the distinction between revealed and natural theology which Scholasticism treated as a branch of philosophy. See W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Greek Thinkers*, Oxford, 1947, pp. 1–5. It is significant to note that with the radical secularization of reason and the process of knowing natural theology was discarded, to be resuscitated in the last few years along with the rise of interest in the more traditional conception of reason in its relation to both the Intellect and revelation.

8. "Les lois de la logique sont sacrées,—comme aussi celles des mathématiques,—car elles relèvent essentiellement de l'ontologie, qu'elles appliquent à un domaine particulier: la logique est l'ontologie de ce microcosme qu'est la raison humaine." F. Schuon, "Pas de droit sacré à l'absurdité," *Études Traditionnelles* 79/460 (Avril–Mai–Juin 1978): 59.

9. "Nous ajouterons—et c'est même ce qui import le plus—que les lois de la logique se trouvent enracinées dans la nature divine, c'est-à-dire qu'elles manifestent, dans l'esprit humain, des rapports ontologiques; la délimitation même de la logique est

extrinsèquement chose logique, sans quoi elle est arbitraire. Que la logique soit opérante en l'absence des données objectives indispensables et des qualifications subjectives, non moins nécessaires, c'est l'évidence même, et c'est ce qui réduit à néant les constructions lucifériennes des rationalistes, et aussi, sur un tout autre plan, certaines spéculations sentimentales et expéditives des théologiens." F. Schuon, "L'enigme de l'Épiclèse," *Études Traditionnelles* 79/459 (Jan.-Feb.-Mar. 1978): 7; also in the author's *Christianisme/Islam—Visions d'oeuménisme ésotérique* (in press).

10. Schuon, "Pas de droit sacré à l'absurdité," p. 52.

11. See, for example, W. C. Smith, *Faith and Belief*, Princeton, 1979, where a sharp distinction is made between faith and belief in the modern sense of the word as it is shorn of all elements of doctrinal certitude and separated from a knowledge which is rooted in the Divine. The author quite rightly distinguishes between the meaning of belief as certain knowledge in the traditional context and its reduction to conjecture and knowledge mixed with doubt in the modern world.

12. See R. Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta*, trans. R. C. Nicholson, London, 1945, p. 14.

13. In this study gnosis is always used in the sense of sapiential knowledge or wisdom, as the knowledge which unifies and sanctifies and not in a sectarian sense as related to gnosticism or in a narrow theological sense as employed by certain early Christian authors who contrasted it with *sophia*.

14. The term *jñāna* implies principal knowledge which leads to deliverance and is related etymologically to gnosis, the root *gn* or *kn* meaning knowledge in various Indo-European languages including English.

15. See A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, New York, 1943.

16. See T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, London, 1955; E. Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India*, London, 1964; F. I. Stcherbatsky, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa*, New York, 1973; and K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nāgārjuna. Siddha-Nāgārjuna's Philosophy as presented in the Mahā-prajñā pāramitā-sāstra*, Rutland, Vt., 1966.

17. "If one considers the canonical image of the Buddha, the following observation can be made: . . . if he is the supreme Knowledge, the lotus will be contemplation, with all the virtues that are implied in it." F. Schuon, *In the Tracks of Buddhism*, trans. M. Pallis, London, 1968, p. 157.

18. This "nature" could be interpreted in the Islamic tradition as *al-fiṭrah* or the primordial nature which is the nature possessed by man when he lived in the proximity of the Tree of Life and ate the fruit of unitive knowledge or wisdom and which he still carries at the center of his being.

19. H. A. Giles, *Chuang-Tzū—Taoist Philosopher and Chinese Mystic*, London, 1961, p. 119.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 127. This is the Chinese manner of stating that knowledge of principles allows man to see things *in divinis* and finally return to the Divine Origin of all things himself. This theme is also developed in many chapters of the *Tao-Te Ching*, concerning the perfect man who is characterized by knowledge of principles which is of course always combined with virtue. See C. Elorduy, *Lao-Tse—La Gnosis Taoista del Tao Te Ching*, Ona, Burgos, 1961, esp. "El hombre perfecto," pp. 53–58.

The apparent opposition of Lao-Tze to wisdom is to ostentatious "wisdom" and not knowledge as such as the verses of chap. 33, "He who knows men has wisdom—He who is self-knowing is enlightened," bear out. Lao-Tze also emphasizes the "primordial nature" of man, the "uncarved block," and the importance of "unknowing" to reach that state. For example, the verses of chap. 81 (trans. G. Feng and J. English, in *Lao-Tsu: Tao Te Ching*, New York, 1972),

*Those who know are not learned,
Those who are learned do not know.*

Here learning means the assembling of facts and worldly knowledge to which principal knowing is contrasted. That is why (*ibid.*, chap. 48)

*In the pursuit of learning, every day something is acquired.
In the pursuit of Tao, every day something is dropped.*

The "something dropped" refers to the process which is also called "unknowing" and which is central in reaching sacred knowledge as certain of the most important sapiential schools in the West, to which we shall turn shortly, have emphasized.

21. On Manichaeism see N. C. Puech, *Le Manichéisme: son fondateur, sa doctrine*, Paris, 1949.

22. On this doctrine and Zoroastrian angelology in general see A. V. W. Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies*, New York, 1928; R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan, A Zoroastrian Dilemma*, Oxford, 1955; G. Widengren, *The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God: Studies in Iranian and Manichaean Religion*, Leipzig, 1945; idem, *Die Religionen Irans*, Stuttgart, 1965; M. Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien; le problème zoroastrien et la tradition mazdéenne*, Paris, 1963; H. S. Nyberg, *Die Religionen des alten Iran*, Leipzig, 1938; and many of the works of Corbin including his *En Islam iranien*, 4 vols., Paris, 1971-72; and *Celestial Body and Spiritual Earth, from Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, trans. N. Pearson, Princeton, 1977.

23. "There are many kinds of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity and femininity are ever thus: innate wisdom and acquired wisdom. Acquired wisdom occupies the place of the masculine, and innate wisdom occupies the place of the feminine. . . . Innate wisdom without acquired wisdom is like a female without a male, who does not conceive and does not bear fruit. A man who possesses acquired wisdom, but whose innate wisdom is not perfect, is like a female who is not receptive to a male." *Aturpāt-i Ēmētān, The Wisdom of the Sasanian Sages (Dēnkard VI)*, trans. S. Shaked, Boulder, 1979, p. 103.

24. See G. von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, London, 1972.

25. See L. Schaya, *The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah*, trans. N. Pearson, London, 1971.

26. *Liqqutei Amarim [Tanya] by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi*, trans. N. Mindel, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1965, pp. 26-27.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-14.

29. Jewish esoterism also speaks in an erotic language when discussing the three *Sefirot*, *Chachma*, *Binah*, *Da'ath*, together abbreviated as *Chabad*, which are wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in both the principal, Divine Order and in the human microcosm considered in its totality. *Chachma* is considered as the father, *Binah* as the mother, and the *Da'ath* as the son born of their union. (*Da'ath* also means sexual union, indicating the symbolic relation between the ecstasy of sexual union and gnosis).

"*Chachma* is called *Abba* (Father), and *Binah* is called *Imma* (Mother). Metaphorically speaking, the seed of *Abba* is implanted in the womb of *Imma*, and there the rudimentary plant of the seed is developed, expanded, externalised, and informed. *Da'ath* is called *Ben* (Son), i.e., the offspring of this union of *Chachma* and *Binah*." Rabbi Jacob Immanuel Sebochet, *Introduction to the English Translation of IGERETH HAKODESH*, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1968, p. 35.

30. F. Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, trans. D. M. Matheson, London, 1963, chap. 1; and S. H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities in Islam*, London, 1980, chap. 1. We have dealt extensively with the Islamic conception of knowledge and the central role of intelligence as the means of access to the Divinity in many of our other writings including *Science and Civilization in Islam*, Cambridge, Mass., 1968; and *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, London-Boulder, 1978.

31. See F. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, Leiden, 1970, where this theme is treated from a scholarly rather than a metaphysical point of view but with much worthwhile documentation. Rosenthal, looking as a historian upon the meaning of knowledge in the Islamic perspective as reflected in the sayings of the Prophet, writes, "In the Prophet's view of the world, 'knowledge' which in its totality is a matter of deepest concern to him consists of two principal parts. There is human knowledge, that is, a secular knowledge of an elementary or more

advanced character and a religious human knowledge; the latter constitutes the highest development of knowledge attainable to man. . . . But in addition to human knowledge both secular and religious, there also exists a divine knowledge. It is basically identical with human knowledge, still, it is somehow of a higher order both quantitatively and qualitatively. The most important features of these aspects of knowledge are felt and respected by the Prophet as interlocking and interdependent." Ibid., p. 31.

On the Islamic conception of knowledge see also 'Abd al-Halim Mahmūd, "Islam and Knowledge," *Al-Azhar Academy of Islamic Research: First Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research*, Cairo, 1971, pp. 407-53.

32. The relation between Greek and Hindu wisdom as compared and studied by such a figure as A. K. Coomaraswamy is principal and not merely historical even if certain historical links may have existed between them as asserted by many recent authors such as J. W. Sedlar, *India and the Greek World*, Totowa, N.J., 1980.

33. There are exceptional studies of much value which have remained fully aware of the link between Greek philosophy and various dimensions of Greek religion. See, for example, F. Cornford, *Principium sapientiae: the Origins of Greek Philosophical Thought*, Cambridge, 1952; idem, *From Religion to Philosophy: a Study in the Origins of Western Speculation*, New York, 1957; and idem, *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays*, Cambridge, 1967.

34. V. 12 on from the King James Version.

35. Quoted by F. Schuon in *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, trans. D. M. Matheson, London, 1953, p. 153.

"If the life of the spirit is the illumination of knowledge and if it is love of God which produces this illumination, then it is right to say: there is nothing higher than love of God." St. Maximus the Confessor, *Centuries of Charity*. And "Holy knowledge draws the purified spirit, even as the magnet, by a natural force it possesses, draws iron." Evagrius of Ponticum, *Centuries of Charity* (both cited from Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, p. 153). The chap. "Love and Knowledge" in *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts* contains the essence of the meaning of the way of knowledge or the sapiential path in Christian spirituality as well as in other traditions.

36. There is no doubt that certain forms of Christology rejected by Western Christianity during later centuries in order to combat various types of theological heresy, had a profound metaphysical significance when interpreted not only theologically and literally but metaphysically and symbolically. See F. Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, trans. P. N. Townsend, New York, 1975, esp. pp. 96ff.

37. See A. Feuillet, *Le Christ sagesse de Dieu*, Paris, 1966; and E. E. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity*, Grand Rapids, 1978, esp. pp. 45ff.

38. See, for example, J. Dupont, *La Connaissance religieuse dans les Epîtres de Saint Paul*, Paris, 1960.

39. On Clement and his gnostic doctrines see T. Camelot, *Foi et gnose. Introduction à l'étude de la connaissance mystique chez Clément d'Alexandrie*, Paris, 1945; J. Daniélou, *Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée. t. II: Message évangélique et culture hellénistique aux II^e et III^e siècles*, Paris, 1961; J. Munck, *Untersuchungen über Klemens von Alexandria*, Copenhagen/Stuttgart, 1933; E. F. Osborn, *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria*, Cambridge, 1954; and W. Völker, *Der wahre Gnostiker Clemens Alexandrianus*, Berlin, 1952. In this as in other similar instances in this book, the bibliographical references do not mean to be exhaustive but are simply a guide for those who wish to pursue further study of the figure in question. Needless to say, there is a vast literature on Clement, much of which is indicated in the bibliographies contained in the scholarly works cited above.

40. Of course Intellect is used in this context and in fact throughout this work in its original sense of *intellectus* or *nous* and as distinct from reason or *ratio* which is its reflection.

41. "He who is already *pure in heart*, not because of the commandments, but for the sake of knowledge by itself,—that man is a friend of God." *Clement of Alexandria. Miscellanies Book VII*, introd., translation and notes by F. J. A. Hort, London, 1902, p. 31.

42. "It is our business then to prove that the gnostic alone is holy and pious, worshipping the true God as befits him; and the worship which befits God includes both loving God and being loved by him. To the gnostic every kind of pre-eminence seems honourable in proportion to its worth. In the world of sense rulers and parents and elders generally are to be honoured; in matters of teaching, the most ancient philosophy and the earliest prophecy; in the spiritual world, that which is elder in origin, the Son, the beginning and first-fruit of all existing things, himself timeless and without beginning; from whom the gnostic believes that he receives the knowledge of the ultimate cause, the Father of the universe, the earliest and most beneficent of all existences, no longer reported by word of mouth, but worshipped and adored, as is his due, with silent worship and holy awe; who was manifested indeed by the Lord so far as it was possible for the learners to understand, but apprehended by those whom the Lord has elected for knowledge, those, says the apostle, who have their senses exercised." Library of Christian Classics, vol. II, *Alexandrian Christianity*, selected and trans. J. E. L. Oulton and H. Chadwick, London, 1954.

43. *Stromateis* IV.6.

44. On Origen see W. R. Inge, *Origen*, London, 1946; M. Harl, *Origène et la fonction révélatrice du verbe incarné*, Paris, 1958; H. de Lubac, *Histoire et Esprit, l'intelligence de l'Écriture d'après Origène*, Paris, 1950; R. A. Greer (ed.), *Origen*, New York, 1979; J. Oulton and H. Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity; Selected Translations of Clement and Origen*, Philadelphia, 1954; H. Urs von Balthasar, *Geist und Feuer. Ein Aufbau aus seinen Schriften*, Salzburg, 1951; and E. R. Redepenning, *Origenes. Eine Darstellung seines Lebens und seiner Lehre*, 2 vols., Bonn, 1966.

45. "Thus, just as a human being is said to be made up of body, soul and spirit, so also is the Sacred Scripture, which has been granted by God's gracious dispensation for man's salvation." From *First Principles*, book 4, cited in Greer, op. cit., p. 182.

46. "And if anyone reads the revelations made to John, how can he fail to be amazed at how great an obscurity of ineffable mysteries is present here? It is evident that even those who cannot understand what lies hidden in them nevertheless understand that something lies hidden. And indeed, the letters of the apostles, which do seem to some clearer, are they not filled with profound ideas that through them, as through some small opening, the brightness of an immense light seems to be poured forth for those who can understand the meaning of divine wisdom?" Ibid., p. 181.

47. See de Lubac, op. cit. Origen devotes much of his *First Principles* to the question of the Logos in its relation to the attainment of knowledge by man. ". . . das Christliche Leben sich für Origenes als eine fortschneitende Läuterung und darauffolgende Erkenntnis formt." H. Koch, *Pronoia und Paideusis*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1932, p. 84. Koch gives an analysis of Origen's "theory of knowledge" in pp. 49-62 of this work.

48. "Le logos est présent, en l'homme, chez qui il est l'intelligence. Parce qu'il se trouve à la fois en Dieu et en l'homme, comme en deux extrémités, il peut les relier et il le fait, d'autant mieux qu'il est également entre les deux, comme un intermédiaire de connaissance. Il joue le rôle que joue la lumière pour la vision des objets: la lumière rend l'objet lumineux et elle permet à l'oeil de voir, elle est lumière de l'objet et lumière du sujet, intermédiaire de vision. De la même façon, le logos est à la fois intelligibilité de Dieu et l'agent d'intellection de l'homme, médiateur de connaissance." Harl, op. cit., p. 94.

49. Origen, *The Song of Songs—Commentary and Homilies*, trans. and annotated by R. P. Lawson, London, 1957, p. 61.

50. "In as much as man is endowed with an intellect, he is by nature a being illumined by God." E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, New York, 1960, p. 80.

51. "Thus God does not take the place of our intellect when we think the truth. His illumination is needed only to make our intellects capable of thinking the truth, and this by virtue of a natural order of things expressly established by Him." Ibid., p. 79. This quotation also shows that already in Augustinian epistemology the sacred character of knowledge is perceived in a somewhat more indirect manner than what we find in the "gnostic" perspective of the Alexandrian fathers.

52. In describing the sapiential dimension in Christianity one could practically confine oneself to Dionysius alone, seeing how important his teachings were. But from the point of view of this cursory study it suffices to emphasize the significance of his well-known doctrines whose development can be seen in Erigena, Eckhart, Cusa, and so many other later Western masters of sapience.

On Dionysius, so unjustly referred to as pseudo-Dionysius as if to detract from the significance of his works through such an appellation, see M. de Gandillac (ed.), *Oeuvres complètes du pseudo-Denys d'Aréopagite*, Paris, 1943; R. Roques, *Structures théologiques de la gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor*, Paris, 1962; idem, *L'Univers dionysien. Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le pseudo-Denys*, Paris, 1954; W. Voelker, *Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Ar.*, Wiesbaden, 1954; and A. M. Greeley, *Ecstasy: A Way of Knowing*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1974.

53. There is a great amount of literature on Erigena in various European languages. See, for example, R. Roques, *Libres sentiers vers l'Erigénisme*, Rome, 1975; G. Allegro, G. Scoto Eriugena—*Antropologia*, Rome, 1976, esp. "Intelletto umano et intelletto angelico," pp. 62ff.; idem, G. Scoto Eriugena, *Fede e ragione*, Rome, 1974; J. J. O'Meara and L. Bieler (eds.), *The Mind of Erigena*, Dublin, 1973; E. Jeanneau (trans.), Jean Scot, *Homelie sur le prologue de Jean*, Paris, 1969, which shows the degree of devotion of Erigena to John whom he almost divinizes as being "superhuman"; G. Kaldenbach, *Die Kosmologie des Johannes Scottus Erigena*, Munich, 1963; G. Bonafede, *Scoto Eriugena*, Palermo, 1969; C. Albanese, *Il Pensiero di Giovanni Eriugena*, Messina, 1929; H. Bett, *Johannes Scotus Erigena, A Study in Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1925; A. Gardner, *Studies in John The Scot*, New York, 1900; M. S. Taillandier, *Scot Erigène et la philosophie scholastique*, Strasbourg-Paris, 1843; and T. Gregory, *Giovanni Scoto Eriugena, Tre studi*, Florence, 1963.

54. See, for example, W. Seul, *Die Gotteserkenntnis bei Johannes Skotus Eriugena*, Bonn, 1932; and A. Schneider, *Die Erkenntnislehre des Johannes Erigena*, Berlin and Leipzig, 1923, both of which give a rather rationalistic interpretation of Erigena reducing Erigena's doctrines to a "harmless" Neoplatonist influence. Later studies have emphasized his Christian character somewhat more but nevertheless still fail for the most part to see in him a crystallization of something essential to the sapiential dimension of Christianity.

55. "Spesso ci si è cruduti costretti a doner scegliere una posizione di fronte alla celebre riduzione, o identificazione, che Scoto compie fra 'vera religio' e 'vera philosophia'." Allegro, G. Scoto Eriugena, *Fede e ragione*, p. 63.

56. "C'est la sagesse, la sapience, qui est cette vertu commune à l'homme et à l'ange; c'est elle qui donne à l'esprit la pure contemplation, et lui fait apercevoir l'Éternel, l'Immuable." Taillandier, op. cit., p. 84.

57. "All the natural (liberal arts) concur in signifying Christ in a symbolic manner, (these arts) in whose limits is included the totality of Divine Scripture." *Expositiones super ierarchiam caelestiam sancti Dionysii*, ed. H. J. Floss in *Patrologia Latina* 122, I, 140A. Erigena states that in the same way that *nous* is an image of God, *artes* is an image of Christ. See Roques, *Libres sentiers*, p. 62.

58. "When [our reason] possesses the presence of the Word of God, it knows the intelligible realities and God Himself, but not by its own means, rather by grace of the Divine Light that is infused in him." Jeanneau (trans.), op. cit., p. 266.

59. See Allegro, G. Scoto Eriugena, *Fede e ragione*, "Il mondo come teofania," pp. 285ff. This relation between the sapiential perspective and interest in the study of nature as the theater of divine activity is to be seen throughout the whole sapiential tradition in the West and is one of the very few principles in which all of the Western esoteric schools of later centuries, even those whose knowledge remains partial, are in accord.

60. "Et puisque Dieu se crée dans sa manifestation, celle-ci se crée elle-même sous la motion divine en exprimant Dieu et elle-même. Dieu passe du Rien au Tout en suscitant les causes primordiales et l'esprit. Indivisiblement, l'esprit crée tire de cette nuit illuminatrice le déploiement qui le fait esprit, c'est-à-dire conscience du tout et de soi-même. Il y a une *noophanie* à l'intérieur de la théophanie. Si bien qu'on peut dire à la fois que Dieu se pense dans les esprits qu'il illumine et que cette pensée est leur auto-

réalisation." J. Trouillard, "Erigène et la théophanie créatrice," in O'Meara and Bieler (eds.), op. cit., p. 99.

61. Following the dictum of Dionysius, *Cognito earum, quae sunt, ea quae sunt, est*.

62. See Bett, op. cit., p. 86.

63. See R. Roques, "Remarques sur la signification de Jean Scot Erigène," in *Miscellanea A. Combes*, Rome, 1967.

64. There is no doubt that both St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas were metaphysicians, properly speaking, as well as theologians as can be seen when they are treated metaphysically and not only theologically by a figure such as A. K. Coomaraswamy. But the fact remains that their purely sapiential teachings (esp. that of St. Thomas) became more or less veiled in a theology which, although of great value, also helped create an intellectual climate in which gnosis appeared to be of less direct concern and in fact less and less accessible to the extent that during the Renaissance many figures had to search outside the prevalent Christian theological orthodoxy for the kind of wisdom or gnosis which had been more accessible within the Western Christian tradition during earlier centuries of Christian history. It seems that for St. Thomas reason impregnated and supported by faith was of greater consequence than intelligence in its sacramental function. St. Thomas was certainly not opposed to intellection although he did not consider in a central manner the role and function of the intelligence as a sacrament because of his adoption of Aristotelianism which counters a penetrating and interiorizing intelligence with an exteriorized and exteriorizing will.

"In the case of the Stagirite, the intelligence is penetrating but the tendency of the will is exteriorizing, in conformity moreover with the cosmolatry of the majority of the Greeks; it is this that enabled Saint Thomas to support the religious thesis regarding the 'natural' character of the intelligence, so called because it is neither revealed nor sacramental, and the reduction of intelligence to reason illuminated by faith, the latter alone being granted the right to be 'supernatural'." F. Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, pp. 174-75.

As for St. Bonaventure he remains closer to the Augustinian position emphasizing illumination and that "cognition," to use his own terminology, which for him is the sixth and crowning stage of the journey of the mind to God even beyond the realm of the contemplation of God as Being to the Divine Darkness. See St. Bonaventure, *The Mind's Journey to God—Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, trans. L. S. Cunningham, Chicago, 1975.

In any case, any complete study of Christian sapiential teachings would have to include certainly the theology of St. Bonaventure and also those of St. Thomas, Duns Scotus, and others which this more cursory survey has to leave aside. Another reason for our passing rapidly over medieval theology is the fact that these schools are well-known in comparison with the more directly gnostic teachings.

65. On Eckhart's doctrine of knowledge as related to the sacred see E. Heinrich, *Verklärung und Erlösung im Vedānta, bei Meister Eckhart und bei Schelling*, Munich, 1961, esp. "Von der Verklärung und von der Einung mit der Gottheit," pp. 80ff.; J. Kopper, *Die Metaphysik Meister Eckharts*, Saarbrücken, 1955, esp. pp. 73-121; J. Hammerich, *Über das Wesen der Götterung bei Meister Eckhart*, Speyer, 1939; H. Schlötermann, "Logos und Ratio, Die platonische Kontinuität in der deutschen Philosophie des Meister Eckhart," in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 3 (1949): 219-39; O. Spann, "Meister Eckharts mystische Erkenntnislehre," in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 3 (1949): 339-55; G. Stephenson, *Gottheit und Gott in der spekulativen Mystik Meister Eckharts*, Bonn, 1954, esp. pp. 73-96; V. Lossky, *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart*, Paris, 1960; J. M. Clark, *Meister Eckhart. An Introduction to the Study of His Works*, New York, 1957; E. Soudek, *Meister Eckhart*, Stuttgart, 1973; C. Clark, *The Great Human Mystics*, Oxford, 1949; V. Brandstätter and E. Sulek, *Meister Eckharts mystische Philosophie*, Graz, 1974; and F. Brunner, *Maître Eckhart, introduction, suivi de textes traduits pour la première fois du latin en français*, Paris, 1969, which contains an exceptional treatment of Meister Eckhart from the point of view of traditional metaphysics or the *scientia sacra* with which we shall deal later.

The extent of recent interest in Eckhart can be gauged from the number of current works on the master such as C. F. Kelley, *Meister Eckhart on Divine Knowledge*, New Haven, 1977; R. Shurmann, *Meister Eckhart: Mystic & Philosopher*, Bloomington, Indiana, 1978; M. C. Walshe, *Meister Eckhart: Sermons and Treatises*, London, 1980; and many new translations or editions of older translations such as the well-known one by F. Pfeiffer as well as numerous comparative studies which involve him and different masters of Oriental wisdom. An incomparable and masterly work of this kind is A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, which contains an exposition of the metaphysics of art of Meister Eckhart and the traditional doctrines issuing from Hinduism.

66. St. Thomas had used this term in Latin (*scintilla animae*) before Eckhart, but this concept plays a more central role in Eckhart esp. as far as epistemology is concerned.

67. See V. Lossky, op. cit., p. 180, where one can find a masterly analysis of many Eckhartian theses.

68. E. Cassirer, who was one of the major influences in the revival of interest in Cusa, in fact believed that Cusa tried to create a third way or school beside the Scholastic and humanist schools which were combating each other during the Renaissance. See Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, Leipzig, 1927.

69. On Cusa see, E. Van Steenberghe, *Le Cardinal Nicholas de Cues*, Paris, 1920; H. Bett, *Nicholas of Cusa*, London, 1932, esp. chap. 5 where his theory of knowledge is discussed but somewhat rationalistically; P. de Gandillac, *La Philosophie de Nicholas de Cues*, Paris, 1941; A. Bonetti, *La ricerca metafisica nel pensiero de Nicolo Cusano*, Brescia, 1973; N. Herold, *Menschliche Perspektive und Wahrheit*, Munster, 1975; A. Bruntrup, *Können und Sein*, Munich, 1973; G. Schneider, *Gott-das Nichtandere, Untersuchungen zum metaphysischen Grunde bei Nikolaus von Kues*, Munster, 1970; K. Jacobi, *Die Methode der Cusanischen Philosophie*, Munich, 1969; N. Henke, *Der Abbildbegriff in der Erkenntnislehre des Nikolaus von Kues*, Munster, 1967; and A. Lubke, *Nikolaus von Kues, Kirchenfürst zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Munich, 1968.

70. See E. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, New York, 1937.

71. See, for example, H. Oberman, "The Theology of Nominalism," *Harvard Theological Review* 53 (1960): 47-79.

72. J. P. Dolan (ed.), *Unity and Reform—Selected Writings of Nicholas of Cusa*, Chicago, 1962, p. 105.

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

74. This is treated extensively by de Gandillac in his work cited in n. 69 above.

75. "Just as any knowledge of the taste of something we have never tasted is quite empty until we do taste it, so the taste of this wisdom cannot be acquired by hearsay but by one's actually touching it with his internal sense, and then he will bear witness not of what he has heard but what he has experimentally tasted in himself." From *De sapientia*, quoted in Dolan, op. cit., pp. 111-12.

76. "Wisdom is the infinite and never failing food of life upon which our spirit lives eternally since it is not able to love anything other than wisdom and truth. Every intellect seeks after being and its being is living; its living is to understand; its understanding is nurtured on wisdom and truth. Thus it is that the understanding that does not taste clear wisdom is like an eye in the darkness. It is an eye but it does not see because it is not in light. And because it lacks a delectable life which for it consists in seeing, it is in pain and torment and this is death rather than life. So too, the intellect that turns to anything other than the food of eternal wisdom will find itself outside of life, bound up in the darkness of ignorance, rather dead than alive. This is the interminable torment, to have an intellect and never to understand. For it is only the eternal wisdom in which every intellect can understand." Dolan, op. cit., pp. 108-9.

77. See A. Conrad, "La docte ignorance cusaïne," *Etudes Traditionnelles* 78/458 (Oct.-Dec. 1977): 164-71.

78. See F. Schuon, "Le problème de l'évangélisme," in his *Christianisme/Islam*, chap. 3.

79. It is of interest to note that this theosophy survived during the past four centuries almost exclusively in Lutheran areas or those influenced by Lutheranism. The German Lutheran mystic Tersteegen in fact distinguishes clearly between Christian mystics and theosophers, claiming all theosophers to be mystics but not all mystics to be theosophers "whose spirit has explored the depths of the Divinity under Divine guidance and whose spirit has known such marvels thanks to an infallible vision." From his *Kurzer Bericht von der Mystik* quoted by Schuon (ibid.).

80. The work of J. S. Bach is a perfect example of this type of music in which the deepest yearning of the European soul for the sacred seems to have taken refuge in an age when the other art forms had become so depleted of the sense of the sacred. Even the *Coffee Cantata* of Bach is of a more religious character than many a modern setting of the Psalms to music. A work like the *B Minor Mass* has an archetectonic structure impregnated with a powerful piety and sense of the sacred which make it very akin and conformable to the sapiential perspective. On the metaphysics of musical polyphony and counterpoint in which Bach was a peerless master see M. Pallis, "Metaphysics of Musical Harmony," in his *A Buddhist Spectrum*, London, 1980, pp. 121ff.

81. "Pour Böhme, la Sagesse est une Vierge éternelle, symbole de Dieu, reflet du Ternaire, image dans laquelle ou par laquelle le Seigneur s'exprime en dévoilant la richesse infinie de la virtualité. Dans le miroir de la Sagesse la volonté divine trace le plan, la figure de son action créatrice. Elle 'imagine' dans ce miroir, acte qui représente l'acte magique par excellence. Ainsi s'accomplit le mystère d'exprimer, de traduire, dans des images finies la pensée infinie de Dieu." A. Faivre, *L'Ésotérisme au XVIII^e siècle en France et en Allemagne*, Paris, 1973, p. 38.

On Boehme see A. Koyré, *La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme*, Paris, 1929; E. Benz, "Über die Leiblichkeit des Geistigen zur Theologie der Leiblichkeit bei Jacob Böhme," in S. H. Nasr (ed.), *Mélanges offerts à Henry Corbin*, Paris-Tehran, 1977, pp. 451-520; Benz, *Der Vollkommene Mensch nach Jacob Boehme*, Stuttgart, 1937; *Revue Hermès*, (ed. J. Masui) 3 (1964-65), containing articles on Boehme; R. M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, London, 1914, chaps. 9-11; H. T. Martensen, *Jacob Boehme: His Life and Teaching*, trans. T. Rhys Evans, London, 1885; H. Tesch, *Vom Dreifachen Leben, Bietigheim/Württ.*, 1971; G. Wehr, *Jacob Böhme in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Hamburg, 1971; V. Weiss, *Die Gnosis Jakob Böhmes*, Zurich, 1955; V. Hans Grunsky, *Jacob Boehme*, Stuttgart, 1956; H. H. Brinton, *The Mystic Will*, New York, 1930; and A. J. Penny, *Studies in Jacob Böhme*, London, 1912.

82. Boehme deals with this theme esp. in chap. 14 of his *De signatura rerum*.

83. According to A. Koyré, the desire for the Eternal is "aussi le gage de la possibilité d'atteindre à une connaissance parfaite de Dieu, et de le connaître à la fois dans la nature par laquelle il s'exprime et dans l'âme ou il habite, virtuellement au moins." Koyré, *La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme*, p. 454.

84. This is the specifically Baaderian interpretation of Boehme, but certainly implicit in his writings.

85. Boehme treats this question in his *Mysterium Magnum* chap. XXXV, 60. The idea of a "natural language" of a sacred character can also be found in other sapiential works of the period such as *Confessio Fraternitatis der Hochlöblichen Bruderschaft von Rosenkreutz*. See Koyré, op. cit., p. 457, n. 4.

86. "When God recognizes and views Himself with holy delight, He apprehends not only Himself, but also all His contents—the 'fullness' of His universe. This fullness, which is best thought of as a universe of ideas, streaming forth in multiplicity from the Father, is gathered by the Son into intellectual unity, and is shaped by the Spirit into a world of ideas, distinct from God, and yet inseparable from Him. We have here what Boehme calls wisdom." H. L. Martensen, *Jacob Boehme*, trans. T. Rhys Evans, new ed. and notes by S. Hobbhouse, London, 1949, p. 106.

87. On the Cambridge Platonists see J. Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century*, 2 vols., London and Edinburgh, 1872; E. A. Burt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science*, London, 1925; F. J. Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists*, London, 1926; E. Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in*

England, trans. J. P. Pettegrove, Edinburgh, 1953; C. E. Raven, *Natural Religion and Christian Theology*, Cambridge, 1953; S. Hutin, *Henry More, Essai sur les doctrines théosophiques chez les Platoniciens de Cambridge*, Hildensheim, 1966, which treats this school more from a, properly speaking, sapiential rather than merely philosophical and rational point of view; and J. A. Passmore, *Ralph Cudworth*, Cambridge, 1951, where an extensive bibliography of earlier works is provided.

On the theme of Henry More's *spissitudo spiritualis* in comparison with doctrines developed by his Muslim contemporary Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī see H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, vol. 4, p. 158. See also the "prélude à la deuxième édition" of Corbin's *Corps Spirituel et terre céleste—de l'iran mazdéen à l'iran shī'ite*, Paris, 1979.

88. "Were I indeed to define Divinity, I should rather call it a *Divine life*, than a *Divine science*; it being something rather to be understood by a *Spiritual sensation*, than by any *Verbal description*." John Smith, "A Praefatory Discourse concerning the True Way or Method of Attaining to Divine Knowledge," in E. T. Campagnac, *The Cambridge Platonists*, Oxford, 1961, p. 80.

It is interesting to note that despite his insistence on the primacy of Divine Knowledge, John Smith accepted Cartesian mechanism—distinguishing "science" from "wisdom"—and opposed Cudworth and More on this central issue demonstrating not only differences of view which existed among the Cambridge Platonists but also the partial character of the traditional knowledge which this school possessed and expounded. On the differences among the Cambridge Platonists, esp. concerning Descartes who had been read by all of them, see J. E. Saveson, "Differing Reactions to Descartes Among the Cambridge Platonists," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21/4 (Oct.–Dec. 1960): 560–67.

89. "Divinity indeed is a true Efflux from the Eternal light, which, like the Sunbeams, does not only enlighten, but heat and enliven; and therefore our Saviour hath in his *Beatitudes* connext Purity of heart with the Beatifical Vision." Campagnac, op. cit., p. 80.

90. Campagnac, op. cit., p. 96.

91. On Angelus Silesius (Johannes Scheffler) see J. Baruzi, *Création religieuse et pensée contemplative*, 2^e part.: *Angelus Silesius*, Paris, 1951; E. Suzini, *Le Pèlerin Chérubique*, 2 vols., Paris, 1964; G. Ellinger, *Angelus Silesius. Ein Lebensbild*, Munich, 1927; H. Plard, *La Mystique d'Angelus Silesius*, Paris, 1943; Von Willibald Köhler, *Angelus Silesius (Johannes Scheffler)*, Munich, 1929; J. Trautmann, *Von wesentlichem Leben: Eine Auswahl aus dem Cherubinischen Wandersmann des Angelus Silesius*, Hamburg, 1946; J. L. Sammons, *Angelus Silesius*, New York, 1967; and G. Rossmann, *Das königliche Leben: Besinnung auf Angelus Silesius*, Zurich, 1956.

92. "Il s'agit, dans son livre, d'un retour à Dieu, et d'abord par la connaissance. C'est le sens du titre, devenu le sien à partir de la seconde édition (1675); *Der Cherubische Wandermann*, où sont réunies l'idée d'une marche vers Dieu, et la connaissance, ou plus exactement, la sagesse comme principe de cette marche." H. Plard, *La Mystique d'Angelus Silesius*, Paris, 1943.

93. How remarkably close is the verse of Silesius,

*Stirb, ehe du noch stirbst, damit du nichte darfst sterben
Wenn du nun sterben sollst; sonst möchtest du verderben.*

*Die now before thou diest; that thou mayst not die
When thou shalt die, else shalt thou die eternally.*

to the verses of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī

تا نباشد زحمت جان دادنت نی چنان مرگی که در گوری روی	رو بمرای خواه قبل از مردنت آچنان مرگی که نه نوری روی
--	---

O man go die before thou diest
 So that thou shalt not have to suffer death when thou shalt die.
 Such a death that thou wilt enter unto light
 Not a death through which thou wilt enter unto the grave.

These and other amazingly similar utterances of Silesius and Sufi poets point not to historical borrowings but common archetypes. They indicate similar types of spirituality within the members of the Abrahamic family of religions.

94. J. Bilger, *Alexandrines, Translated from the Cherubischer Wandermann of Angelus Silesius 1657*, North Montpelier, N.Y., 1944, p. 33.

95. Angelus Silesius, *The Cherubic Wanderer*, selections trans. W. Trask, New York, 1953, p. 27.

96. Angelus Silesius, *A Selection from the Rhymes of a German Mystic*, trans. P. Carus, Chicago, 1909, p. 163.

97. Silesius, *The Cherubic Wanderer*, p. 60.

98. Silesius, *A Selection*, p. 152. This rather jarring anthropomorphic imagery must of course be understood in its esoteric and symbolic sense, signifying both union and ecstasy which characterize the state of the intellect when it attains knowledge of the sacred at its highest level.

99. It is certainly paradoxical that the eighteenth century which, along with the period that was to follow, must be characterized as the age of darkness from the sapiential point of view should be identified with "light," this age being known as the Enlightenment, *l'âge des lumières*, *illuminismo*, or *Aufklärung* in various European languages. If in a hypothetical situation an Oriental sage such as Śāṅkara or Ibn 'Arabī were to review the later history of Western thought, perhaps few facts would amaze him more than seeing men like Diderot and Condorcet called "enlightened." He would also be surprised that some (but of course not all) of those figures who were called *les frères illuminés* and who belonged to various "esoteric" and "occultist" groups were opposed to theism not from the point of view of the Advaita or the "transcendent unity of being" (*wahdat al-wujūd*), which "comprehends" the theistic position, but from the perspective of a deism which was practically agnostic if not outright atheistic. See E. Zolla, "Che Cosa Potrebbe Essere un Nuova Illuminismo" in his *Che Cos'è la Tradizione*, Milan, 1971.

It is, however, important to note also that careful studies carried out only recently have shown that there were a large number of figures in the eighteenth century who, although belonging to this period in time, stood opposed to the rationalism of the age. This group embraced many figures ranging all the way from real gnostics and theosophers who possessed authentic esoteric knowledge to different kinds of occultists who were to be the forerunners of the better known occultist groups of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. No one in recent years has done as much as A. Faivre to make better known the teachings of these marginal but important figures of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. See his *L'Ésotérisme au XVIII^e siècle en France et en Allemagne*, Paris, 1973; *Kirchberger et l'illuminisme du XVIII^e siècle*, The Hague, 1966; *Epochen der Naturmystik: Hermetische Tradition im wissenschaftlichen Fortschritt*, Berlin, 1977; and "De Saint-Martin à Baader, le 'Magikon' de Kleuker," in *Revue d'Études Germaniques*, April-June 1968, pp. 161-90. See also R. Le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie occultiste au XVIII^e siècle et l'Ordre des Elus-Coens*, Paris, 1928; idem, *La Franc-Maçonnerie occultiste et templière aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles*, Paris, 1970; E. Benz, *Adam, der Mythos von Urmenschen*, Munich, 1955; "L'illuminisme au XVIII^e siècle," ed. R. Amadou, in *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques*, Paris, 1960; and H. Schneider, *Quest for Mysteries*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1947.

100. See A. Faivre, *Eckartshausen et la théosophie chrétienne*, Paris, 1969. Eckartshausen was not only influential in Russia but even left his effect upon such more recent occultists as Eliphas Lévi and Papus.

101. There is a vast literature on Swedenborg. See, for example, E. Benz, *Swedenborg, Naturforscher und Seher*, Munich, 1948; and H. Corbin, "Herméneutique spirituelle comparée (I. Swedenborg—II.) Gnose ismaélienne," in *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 33 (1964):

71–176, where an interesting morphological study is made of Swedenborg's hermeneutics and that of certain Ismā'īlī exegetes who sought to reveal the inner significance of the Quran.

102. On Newton and alchemy see B. Dobbs, *The Foundations of Newton's Alchemy; or, "The Hunting of the Greene Lyon,"* Cambridge, 1976. Although the interest of the author is more scholarly and historical than philosophical and metaphysical, she has provided in this study much material on Newton's alchemy not available before including a list of Newton's considerable alchemical writings in Appendix A, pp. 235–48.

On Newton's alchemy see also P. M. Rattansi, "Newton's Alchemical Studies," in A. Debus (ed.), *Science, Medicine and Society in the Renaissance. Essays to Honor Walter Pagel*, 2 vols., New York, 1972, II, pp. 167–82.

103. Concerning Newton's profound interest in Boehme see S. Hutin, *Les Disciples anglais de Jacob Böhme*, Paris, 1960; also K. R. Popp, *Jakob Böhme und Isaac Newton*, Leipzig, 1935. The thesis that Boehme has influenced Newton has been refuted by H. McLachlan, *Sir Isaac Newton: Theological Manuscripts*, Liverpool, 1950, pp. 20–21, on the basis of lack of any substantial extracts from Boehme's writings in Newton's theological works. His view has also been espoused by Dobbs in op. cit., pp. 9–10. On the general philosophical level of the meaning of alchemy, however, one can see a relation between them and the thesis of S. Hutin and others who claim a link between Boehme and Newton cannot be totally refuted through the lack of either citations of names or quotations of texts or even the fact that Newton had another side very different from Boehme.

104. It is remarkable how little of the writings of this important figure is available in the English language. On von Baader see H. Fischer-Barnicol (ed.), *Franz von Baader vom Sinn der Gesellschaft*, Köln, 1966; M. Pulver, *Schriften Franz von Baaders*, Leipzig, 1921; E. Susini, *Franz von Baader et le romantisme mystique*, 3 vols., Paris, 1942; J. Glaassen, *Franz von Baaders Leben und theosophische Ideen*, 2 vols., Stuttgart, 1886.

105. See E. Klamroth, *Die Weltanschauung Franz von Baaders in ihrem Gegensatz zu Kant*, Berlin, 1965. To Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*, von Baader was to answer *cogitor, ergo cogito et sum* ("I am thought [by God], therefore I think and I am"), placing God's knowledge of man as the source of both his being and intelligence. See F. Schuon, *Logic and Transcendence*, p. 44. For von Baader knowledge does not begin with *cogito* but with God's knowledge of us.

106. This doctrine is found especially in his two major works *Fermenta cognitionis* and *Spekulative Dogmatik*.

Von Baader also considered religion as a sacred science and sacred science as religion. For him religion should be based on knowledge of a sacred character and not only sentiments. Likewise, science should be ultimately rooted in the Divine Intellect which would make of it religion in the vastest sense of this term. "Baader affirme que la religion doit devenir une science, et la science une religion; qu'il faut savoir pour croire, croire pour savoir." A. Faivre, *L'Esotérisme au XVIII^e siècle*, p. 113.

107. See Susini, op. cit., esp. vols. 2–3, pp. 225ff.

108. The influence of Rosmini was to continue in Italy until recent times among such Catholic thinkers as F. Sciacca, but he is hardly known in the English-speaking world and remains like von Baader and similar philosophers a peripheral figure in a world where philosophy became reduced to rationalism and finally irrationalism.

109. The root of knowledge is of course the same as the Sanskrit *jñāna* as well as the Greek *gnosis* which mean both knowledge and sapiential wisdom. The distinction made in later Greek thought and also by the church fathers between *gnosis* and *epistēmē* already marks the separation of knowledge from its sacred source. Otherwise knowledge in English or *Erkenntnis* in German containing the root *kn* should also reflect the meaning of *gnosis* as *jñāna* does in Sanskrit, a root which implies at once knowledge and coming into being as the word *genesis* implies.

110. "Le 'miracle grec', c'est en fait la substitution de la raison à l'Intellect, du fait au Principe, du phénomène à l'Idée, de l'accident à la Substance, de la forme à l'Essence, de l'homme à Dieu, et cela dans l'art aussi bien que dans la pensée." F. Schuon, *Le Soufisme voile et quintessence*, Paris, 1980, p. 106.

111. "Le véritable miracle grec, si miracle il y a,—et dans ce cas il serait apparenté au 'miracle hindou',—c'est la métaphysique doctrinale et la logique méthodique, providentiellement utilisées par les Sémites monothéistes." *Ibid.*, p. 106.

112. See S. H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, Albany, N.Y., 1975, chaps. 1 and 2.

113. On the issues involved in this "dialogue" see F. Schuon, "Dialogue between Hellenists and Christians," in *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, trans. Lord Northbourne, London, 1965, pp. 58–71.

114. Of course Hellenism triumphed in another dimension by surviving as a doctrinal language and way of thinking and looking upon the world at the heart of Christianity itself.

"Like most inter-traditional polemics, the dialogue in which Hellenism and Christianity were in opposition was to a great extent unreal. The fact that each was right on a certain plane—or in a particular 'spiritual dimension'—resulted in each emerging as victor in its own way: Christianity by imposing itself on the whole Western world, and Hellenism by surviving in the heart of Christianity and conferring on Christian intellectuality an indelible imprint." *Ibid.*, p. 58.

It would be worthwhile to note that, while Western Christianity opposed so strongly what it considered as Greek "paganism," in Western Asia in certain Christian circles during early centuries of Christian history such figures as Socrates were considered as pre-Christian saints.

115. We owe this term to Th. Roszak. See his *Where the Wasteland Ends*, New York, 1972.

116. See J. Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*, New York, 1977, "Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles," pp. 265ff.; also H. Corbin, "L'Orient des pèlerins abrahamiques," in *Les Pèlerins de l'orient et les vagabonds de l'occident*, *Cahiers de l'Université Saint-Jean de Jérusalem*, no. 4, Paris, 1978, p. 76; and Corbin, "La nécessité de l'angélologie," in *Cahiers de l'hermétisme*, Paris, 1978, chap. 4, II.

117. For his views on this crucial question see E. Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*, New York, 1938.

118. S. H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, pp. 185ff.

It is interesting that neo-Thomist European scholars of Islamic thought such as L. Gardet have posed the question as to whether Ibn Sīnā's thought is Islamic philosophy or just Greek philosophy in an Islamic dress, while a scholar such as Corbin, who was so devoted to the sapiential school of the West including the Renaissance Protestant mystics, insists upon not only the importance of Ibn Sīnā as an Islamic philosopher for Islamic thought itself but the sapiential and gnostic teachings of Suhrawardī and Mullā Sadrā. Despite our deep respect for such scholars as Gardet, who precisely because of their Thomism are able to understand many important aspects of Islam which simply secularist or agnostic scholars have neglected and ignored, on this particular issue we agree totally with the views of Corbin. Anyone who, in fact, knows later Islamic thought well and who also comprehends the purely metaphysical perspective cannot but be led to a similar if not identical conclusion as we see in the writings of T. Izutsu who has also made many important studies of later Islamic philosophy and gnosis. See Corbin in collaboration with S. H. Nasr and O. Yahya, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, vol. 1, Paris, 1964; the prologomena of Corbin to Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*, Paris-Tehran, 1964; and T. Izutsu, *The Concept and Reality of Existence*, Tokyo, 1971.

119. See H. Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, trans. W. Trask, Dallas, 1980.

120. On Latin Avicennism and Latin Averroism see R. de Vaux, "La première entrée d'Averroès chez les Latins," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 22 (1933): 193–245; de Vaux, *Notes et textes sur l'Avicennisme latin aux confins des XII^e–XIII^e siècles*, Paris, 1934; M. T. d'Alverny, *Avicenna nella storia della cultura medioevale*, Rome, 1957; d'Alverny, "Les traductions latines d'Ibn Sīnā et leur diffusion au Moyen Âge," *Millénaire d'Avicenne. Congrès de Bagdad*, Baghdad, 1952, pp. 59–79; d'Alverny, "Avicenna Latinus," *Archives d'Histoire, Doctrinale du Moyen-Âge* 28 (1961): 281–316; 29 (1962): 271–33; 30 (1963): 221–72, 31 (1964): 271–86; 32 (1965): 257–302; M. Bouyges, "Attention à Averroïsta'," *Revue du Moyen Âge Latin* 4 (1948): 173–76; E. Gilson, *History of Christian*

Philosophy in the Middle Ages, New York, 1935; and F. Van Steenberghen, *Siger de Brabant d'après ses oeuvres inédites*, 2 vols., Louvain, 1931-42.

121. See Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*.

122. This process has been admirably treated by E. Gilson in his *Unity of Philosophical Experience*, although Gilson in conformity with his Thomistic perspective does not point to the significance of the loss of the sapiential or gnostic dimension in the destruction of Thomism itself. For in the absence of the availability of that type of knowledge which is immediate and sanctifying, even the imposing edifice of Thomism, which leads to the courtyard of the Divine Presence but not the beatific union itself, was finally criticized and rejected. Also had the intellectual intuition of men not become dimmed, the realist-nominalist debate would not have even taken place and a situation would perhaps have developed not dissimilar to what is found in India and also the Islamic world where positions similar to nominalism have existed but only at the margin of the traditional spectrum whose center has always been occupied by doctrines of a *jñāni* or *irfānī* nature.

123. See D. P. Walker, *The Ancient Theology, Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1972.

124. On the integration of various figures of Greek wisdom such as Apollo and Orpheus which marks the integration of ancient wisdom into the Christian tradition and its literature see E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. R. Trask, New York, 1953. Perhaps the last European literary figure for whom the Orpheus-Christ figure was still a reality was the seventeenth-century Spanish playwright Calderón, the author of *El Divino Orfeo*, for whom "Christ is the divine Orpheus. His lyre is the wood of the Cross." Curtius, op. cit., p. 244. Calderón viewed Greek wisdom as a second Old Testament and wrote in his *Autos sacramentales*:

*la voz de la Escritura
Divina en los Profetas
Y humana en los poetas*

But like the Spanish philosophers of his day, he did not stand in the mainstream of European culture.

Likewise, in Shakespeare who represents the continuation of tradition in Elizabethan England there remains an awareness of the inner relationship between Greek wisdom and Christianity, although he too stood opposed to the prevalent tendencies of his day. "For Shakespeare and for Dante, just as for the ancient priests and priestesses at Delphi, Apollo is not the god of light but the Light of God." M. Lings, *Shakespeare in the Light of Sacred Art*, London, 1966, p. 17.

125. As Suhrawardī, Qutbal-Dīn Shīrāzī, and later Mullā Ṣadrā were to do for Peripatetic philosophy in Islam.

126. The celebrated Sufi of the fourth/eleventh century who was put to death in Baghdad for uttering esoteric sayings (theophonic utterances called *shath* in Arabic) and who is considered as one of the great masters of Islamic gnosis. His life and teachings have been treated amply by L. Massignon in his classical work, *La Passion d'al-Hallāj*, 2nd ed., 4 vols., Paris, 1975; this work has been translated in its entirety into English by H. Mason and is to appear shortly.

127. "Metaphysics prescind from the animistic proposition of Descartes, *Cogito ergo sum*, to say, *Cogito ergo Est*; and to the question, *Quid est?* answers that this is an improper question, because its subject is not a what amongst others but the whatness of them all and of all that they are not." A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Bugbear of Literacy*, London, 1947, p. 124; enlarged edition, London, 1980.

128. Certain forms of analytical philosophy have rendered, relatively speaking, a positive service in clarifying the language of philosophical discourse which had in fact become ambiguous in modern times but not in traditional schools where philosophical language, let us say in Arabic, Hebrew, or Latin, is as precise as that of modern science and not like modern philosophy. But this clarification of language is not the only task

achieved by analytical philosophy and positivism in general whose much more devastating effect has been the trivialization of philosophy and its goals, causing many an intelligent seeker after *philo-sophy* to search for it in disciplines which do not bear such a name in contemporary academic circles.

129. "Academic philosophy as such, including Anglo-Saxon philosophy, is today almost entirely anti-philosophy." F. A. Schaeffer, *The God Who is There*, Downers Grove, Ill., 1977, p. 28.

130. See F. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, London and Boston, 1979.

131. We have dealt extensively with this issue in our *Man and Nature*, London, 1976; see also Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends* and his *Unfinished Animal*, New York, 1975.

132. Referring to critics of modern science E. J. Dijkterhuis, who has done extensive research and provides a detailed account of how the process of mechanization of the world took place, writes, "They are inclined to look upon the domination of the mind by the mechanistic conception as one of the main causes of the spiritual chaos into which the twentieth-century world has, in spite of all its technological progress, fallen." Dijkterhuis, *The Mechanization of the World*, trans. C. Dikshoorn, Oxford, 1961, pp. 1-2. This process has also been dealt with by many historians of science of the Renaissance and seventeenth century such as A. Koyré, G. Di Santillana, and I. B. Cohen.

133. For an example of reactions against the new astronomy which served as a basis for the mechanistic world view among such figures as Oetinger and Swedenborg see E. Benz, "Der kopernikanische Schock und seine theologische Auswirkung," in *Eranos Jahrbuch* 44 (1975): 15-60; also *Cahiers de l'Université de St. Jean de Jérusalem*, vol. 5, Paris, 1979.

134. Goethe and Herder who championed the cause of both integral knowledge and *Naturphilosophie* were among those who opposed the mechanized conception of the world and who reasserted the idea of the interrelatedness of the parts of nature into a living whole which accords with traditional teachings. Goethe writes, "Die Natur, so mannigfaltig sie erscheint, ist doch immer ein Eins, eine Einheit, und so muss, wenn sie teilweise manifestiert, alles übrige Grundlage dienen, dieses in dem übrigen Zusammenhang haben." Quoted in R. D. Gray, *Goethe, The Alchemist*, Cambridge, 1952, p. 6. See also H. B. Nisbet, *Goethe and the Scientific Tradition*, London, 1972, p. 20.

135. The popular work of K. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, Boston, 1957, is one of the best known of these criticisms by a famous contemporary philosopher of science.

Modern phenomenology has also reacted against historicism and produced alternative ways and methods of studying religion, philosophy, art, etc., and has produced notable results when wed to the traditional perspective. Otherwise, it has led to a kind of sterile study of structures divorced from both the sense of the sacred and the history of various traditions as sacred history. Nevertheless, there lies at the heart of the intuition which led to phenomenology an awareness of the "poverty of historicism" and the recollection of the richness of the permanent structures and modes which one observes even in the phenomenal world and which reflect aspects of the permanent as such.

136. He refers to the idea of nature as a great book at the beginning of his *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems—Ptolemaic and Copernican*.

137. "Philosophy is written in this grand book, the universe, which stands continually open to our gaze. But the book cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and read the letters in which it is composed. It is written in the language of mathematics and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it." From the *Assayer* in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, trans. Stillman Drake, New York, 1957, pp. 237-38. Quoted in M. De Grazia, "Secularization of Language in the 17th century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41/2 (April-June 1980).

There is little evidence of Galileo showing direct interest in Pythagoreanism although his father was keenly interested in Pythagorean teachings.

138. Kepler develops this idea in several of his works including the *Mysterium Cosmographicum*.

139. De Grazia, op. cit., p. 326.

140. "In the seventeenth century, the traditional connection between human and divine language broke down. God's language was no longer considered primarily verbal; human words ceased to be related both in kind and quality to the divine Word." Ibid., p. 319.

This process was without doubt facilitated in the West because Christianity, in contrast to Judaism and Islam, did not possess a sacred language, Latin being, properly speaking, a liturgical language and not sacred as are Arabic and Hebrew for Islam and Judaism.

141. The same process has had to take place in the revival of traditional doctrines today to which we shall refer in the following chapters.

The whole question of the relationship between the process of the desacralization of knowledge and language in the modern world deserves a separate, detailed study to which we can allude here only in passing. The process of the desacralization of the traditional languages of the Orient in the face of the secularization of thought in the East today affords a living example of what occurred in the West over a period of some five centuries.

142. One might of course say that this radical departure from the realm of reason and taking refuge in faith alone are because "modern rationalism does its work against faith with silent violence, like an odorless gas." K. Stern, *The Flight from Woman*, New York, 1965, p. 300. But the question is why should a Christian theologian accept the limitation of reason imposed by rationalism if not because of the loss of the sapiential perspective which has always seen in reason not the poison gas to kill religion but a complement to faith since both are related to the Divine Intellect. The fact that such types of theology appear indicates that the depleting of the faculty of knowing of the sacred by modern Western philosophy and science has been finally accepted by the theologians themselves, some of whom then carry it out to a much more radical stage than do many contemporary scientists in quest of the rediscovery of the sacred.

143. Speaking of Barth, Schaeffer writes, "He has been followed by many more, men like Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, Bishop John Robinson, Alan Richardson, and all the new theologians. They may differ in details, but their struggle is the same—it is the struggle of modern man who has given up a unified field of knowledge. As far as the theologians are concerned, they have separated religious truth from contact with science on the one hand and history on the other. Their new system is not open to verification, it must simply be believed." Schaeffer, op. cit., p. 54.

The case of Teilhard de Chardin presents, from the traditional point of view, a new dimension of theological subversion with which we shall deal later.