Seeing with Two Eyes

René Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy and the Complementary Reassertion of Traditional Metaphysics

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"Not that the One is two, but that these two are one."
Hermes Trismegistos

One of the most remarkable, if unremarked intellectual and spiritual developments of the last century has been that of a school of thought concerned with the reassertion at once of tradition and of the sacred. Termed the Traditionalist, or Perennialist School,[1] its overarching themes might best be summarized in the subtitle both of its foremost journal and seminal anthology:[2] Metaphysics, Cosmology, Tradition, Symbolism. Although comprised of diverse figures, its coherence has been readily apparent: as Kenneth Oldmeadow has observed,

> Anyone who has given more than cursory attention to the writings of these men will not doubt that they form a unified group. They share philosophical assumptions and adhere to a specific understanding of the perennial philosophy. Their works are shot through with the same ideas, principles and themes. The solidarity of the group is evident not only in the substance of their writings but in several superficial and more immediately obvious ways….Doubtless there are many other reciprocal relationships, personal and intellectual, which are not visible to the public eye.[3]

The Traditionalist School may be understood in perhaps three conjoined ways: first, as a collection of diverse contemporary writers united under the banner of a common spiritual vision of tradition; second, as a continuation and reaffirmation in the contemporary era of a 'golden chain' of expression of the *philosophia perennis et universalis*[4] extending across civilizations and through history; third, as a decisive doctrinal assertion and *theoria* of the Real, of That which is, along with the historic and normative human adumbrations consequent upon It. These three understandings might be envisioned geometrically: the first as a bounded circle lying in a horizontal plane, suggestive of the immediate sense of the Traditionalist School taken in isolation; the second as the larger horizontal plane in its entirety, suggestive of the totality of civilizational and historical traces of the perennial philosophy; the third as a vertical axis piercing this plane, suggestive of the perennial philosophy's ultimate orientation: rising above mundane contingencies, intellectively directed from Earth to Heaven.

Taken in these three senses, the Traditionalist School bears a certain analogic resemblance to similar schools that have appeared historically, such as the late Platonic Academy, the School of Chartres or the Ikhwân al-Ṣafâ' (Brethren of Purity). However, it is distinct from such historical analogues in two fundamental ways: first, the comparative universality of its vision across traditions; second, its embeddedness within the larger historical anomaly of modernity. Both of these distinctions are, in a sense, consequences of its historical moment, as the collapse of the boundaries between traditional worlds – which at once makes the breadth of the Traditionalist

School both possible and necessary – is concomitant with the modern world to which it stands in intellectual opposition and which it must address.

As such, the Traditionalist School stands at once in continuity and distinction to its analogic precursors, at once perennial and novel. As Roger Lipsey has perceptively noted,

> A school of thought had come into existence, sometimes militantly, sometimes compassionately at odds with the greater part of academic thought on its specialized subjects: traditional thought and its application to all aspects of human life.…Coomaraswamy and Guénon can be thought of as bringing the knowledge of the *madrasa* [i.e. traditional school] to the attention of the university; but this analogy errs slightly.…[Coomaraswamy] and the other traditionalists represent much more a new center of learning than a Western offshoot of something that exists more fully in the East.[5]

The Two Pillars of Wisdom

Here, mention is made of the two figures in whose work and legacy the Traditionalist School finds its seminal founding: René Guénon and Ananda Coomaraswamy. René Guénon, the remarkable French master of traditional metaphysics, symbolism and esoterism who lived much of his life in the shadow of the pyramids; Ananda Coomaraswamy, the Anglo-Ceylonese doctor of traditional arts, cultures, languages and scriptures, a preeminent art historian, although his greatest significance was that of cross-civilizational metaphysician.[6] Apart from these two, and following them, mention must also be made of Frithjof Schuon,[7] his magisterial writings and spiritual legacy, as well as a number of other additional, significant figures.[8] Yet the confluence of these two seminal figures is at once decisive in its impact and remarkable in its complementarity.

This complementarity has been affirmed by a number of individuals familiar with their legacy. Thus, Seyyed Hossein Nasr has observed that,

> …Coomaraswamy was a meticulous scholar concerned with details while Guénon was essentially a metaphysician and mathematician concerned with principles. Even in personal traits and styles of writing, the two men complemented each other, yet they were in perfect agreement about the validity of the traditional perspective and the metaphysical principles which lie at the heart of all traditional teachings.[9]

Similarly, with respect to their specific styles of approach, Roger Lipsey has noted that,

> Guénon generally treated in a more abstract and theoretical mode subjects that Coomaraswamy treated in the specific terms of the Indian, Platonic or Christian traditions….Coomaraswamy was not a lesser Guénon, nor vice versa; their thought was complementary.…[Guénon] was an extraordinary thinker and engaged from his youth in philosophical studies; his thought was strictly orthodox and traditional, but tended to be more distant from the texts, from "chapter and verse," than was Coomaraswamy's. He proceeded by an intuitive, intellectual process, while Coomaraswamy engaged in a more scholastic struggle to understand the details. Guénon would voice a principle; Coomaraswamy in his metaphysical studies would collate a series of Indian, Platonic and Christian texts where a principle was voiced…[10]

In terms of their complementary functions, Marco Baistrocchi has written,

> …if we were to synthesize in a few words the functions of these two great thinkers, we would have to say that Guénon – endowed at a very young age with the profound knowledge of metaphysics – had a priestly function of transmitting the truth forgotten by now at least in

the western world; whereas Coomaraswamy, having also partly performed such function, seems to have been above all a doctrinal guarantor…[11]

Finally, Whitall Perry has written of their 'twin' character, "…these two men in their way were related like twins in their mutual role as witnesses to traditional doctrines in a world where these verities are no longer heeded nor even understood…,"[12] while suggesting, on the basis of his personal experience of both figures, a possibly more profound connection between them:

> My wife and I were in Cairo later that same autumn, when we first met Guénon. Led into his presence, we both had the initial shock before this remote and unseizable figure, whose real self appeared as it were veiled behind the 'sackcloth' of an outer anonymity, of nevertheless discovering ourselves confronted with Coomaraswamy – an impression that gradually receded as Guénon's own personality began to manifest. Our companion afterwards assured us, on the basis of photographs he had seen, that the semblance was purely a subjective illusion; and we were constrained to believe him until early the following year Coomaraswamy's son Rama met Guénon and spontaneously exclaimed on the likeness. About ten months after this came the news of Coomaraswamy's death….When my wife and I went to Guénon with the news, he was seated in his study, his features reflected in the glass panes of a book cabinet near the desk: and in this mirror it was once again Coomaraswamy that we both saw.[13]

Of Centrality and Complementarity

Although each man ranged across an impressive breadth of intellectual concerns related to tradition, the central and pivotal concern of both was that of metaphysics. Such a centrality of consideration is in the nature of things, as metaphysics is the fundamental ground from which other, derivative considerations must necessarily follow and stand in relation to, whether it be, for Guénon, some question of initiation, or, for Coomaraswamy, the understanding of a traditional artifact. For this same reason, in the reassertion of tradition in the face of modernity, it is the reassertion of traditional metaphysics that must necessarily be emphasized, for it is at once most essentially characteristic of tradition as such, while it stands in direct opposition and challenge to the intellectual presuppositions of modernity, which are precisely *anti-metaphysical* in character.

Both Guénon and Coomaraswamy performed a seminal function in readdressing traditional metaphysics to a modern audience, for whom the very notion of metaphysics had ceased to hold meaning. As borne witness to in the passages above, while they are quite similar in their fundamental teaching, their expostulatory styles could hardly be more different: Guénon's is quintessentially mathematical, geometric and limpid, whereas Coomaraswamy's is quintessentially erudite, scholastic and baroque. While this stylistic distinction is readily apparent, what is perhaps less evident is how this complementary distinction acts to jointly strengthen the force of their collective exposition. Either taken in isolation might well be sufficient for a sympathetic reader to gain conviction as to the truth of the teaching; both taken in combination are, in a sense, greater than their sum, as the reader is presented with two approaches which, rather than being repetitious, are mutually illuminating, the one demonstrating the inherent coherence of the teaching, the other demonstrating its universality.

To evoke the symbolism of the cross, one might say that Guénon's approach is characteristically vertical, tracing the inherent evidence of metaphysical doctrine, whereas Coomaraswamy's is characteristically horizontal, tracing the evidence of the same doctrine as

witnessed across traditions. Just as the two linear axes of a cross define a plane, so together, the two expositions in question achieve a comprehensiveness of view and conviction greater than either alone. Insofar as metaphysics may serve at once as a sacred and saving vision, this understanding carries a decisive potentiality for the contemporary individual, as it may open the possibility of a spiritual way otherwise barred from within by the presuppositions and structures of thought absorbed from the pervading worldview of modernity.

Traditional Metaphysics in Perspective

For this vision to be received in depth, it is perhaps best that it be received through the *theoria* of Guénon and Coomaraswamy's own metaphysical writings. In what follows, we treat a number of central, interrelated metaphysical themes, each of which we structure, situate and then elucidate through representative quotations from both Guénon and Coomaraswamy, selected from the entire range of their respective metaphysical writings.[14]

The Metaphysical Infinite

The root intuition of traditional metaphysics – that there is an ultimate source, substratum or noumenon that precedes, transcends and pervades all – might best be approached through the fundamental question of existence: "Why is there something and not nothing?" Once existence is recognized as a non-given – as having might not have been – the question of its source and cause must necessarily follow; its present fact necessarily points beyond itself to its precedent principle. Yet, even if some immediate principle may be determined, this in turn must find its necessary cause in some further principle. There must, therefore, necessarily be some ultimate principle that is at once its own sufficient cause and that comprehends all subsequent principles or mediate causes, which are necessarily derivative to it and bound by its respective potentialities. Such an ultimate principle must necessarily be uncaused, undetermined and unlimited, else, if it were effectuated, determined or circumscribed by some other principle, it would not thereby be the ultimate.

This ultimate and foundational metaphysical principle of all is termed by Guénon the 'metaphysical Infinite'. As the Infinite, It is without limit or restriction, unconditioned and undetermined; Guénon defines the Infinite most essentially as, "that which has no limits…absolutely no limits whatsoever."[15] This transcendence of limitation is necessarily also a transcendence of condition, determination and definition. As Guénon elucidates,

> The Infinite…, to be truly such, cannot admit of any restriction, which presupposes that It be absolutely unconditioned and undetermined, for every determination, of whatever sort, is necessarily a limitation by the very fact that it must leave something outside of itself…[16]

Although, as understood mathematically, the notion of the infinite is undetermined and unbound, in a sense, even this understanding is too delimited, for It is at once the infinite, the finite and the unitive, and yet also none of these. It is not apart from the finite, which It necessarily encompasses, nor is It other than singular, for, although It is infinite, It cannot be multiple. It is, as Coomaraswamy describes,

> ...the Supreme Identity (*tad ekam*), undetermined even by a first assumption of unity, [which] subsumes in its infinity the whole of what can be implied or represented by the notions of the infinite and the finite, of which the former includes the latter, without reciprocity.[17]

As a further demonstration of the necessary singularity of the Infinite, Guénon observes, in a *reductio ad absurdium*, the inherently limitative contradiction of a multiplicity of infinites: "The

conception of a 'plurality of infinites' is absurd because these 'infinities' would mutually limit each other, and so in reality none of them would be infinite."[18] The necessary correlative to the singularity and unlimitedness of the Infinite is that It must necessarily comprehend everything, that which is apart from It being a literal nothingness. As Guénon expresses,

> The Infinite, by its very nature, must be all-encompassing, on pain of not being the Infinite. That which has no limits is that of which nothing can be denied, and is therefore what contains everything, that outside of which there is nothing.[19]

As he further clarifies, "…[the Infinite as 'Whole'] cannot be limited in any way, for It could only be so in virtue of something exterior to It, and if anything were exterior to It, It would not be the 'Whole'."[20]

Just as the Infinite comprehends and encompasses the finite, conversely, the finite can never stand apart from the Infinite, which necessarily contains and subsumes it, on pain of not being the Infinite. For Coomaraswamy, "…the finite cannot be excluded or isolated from or denied to the infinite, since an independent finite would be in itself a limitation of the infinite by hypothesis."[21] Further, as the Infinite is by Its nature uncaused and unconditioned, It necessarily can neither be occasioned, nor conditioned nor limited by the finite that It encompasses. As Guénon clarifies, "The 'greater' cannot come from the 'lesser', nor the Infinite from the finite."[22] Additionally, the Infinite can in no way be considered a mere aggregate of finitudes, but necessarily stands as a transcendent principle without common measure in relation to that which It comprehends. As Guénon elucidates,

> [The Infinite] is 'without parts', for these parts would of necessity be relative and finite and so could have no common measure with It, and consequently no relationship with It, which amounts to saying that they would not exist for it…[23]

Similarly, just as the Infinite transcends any simple aggregation, even if a 'part', or finitude, could possibly be removed from the Infinite, such a removal could not reduce It in any way. As Coomaraswamy demonstrates,

> "The Infinite (*aditih*) is Mother, Sire, and Son, whatever hath been born, and the principle of birth, etc." (*Ṛg Veda* 1.89.10); "Nothing is changed in the immovable Infinite (*ananta*) by the emanation or the withdrawals of worlds" (Bhāskara, *Bījagaṇita* [Benaras, 1927], repeating the thought of *Atharva Veda* X.8.29 and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* V.I, that "Though plenum (*pūrṇam*) be taken from plenum, plenum yet remains").[24]

Paradoxically, although certain aspects of the nature of the Infinite may be approached through consideration of Its intrinsic and necessary coherence, the Infinite Itself, by Its very indetermination, is ungraspable and unspeakable. As Guénon states, "…this idea of the Infinite…can only be expressed in negative terms by reason of its absolute indetermination."[25] Coomaraswamy dwells upon this point at considerable length:

> In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* III.6, where there is a dialogue on Brahman, the position is finally reached where the questioner is told that Brahman is "a divinity about which further questions cannot be asked," and at this the questioner "holds her peace" (*upararāma*). This is, of course, in perfect agreement with the employment of the *via remotionis* in the same texts, where it is said that the Brahman is "No, No" (*neti, neti*), and also with the traditional text quoted by Śaṇkara on *Vedānta Sūtras* III.2.17, where Bāhva, questioned regarding the nature of Brahman, remains silent (*tūṣṇīm*), only exclaiming when the question is repeated for the third time, "I teach you indeed, but you do not understand: this Brahman is silence."[26]

Similarly, words must necessarily fail That which is the source of words. As Coomaraswamy demonstrates across traditions,

> …God may be spoken of as Nonbeing, No-thing, or Darkness, or as in the Upaniṣads by the famous expression *neti, neti*, "No, no," or as That "from which words turn back, together with the intellect, not finding Him" (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II.4), and "where high fantasy falls short of power" (Dante, *Paradiso* XXXIII.142). Eckhart follows this method when he says that "Nothing true can be said of God."…[Similarly with Erigena,] "He does not know what He Himself is, because He is not any thing.…Wherefore it is said that God is Essence, but more truly that He is not Essence" (Erigena, *De div. naturae*, II.13 and I,14).[27]

The Procession of the Infinite

The Infinite, by Its very nature, proceeds. This effulgence into universal expression, or universal Possibility, is at once inherent in the Infinite and indistinct from It; the Absolute is also the All. Just as the Infinite is the uncaused cause, so It is the necessary cause, the caused in itself a consequence and aspect of the infinitude of the Infinite. That the Infinite proceeds out of Its transcendence and into Its potentialities is self-evident – since the world is and we are – but such secondary evidence is in a sense superfluous, as the perfection of the Infinite demands Its expression as a necessary correlative. Just as the Infinite is the ultimate principle of all Its subsequent potentialities, so It must necessarily encompass them. Else the finite, sprung from the Infinite, would be other and apart from It, which cannot be without repudiating the fundamental all-comprehension and all-comprehensiveness of the Infinite Itself. As Guénon addresses the matter,

> universal and total Possibility [is]…an aspect of the Infinite, from which it is in no way and in no measure distinct;…it is nothing other than the Infinite itself envisaged under a certain aspect – insofar as it is permissible to say that there are aspects to the Infinite.[28]

Further, the Infinite, as all-encompassing, necessarily implies as correlative that nothing may lie outside of universal Possibility. If anything – any expressed potentiality – were to lie outside, it would be just as if some finite were apart from the Infinite, which cannot be. Only impossibility is to be found outside of universal Possibility. Here, one recalls that the etymological root for 'potential' and 'potent', the Latin *potentia*, is the same, both signifying "that which is possible". The impossible has no potency, no power, to limit universal Possibility; for Guénon,

> …what is outside of the possible can be nothing but the impossible; but since an impossibility is a negation pure and simple, a true nothingness, it can obviously not limit anything whatsoever, from which it immediately follows that universal Possibility is necessarily unlimited.[29]

The Infinite as Infinite is at once unaffected and undiminished by Its procession into universal Possibility as well as indistinct from this procession. It is, in a common trope across traditions, an ever-shining sun unsundered from the entirety of its rays. This eternal outflowing of the Infinite in procession has also often been described as the flowing of an inexhaustible fountain; as Coomaraswamy reveals,

> For Plato, the Divine Life is an "ever-flowing Essence" (ἀέναον οὐσίαν, *Laws* 966E). For Meister Eckhart…the Soul is "an outflowing river of the eternal Godhead" (Pfeiffer ed., p.581, cf.394);…"Imagine," says Plotinus, "a fountain (πηγή) that has no origin beside itself; it gives itself to all the rivers, yet is never exhausted by what they take, but always remains

integrally what it was…the fountain of life, the fountain of intellect, beginning of being, cause of the good, and root of the Soul" (*Enneads* III.8.10 and VI.9.9).[30]

Just as one may speak of the Infinite as the uncaused cause and cause of all, or as the ultimate principle of all potentialities, so one might say that the Infinite, through Its principial infinitude, comprehends All Possibility, which, through this comprehension, is thereby rendered all-comprehensible and all-comprehensive. This comprehension may be understood as a self grasping of the potentialities inherent to it or may also be understood as a kind of knowledge; just as All Possibility may be spoken of as inherent in the infinitude of the Infinite, so one may also describe it in terms of the Known self-necessitated by the Knower. Yet, it cannot be a knowledge as we have knowledge, a knowledge of some other, for the Infinite has no other. This comprehension is one that involves no 'space' or distinction between knower and known. Rather, one may say that, through the knowledge of the Knower, the known is; or that, for this Knower, its knowledge and procession are identical. As Coomaraswamy clarifies, "It is not by means of this All that He knows Himself, but by His knowledge of Himself that he becomes this All."[31] Similarly, he asserts with Aquinas that, "God is the cause of all things by His knowledge" (St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.* (Suppl.) III.88.3).[32] As he further demonstrates,

"The eternal procession is the revelation of Himself to Himself. The knower being that which is known" (Meister Eckhart, Evans ed., I,394). "It knew Itself, that 'I am Brahma', therewith It became the All" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.4.10).[33]

Just as tradition speaks of the procession of the Infinite as out of Its nature or from Its knowledge, so also this procession may be conceived as consequent of the Divine will. Yet to speak of this procession as a Willing would imply a lack on the part of the Infinite; by Its nature, however, the Infinite can lack nothing. Again, as Coomaraswamy explains,

Whenever we explain the existence of the world not directly by God's being, or by His knowledge of Himself, but as a consequence of His Will, i.e., 'of expression', as…when it is said that "Prajāpati desired (*akāmayat*), 'May I be many'" (Brāhmaṇas, *passim*), we are speaking metaphorically as if He really had ends to be attained, as is explicit in *Maitri Upaniṣad* II.6…More truly, "There is nothing whatever that I might obtain that I am not already possessed of" (*na…me kiṃcana anavāptam avāptavyam*, *Bhagavad Gītā* III.22); "Non per aver a sè di bene acquisto, ch'esser non può" [Not to acquire new goodness for Himself, which cannot be…] (Dante, *Paradiso*, XXIX.13-4).[34]

It is precisely in response to this perception that the procession is spoken of also as a 'play', or *līlā*, thus signifying a Divine 'act' that involves no precedent motivation and thus no requirement upon the Infinite. Rather than as a 'play', this act may similarly be seen as an unmotivated 'gift' of the Divine into creation.

One Essence and Two Natures

The Infinite, in Its act of procession, may be said to be of one essence but two natures: non-manifestation and manifestation, Non-Being and Being, the unspoken and spoken Word. That this is so may be seen from the nature of the Infinite and All Possibility, as the manifest must necessarily be limited, yet the Infinite may not be so constrained. Therefore, universal Possibility, while containing the manifest, cannot be reduced solely to the manifest; there must be some other aspect or domain such that universal Possibility remains unbounded, this domain being precisely Non-Being. To approach the matter differently, we may observe that insofar as that which is manifest – the world and ourselves – arises and passes away, there must necessarily

be that which is unmanifest for it to arise from and pass away into; Being at once finds its source and end in Non-Being. In general, one may speak of two inherent perspectives relating Being and Non-Being: either as two distinct domains conjointly comprising universal Possibility, or more profoundly as hierarchically related, such that Being finds its immediate principle in Non-Being. Articulating this first perspective, Guénon asserts,

> Universal Possibility necessarily contains the totality of possibilities, and one can say that Being and Non-Being are its two aspects, Being insofar as it manifests the possibilities (or, more precisely, certain of them), and Non-Being insofar as it does not manifest them. Being, therefore, contains everything manifested; Non-Being contains everything unmanifested, including Being itself; but universal Possibility contains both Being and Non-Being.[35]

This distinction of natures in no way affects or disrupts the simplicity and integrality of the Infinite, which necessarily remains an Identity. As Coomaraswamy summarizes,

> All tradition speaks in the last analysis of God as an inconnumerable and perfectly simple Identity, but also of this Supreme Identity as an identity of two contrasted principles, distinguishable in all composite things, but coincident without composition in the One who is no thing.[36]

In treating of this necessary and inherent distinction of essence and natures, he further explicates,

> Taken in and by itself, this Primal Spirant (*paramātman*), without composition (*advaita*), and at rest (*śayāna*), is the "living conjoint principle" of St. Thomas (*Sum. Theol.* 1.27.2C), the unity of the "cohabitant parents" (*sakṣitā ubhā…mātarā*, *Ṛg Veda* I.140.3, *parikṣitā pitarā*, III.7.1, etc.), who are innumerably named but typically 'Intellect' (*manas*) and 'Word' (*vāc*), whose conjunction effects what Eckhart calls "the act of fecundation latent in eternity."…As Plotinus expresses it (*Enneads* IV.4.1) "The Highest, as a self-contained unity, has no outgoing effect….But the unity of the power is such as to allow of its being multiple to another principle, to which it is all things."[37]

The character of these two natures – unmanifest and manifest – is fundamentally distinct, this distinction being precisely that of the principial and conditioned, of possibilities unexpressed and expressed, unarticulated and articulated. As Guénon clarifies, "…the state of manifestation is always transitory and conditioned,…the state of non-manifestation alone is absolutely permanent and unconditioned."[38] Further, "…in the state of nonmanifestation…all things subsist eternally in principle, independent of all the particular and limiting conditions that characterize this or that mode of manifested existence."[39] Coomaraswamy describes this same fundamental distinction of the indefinable and defined in the metaphor – at once Vedic and Christian – of speech: "The Supreme Identity is neither merely silent nor merely vocal, but literally a no-what that is at the same time indefinable and partially defined, an unspoken and spoken Word."[40]

Standing in hierarchical relation, these two natures – Being and Non-Being – are not of the same order or significance; rather, Being is fundamentally contingent upon and encompassed by Non-Being, from which it draws all of its reality. As Guénon elucidates, "Non-Being, or the non-manifested, comprehends or envelops Being, or the principle of manifestation."[41] Further, although non-manifest, Non-Being is not less real than the manifest, but more real, through the very permanence, non-contingency and non-particularity that characterizes its potentialities. As Guénon clarifies,

> Since…non-manifestation alone possesses the character of absolute permanence, manifestation in its transitory condition draws all its reality from it; and by this it is evident that Non-Being, far from being 'nothingness', is exactly the opposite, if indeed 'nothingness'

could have an opposite, for this would imply granting it a certain degree of 'positivity' incompatible with its absolute 'negativity', which is pure impossibility.[42]

Yet while manifestation may be merely contingent upon the unmanifest, it remains intrinsically necessary both through the relation to its principle implied in its very contingency as well as through its necessary place in the all-inclusion of universal Possibility. Again, for Guénon,

> Thus manifestation, which as such is purely contingent, is nonetheless necessary in its principle, just as, although transitory in itself, it nevertheless possesses an absolutely permanent root in universal Possibility, this moreover being what constitutes all its reality….to say that manifestation is necessary in principle is basically nothing else than to say that it is contained in universal Possibility.[43]

There is thus a twofold sequence of principial causation: the Infinite as the principle of all and the immediate principle of Non-Being; Non-Being in turn as the immediate principle of Being. Being itself is in turn the immediate principle of Existence, so that one may extend this sequence to be threefold in character. Yet these principial relations are ultimately subsumed within the 'Supreme Identity' of the Infinite itself. As Coomaraswamy elucidates,

> "It is appropriate to contemplate…the emanation of all being from the universal cause which is God….Creation, which is the emanation of all being, is out of nonbeing, which is nothing" [St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* 1.45.1]. God is the supreme identity of "Being and Nonbeing," Essence and Nature; from Nonbeing there arises Being as a first assumption, and from Being come forth all existences.[44]

Similarly, as Coomaraswamy further explores across traditions,

> All generation (origination, production) is from contraries (*Sum. Theol.* 1.46.1 *ad* 3). The Supreme Identity (*tad ekam*, *Ṛg Veda*) is a syzygy (*principium conjunctum*) of being and nonbeing, spiration and despiration, etc., one essence of two natures (*Ṛg Veda* X.129.2, *Maitri Upaniṣad* VII.II.8). When these two natures are considered apart and as interacting, being takes birth from nonbeing, life from what is not alive, as from a father and mother (*Ṛg Veda* X.72.2, *asataḥ sad ajāyata*; *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* IV.18.8, *yat prānena no prāṇiti yena prāṇaḥ prāṇīyate*; *Muṇdakạ Upaniṣad* II.I.2.3, a*prāṇo…tasmāj jāyate prāṇaḥ*). The doctrine is expressed also by Philo, ό ἀγένητος φθάνει πάσαν γένενιν, *De sarificiis* 66, cf. 98; and by Plotinus, *Enneads* VI.7.17, "Form is in the shaped, the shaper is formless." It is in this sense that the world is *ex nihilo fit* (*Sum. Theol.* 1.45.1, *emanation totius esse est ex non ente, quod est nihil*).[45]

The One and the Many

Just as the metaphysical Infinite, in Its aspect as universal Possibility, implicitly carries the distinction between Its two natures of Non-Being and Being, so Being through its nature, implicitly carries the potentiality of manifold existence, in relation to which it serves as determining principle. The metaphysical Infinite Itself may be described as singular, insofar as Its infinitude denies any multiplicity of infinities; and yet, to describe the Infinite as a unity in a certain sense may impose a boundedness and delimitation inappropriate to Its absolute indetermination. Even Non-Being, as the domain of the unmanifest and prior to any particularization, in a sense precedes ontological unity; rather, Being itself may be understood as such a unity, insofar as it bears within itself the root of all multiplicity. Expressed in another manner, multiplicity is an extension of the possibilities latent in unity. As Guénon expresses the matter,

> Being is one, or rather it is metaphysical Unity itself; but Unity embraces multiplicity within itself, since it produces it by the mere extension of its possibilities; it is for this reason that even in Being itself a multiplicity of aspects may be conceived, which constitute so many attributes or qualifications of it, although these aspects are not effectually distinguished in it, except insofar as we conceive them as such: yet at the same time they must be in some way distinguishable for us to be able so to conceive them. It might be said that every aspect is distinguishable from the others in a certain respect, although none of them is really distinguishable from Being, and that all are Being Itself.[46]

Multiplicity exists within its own determination, so that the multiple existents are, as it were, multiple and discrete with respect to one another, yet ultimately, existent multiplicity is subsumed into the unity of Being, from which in fact it has never departed; Being itself is in turn subsumed into the 'pre-unity' – what Guénon terms 'metaphysical Zero' – of Non-Being. The extension of the unity of Being into the multiplicity of Existence may be described as a 'participated division', insofar as neither the one nor the many may be simply spoken of in isolation one from the other. Rather, both are of necessity a 'one and many': the many, insofar as they necessarily trace back to the one; the one, insofar as it necessarily extends into the many. As Coomaraswamy clarifies,

> …the traditional doctrine of the relation…between the one and the many: the nature of which relation is implied in Vedic Sanskrit by the expressions *viśvam ekam* (*Ṛg Veda* III.54.8), "the many that are one, the one that is manifold" (=Plotinus, "integral multiplicity"), *viśvam…garbham* (*Ṛg Veda* X.121.7), "the germ of all," and more fully enunciated in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* X.5.2.16, "As to this they say, 'Is He then one or many?' One should answer, 'One and many.' For inasmuch as He is That, He is one; and inasmuch as He is multiply distributed (*bahudhā vyaviṣṭiḥ*) in his children, He is many," i.e., as the "Person in the mirror (*ādarśe puruṣaḥ*), Who is born in his children in a likeness" (*pratirūpaḥ…prajāyāmājāyata*, *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* IV.II).[47]

In a sense, the mutual participation of the one in the many and the many in the one is precisely correlate to the very undividedness of the one. If the many were truly independent of the one in their multiplicity and distinction, they would be sundered from their ontological ground, which would be a true 'dismemberment' of the unity of Being, but the many could not then be, as this very severance would deny them their very ontological basis for existence. To be divided through participation of the one is to be divided not in fact, but in appearance. Again, as Coomaraswamy expresses,

> He, that is, who is "undivided in, though *as it were* divided by his presence in divided beings" (*Bhagavad Gītā* XIII.16 and XVIII.20), being "One as he is in himself, and many as he is in his children" (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* X.5.2.16), who are not Beings independently, but Beings by participation.[48]

Just as one may speak, in an apparently paradoxical manner, of a 'participated division' or 'undivided division', so also the extension of Being into Existence may be understood as a 'non-proceeding proceeding', an understanding that may be applied generally to the immediate extension of any principle into its contingent potentialities. As Guénon describes,

> Multiplicity does not in fact proceed from unity, any more than unity does from metaphysical Zero, or than anything at all does from the universal Whole, or than any possibility can be situated outside the Infinite or outside total Possibility. Multiplicity is included in primordial Unity, and it does not cease to be so by the fact of its development in manifested mode; this

> multiplicity belongs to the possibilities of manifestation, and cannot be conceived otherwise, for it is manifestation that implies distinctive existence.[49]

Unity is at once the principle of multiplicity and contains it entirely. Although articulated into and participated in multiplicity, unity nevertheless is unaffected by it, for the effect cannot affect its own cause. As Guénon clarifies, "…multiplicity exists in unity itself, and if it does not affect unity, this is because it has only an altogether contingent existence in relation to it."[50] As he further expresses,

> Thus the principle of universal manifestation necessarily contains multiplicity, all the while being one and even being unity in itself; and multiplicity, in all its indefinite developments,…proceeds in its entirety from primordial unity in which it remains ever contained, and which cannot in any way be affected or modified by the existence of this multiplicity in itself, for it could obviously not cease to be itself by an effect of its own nature, and it is precisely insofar as it is unity that it essentially implies the multiple possibilities in question.[51]

The entry of the one into the many is sometimes spoken of mythologically as a dismembering, disjointing or dispersing of the deity – such as Prajāpati or Osiris – which is, as it were, divided and scattered into the multiplicity of his children. In a certain sense, this description is apt, as this division, while metaphysically necessitated, is both sacrifice and fall; yet the symbolism is also imperfect, for while the one 'becomes' the many, it yet remains integrally itself. Another, more suitable symbolic description is that of the Sun and its rays, as the Sun is understood to give of itself without diminution or true separation; indeed, the solar rays are the warp and weft of the world, the pneumatic threads that breathe life into the tapestry of existence. As Coomaraswamy describes,

> …the Sun is the spiritual essence (*ātman*) of all that is (*Ṛg Veda* 1.115.1); once we have understood that light is progenitive (*Taittirīya Saṃhitā* VII.1.1.1; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* VIII.7.1.16), that the Sun's many rays are his sons (*Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* II.9.10), that he fills these worlds by a division of his essence (*ātmanaṃ vibhajya*, *Maitri Upaniṣad* VI.26), although remaining undivided, i.e., a total presence, amongst divided things (*Bhagavad Gītā* XIII.16 and XVIII.20), being thus one in himself and many in his children (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* X.5.2.16), and that he is connected to each of these children by the ray or thread of pneumatic light (*sūtrātman* doctrine, *passim*) on which their life depends…[52]

The language of the one and many, of the 'undivided division', may also be understood in terms of noumenon and phenomenon. As Coomaraswamy is always keenly aware, the etymology of words often bears a deep wisdom that opens the most surprising vistas of meaning upon commonplace and familiar terms. Thus, a phenomenon – literally "that which appears" – is, in Upaniṣadic, Neo-Platonic and Scholastic thought, necessarily an appearance – an *epiphany* – of an underlying noumenon. As Coomaraswamy expresses,

> The creation is always conceived in these terms, viz. as *māyā-maya*, a "product of art"; this Vedantic *māyā-vāda* doctrine must not be understood to mean that the world is a "delusion," but that it is a *phenomenal* world and as such a theophany and epiphany by which we are deluded if we are concerned with nothing but the wonders themselves, and do not ask "Of what?" all these things are a phenomenon.[53]

Yet although a theophany, this in no way implies that existence reveals the entirely of the Whole; the inherent limitativeness of manifestation precisely precludes this. Rather, speaking metaphorically, only a 'fraction' of the Infinite is displayed. Again, for Coomaraswamy,

> The view that all this is a theophany does not mean that *all* of Him is seen; on the contrary, "only a quarter," so to speak, of his abundance (*Ṛg Veda* x.90.3, cf. *Maitri Upaniṣad* VI.35, *Bhagavad Gītā* X.42) suffices to fill up the worlds of time and space, however far they may extend, however long they may endure.[54]

In a certain sense, multiplicity may even be spoken of as 'illusory', insofar as it may taken as subsisting independent of its principle of unity. Taken in such a sense, "this existence is purely illusory, for it is unity alone that, being its principle, gives to it all the reality of which it is capable,"[55] as Guénon insists. This illusory character may also be understood as simply designating a 'lesser' reality in relation to the 'greater' reality that forms its principial support. Again, for Guénon,

> Multiplicity, once it is a possibility, exists according to its own mode, but this mode is illusory, in the sense…of a lesser reality, because the very existence of this multiplicity is based upon unity, from which it is derived and within which it is principially contained.[56]

The Two Selves

Man, as a part of the manifested order, necessarily participates in the 'undivided division' of unity into multiplicity. Just as the principle of Being participates throughout the entirety of Existence, so this participatory principle must also be present for man, who is necessarily found within the existent domain. Just as, with Being in relation to Existence, there is at once unity and multiplicity, principle and contingency, so there is a coincident 'doubling' in man. "There are two in man" (*duo sunt in homine*), as Aquinas witnesses; these 'two' are the two selves, higher and lower, principial and contingent, real and relatively real. The distinction of the two selves is yet a readumbration of the distinction proceeding throughout the entire metaphysical chain of relations, that between the metaphysical Infinite and universal Possibility, between Non-Being and Being, between Being and Existence. In each, there is the apparent division between an immutable principle and the contingent modification consequent upon it. Coomaraswamy bears witness to this intuition in a private letter: "The 'two' [in man] would seem to be the trace of the Divine Biunity of Essence and Nature – one in Him but distinct in us."[57] To extend the metaphor of the mirror, the image generated from the imaged reality serves as that which is imaged in relation to its subsequent image, which serves as imaged in turn, and yet there is only and ultimately a single imaged reality, a single source and ground of all that follows, in all of its subsequent contingent modifications: the metaphysical Infinite Itself; all subsequent images are ultimately images of This. The critical corollary of this understanding is that the Self is not only the apparently particularized presence of the principle of Being within our contingent existence, but ultimately that of the Infinite Itself.

This fundamental and inherent distinction between principle and contingent modification, as found in man, is voiced clearly by Guénon, who speaks of,

> …the fundamental distinction between the 'Self' and the 'ego'…The 'Self'…is the transcendent and permanent principle of which the manifested being, the human being for example, is no more than a transient and contingent modification, which moreover can in no wise affect this principle.[58]

Quite apart from the necessity of this twofold nature of man within the overall economy of metaphysics, the most significant testimony to the two selves is that found universally across the wisdom traditions, a testimony that Coomaraswamy is an unequalled master in drawing forth.

Here, the hierarchy of these two selves – immortal and mortal, inner and outer, commanding and commanded – is readily apparent. As Coomaraswamy demonstrates,

> Our whole tradition everywhere affirms that "there are two in us"; the Platonic mortal and immortal "souls," Hebrew and Islamic *nefesh* (*nafs*) and *ruaḥ* (*ruḥ*), Philo's "soul" and "Soul of the soul," Egyptian Pharaoh and his Ka, Chinese Outer and Inner Sage, Christian Outer and Inner Man, Psyche and Pneuma, and Vedantic "self" (*ātman*) and "self's Immortal Self" (*asya amṛta ātman*, *antaḥ puruṣa*) – one the soul, self, or life that Christ requires of us to "hate" and "deny," if we would follow him, and that other soul or self that can be saved. On the one hand, we are commanded, "Know thy self," and on the other told, "That (self's Immortal Self) art thou."[59]

The Self, although present to the human being, is neither affected nor particularized by this association, any more than the principle can be affected by that which is contingent upon it. The Self is, necessarily, immutably itself. As Guénon expresses,

> The 'Self' is the transcendent and permanent principle of which the manifested being, the human being, for example, is only a transient and contingent modification, a modification which, moreover, can in no way affect the principle...The 'Self', as such, is never individualized and cannot become so, for since it must always be considered under the aspect of the eternity and immutability which are the necessary attributes of pure Being, it is obviously not susceptible of any particularization, which would cause it to be 'other than itself'.[60]

Further, the self, as contingent upon the Self, necessarily draws all of its reality from it. From the human perspective, the self appears to be real, but this is a borrowed reality, for it has no self-existence apart from its principle. Taken in itself, it is unreal and illusory, yet as an expression of the Self, it is real through the very participation of its principle. Similarly, one may say, without contradiction, of an image in a mirror that it at once illusory and real. Guénon, speaking of the self, asserts that it,

> …is still nothing at all in relation to the [Self], which alone is the true being, because it alone represents its permanent and unconditioned state, and because there is nothing else which can be considered as absolutely real. All the rest is, no doubt, real also, but only in a relative way, by reason of its dependence upon the Principle and insofar as it reflects it in some degree, as the image reflected in a mirror derives all its reality from the object it reflects and could enjoy no existence apart from it; but this lesser reality, which is only participative, is illusory in relation to the supreme Reality, as the image is also illusory in relation to the object; and if we should attempt to isolate it from the Principle, this illusion would become a pure and simple non-entity.[61]

The Self as principial presence, is not to be understood in any detached, theoretical sense, but as literally present, as our highest part, here and now. In a question that may pierce the hearts of those open to it, Coomaraswamy asks, "Who gives counsel when we 'take counsel with ourselves'?" As with Socrates and his *daimon*, this question is by no means a rhetorical flourish, but rather deadly serious. In a *tour de force* of comparative metaphysics, Coomaraswamy gathers much of the traditional testimony that speaks of this higher guide of the soul, the inner Leader and giver of counsel:

> We hardly need to say that Plato speaks of the Leader (ήγεμών) within us by many names, such as the vocal Reason (λόγος), Mind (νοῦς), Genius (δαίμων), and most divine (θειότατος) and best or ruling (κράτιστος) and eternal (ἀειγενής) part of us, nor to be

reminded that this Immortal Soul 'is our real Self' (*Laws*, 959A) and that it is for 'us' to be Its servant (ὑπήρέτης, *Laws*, 645A, *Timaeus*, 70D, etc.); how otherwise, indeed, should "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?" This immanent divinity is likewise Philo's 'Soul of the soul' (ψυχὴ ψυχῆς), Hermes' 'Good Genius' (ὁ ἀγαθὸς δαίμων), and the 'Shepard' of Hermas. It is the Scholastic '*Synteris*', Meister Eckhart's '*Funkelein*', and however attenuated, our own 'Conscience'….It is the Spirit that Scripture, as St. Paul points out, so sharply distinguishes from the soul, and his *jam non ego*, *sed Christus in me* (Heb. 4:12 and Gal. 2:20). It is "the Self of the self, called the 'Immortal Leader'" (*ātmano'tmā netāmṛtākhyaḥ*, *Maitri Upaniṣad* VI.7), the 'Inner Controller' (*antaryāmin*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* III.7.1, etc.), "Self (or Spirit) and King of all beings," or "of all that is in motion or at rest" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* I.4.16, II.1.2, *Ṛg Veda* I.115.1, etc.), the 'immanent Genius' (*yakṣa*) (*Atharva Veda* x.8.43, *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* IV.24), and the impassible 'immortal, incorporeal Self' (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VIII.12.1), the 'That' of the famous dictum "That art thou."[62]

Can the presence of these two selves be experientially demonstrated? Certainly, the phenomenal reality of the lower self, the soul or ego, is all too apparent to oneself, *is* oneself, if appearances may be believed. In contrast, the higher Self, the Spirit, is no such phenomenon, can never be any such phenomenon, for it is not the known, but the Knower. Here, the immediate experience of our being aware of ourselves necessarily implies a subject apart from the phenomenal self: we are at once self-knower and self-known, at once the ground and content of our own awareness, for we both *are* awareness and yet are aware of ourselves. As Coomaraswamy observes, "our consciousness of being, although invalid as an awareness of being So-and-so, is valid absolutely,"[63] as indicative of That which stands behind our egoic self-identity. To turn the famous *Cogito* on its head: I do not think because I am; I think because Another is. As Coomaraswamy puts the matter, "The argument is not *Cogito ergo sum*, but *Cogito ergo Est* – we *become*, because He *is*."[64] As he more fully elucidates,

> From the point of view of our tradition, the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* is an absolute *non sequitur* and argument in a circle. For I cannot say *cogito* truly, but only *cogutatur*. 'I' neither think or see, but there is Another who alone sees, hears, thinks in me and acts through me; an Essence, Fire, Spirit, or Life that is no more or less 'mine' than 'yours', but that never itself becomes anyone.[65]

This Other, the Subject and Knower of each, is yet its own and belongs to none; it is none other than the one Subject made many, "undivided in things divided," as the *Bhagavad Gītā* describes. We speak of the Self as present individually to us, yet this Self is necessarily the Self of all. This undivided division of the ultimate indivision – or individuality – of the Self is precisely what underlies the phenomenal existence and experience of self. As Coomaraswamy gnomically portrays,

That *I* can think is proof *Thou* art,
The only individ-uality from whose dividuality
My postulated individuality depends.[66]

Here, we might also observe that the coherence and undividedness that characterizes one's own self-awareness – such that one may speak of an *individual* – finds its trace in the indivision of the Knower. Further, just as this coherence holds for a given self, so too there is a coherence among the many selves in their perception – necessarily based upon the apparent distinction between subject and object – of the phenomenal world – such that we may speak in common of *one* world

– that arises as consequent of the singular Self behind and within each and all of the multiple selves.[67]

Human languages, both ancient and modern, also bear witness to these selves, often in obvious yet surprisingly overlooked ways. For example, the English word conscience, or 'con-science' as Coomaraswamy would express, finds its etymology in the Latin *conscientia* and ultimately in the Greek *syneidesis*, all of which preserve the meaning of "a mutual awareness within oneself," this mutuality being inherently indicative of the two selves. The close English synonym 'self-aware' bears out a similar indication, of an awareness of self apart from self. As Coomaraswamy more expansively demonstrates,

> …phrases such as "our better self," "be yourself," "came to himself" and "self-government" and "self-control" (i.e., of self by Self, *le moi* by *le soi*) are not understood if we overlook their *supposition*, equally Platonic, Scholastic, Islamic, Indian, and Chinese, that *Duo sunt in homine*.[68]

Further, the very structure of language would seem to reflect the underlying reality of the two selves, insofar as fundamental joining prepositions such as 'co-' and 'con-' may legitimately be and historically are employed in a 'self' referential manner. Curiously, although one would expect more modern languages to more greatly obscure such inherent reference to these selves, this does not always seem to be the case. For instance, the English word composure, 'com-posure', from the Latin *componere*, preserves the meaning of "putting oneself together," although in modern colloquial usage it is defined as calmness or equanimity; however, the close English synonym 'self-possession', a term less than three centuries old, is clearly indicative of the doctrine of the two selves, else by what or in what is one's self possessed? As Coomaraswamy further clarifies,

> …it is essential to remember, what can easily be overlooked, that all words containing the prepositions co- or con-, *cum*, σύν, *sam*-, and all such terms as 'self-control', 'self-government', and 'self-possession'; (=com-posure), imply a relation between *two* things (cf. Plato, *Republic*, 431A, B, 436B), which two are, in the last analysis, respectively human and divine.[69]

Additionally, all such 'self-' referring terms as those listed above clearly objectify the self as something apart from the Subject: thus the self is some *thing* to be controlled, governed, possessed, collected, mastered, disciplined, denied or sacrificed and any such self cannot be what one *is*.

The Self and Realization

There is the Self, the Knower and Witness within us – or, more properly, us within it – yet the self neither knows nor is witness to it. Every aspect of the Divine articulation – whether in Non-Being, Being or Existence – is a contingent manifestation of the potentialities of a given principle, yet the self recognizes neither its contingency nor its prior. As such, it is a prodigal, lost to its Self, entirely identified with the 'field' of manifestation, rather than That which stands witness to it. Yet while the self may have forgotten its Self, the Self is nevertheless ever-present; "There stands One in our midst whom we do not know" (John 1:26). The very contingency of the self is our opening to liberation, for the self cannot be other than the Self, its very principle. If the self may turn within and know this Knower, it will recognize that, as Coomaraswamy evokes, it is become,

> …the "Knower of the Field" (*Bhagavad Gītā* XIII), [none] other than the Prodigal Son, "who was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" – dead for so long as he had forgotten who he was, and alive again "when he came to himself" (Luke 15.11 ff.).[70]

This self-awareness, self-remembrance, self-recognition, and self-realization must necessarily arise – as all these terms suggest – through and as knowledge. The self is none other than the Self; therefore there is no activity, nothing to be done, for it to become the Self. Realization can only be through knowledge. As Guénon asserts, "There can be no true metaphysics for anyone who does not truly understand that the being realizes itself through knowledge, and that it can only realize itself in this way."[71] This is not to claim that activity – such as virtuous deeds, ritual, prayer or study – is of no value, for such can be dispositive to the thinning of ignorance, but rather that such activity cannot be the precipitating factor in the realization of the Self. As Coomaraswamy elucidates,

> When this Perfection has been realized, it will not be found to have been affected by our toil…our toiling was not essential to the *being* of its Perfection, our own Perfection, but only dispositive to our *realization* of it. As Eckhart expresses it, "When I enter there no one will ask me whence I came or whither I went." *The weary pilgrim is now become what he always was had he only known it*.[72]

Activity is necessarily bound to the world of change and alteration, indeed this is the very essence of action, yet the Self is changeless and one is ever that. Since one does not become the Self, what deed, bound to becoming, can yield the recognition of the Self? In a profound sense, knowledge is not merely the means to realization, but when perfected is none other than realization. As Guénon clarifies,

> Deliverance, then, is only effective insofar as it essentially implies perfect Knowledge of *Brahma* [i.e. the Infinite, which the Self is none other than]; and, inversely, that Knowledge, to be perfect, presupposes of necessity the realization of what we have already termed the 'Supreme Identity'. Thus, Deliverance and total and absolute Knowledge are truly but one and the same thing; if it be said that Knowledge is the means of Deliverance, it must be added that in this case means and end are inseparable, for Knowledge, unlike action, carries its own fruit within itself.[73]

This knowledge and recognition of the self as ultimately not other than the Self may also be understood as a transference from self-identity to Self-identity, from this man So-and-so to Universal Man. As Coomaraswamy summarizes,

> The whole problem of man's last end, liberation, beatitude, or deification is accordingly one of finding 'oneself' no longer in 'this man' but in the Universal Man, the *forma humanitatis*, who is independent of all orders of time and has neither beginning nor end.[74]

It is to identify oneself, not with the field of manifestation, of which the egoic self is a part, but with the Witness and Spectator of all things. As Coomaraswamy continues, in a brilliant metaphor,

> Conceive that the 'field' is the round or circus of the world, that the throne of the Spectator, the Universal Man, is central and elevated, and that his aquiline glance at all times embraces the whole of the field (equally before and after the enactment of any particular event) in such a manner that from his point of view all events are always going on. We are to transfer our consciousness of being, from our position in the field where the games are going on, to the pavilion in which the Spectator, on whom the whole performance depends, is seated at ease.[75]

The realization of the Self by the self – although perhaps most clearly described as a Self-recognition or Self-identification – may be understood in numerous ways: as a death and extinction, as a surrender and submission, and, particularly fruitfully, as a marriage, consummation and union. This is the true 'sacred marriage', which, having been divinely joined, no man may put asunder. As Coomaraswamy beautifully describes,

> "Heaven and earth: let them be wed again" (*Ṛg Veda* x.24.5). Their marriage, consummated in the heart, is the *Hieros Gamos*, *Daivam Mithunam*, and those in whom it has been perfected are no longer anyone, but as He is "who never became anyone" (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* II.18)….And what follows when the lower and the higher forms of the soul have been united? This has nowhere been better described than in the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* (II.3.7): "This Self gives itself to that self, and that self to this Self; they become one another; with the one form he (in whom this marriage has been consummated) is unified with yonder world, and with the other united to this world"; the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV.3.23): "Embraced by the Prescient Self, he knows neither a within nor a without. Verily, that is his form in which his desire is obtained, in which the Self is his desire, and in which no more desires or grieves."[76]

This "marriage of true minds," this *con-scientia* – the Self-knowledge of the self – is a knowledge through union, an assimilation of image to imaged, a loosening of the heart's impediments, and a resolution of the war in the breast; the *magnum scientia* is at once marital bond and martial victory. As Coomaraswamy describes,

> …the 'great understanding' is a kind of synthesis and agreement (Skr. *samdhi, samādhi*, *samjñāna*), by which our internal conflict is resolved, or as the Sanskrit texts also express it, in which "all the knots of the heart are loosed". If we ask, "an agreement of what with what?" the answer will be evident: unanimity (ὁμόνοια) of the worse and better, human and divine parts of us, as to which should rule (Plato, *Republic*, 432C); "assimilation of the knower with the to-be-known (τῶ κατανοουμένω το κατανοοῦν ἑξομοίωσις), in accordance with the archetypal nature, and coming to be in this likeness" (Plato, *Timaeus*, 90D, cf. *Bhagavad Gītā*, XIII.12-18, *jñeyan…anādimatparam brahma…*), "which likeness begins now again to be formed in us" (St. Augustine, *De. spir. et lit.* 37); *con-scientia* with our 'divine part', when the two parts of the mortal soul [i.e. the psychosomatic 'complex'] have been calmed and the third part of the soul is so moved that we are "of one mind with our real Self" (σύννοιαν αὐτός αὐτῶ ἀφικόμενος), thus obtaining true knowledge in the stead of our opinion (*Republic*, 571, 572). In Indian terms this is also the marital agreement, or unanimity of the elemental self (*bhūtātman, śarīra ātman*) with the prescient solar Spirit (*prajñātman, aśarīra ātman*) in a union transcending the consciousness of a within or a without (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* IV.3.21); in other words, the fusion of the Outer King with the Inner Sage, the *Regnum* with the *Sacerdotium*.[77]

From the perspective of manifestation, the contingent potentialities of the Self are 'deployed' externally, as it were, yet from the perspective of the Self, these potentialities never depart from it, but reside principially within it; the self is not apart from but *within* the Self. As Guénon clarifies,

> In reality,…it is the individual who dwells in the 'Self', and the being becomes effectively conscious of this when 'Union' is realized….When it is said of the 'Self' that it is in a certain sense indwelling in the individual, this means that one has taken up the viewpoint of manifestation...[78]

In this 'fusion' of self with Self, the distinction of self as isolated and independent is abolished, the contingent determination of the self being self-identified with its Principle. Here, the 'illusion' of self-independence of both the self and manifestation is overturned and the essential contingency upon the Principle of all revealed, this contingency in turn revealed as effectively indistinct from its Principle. As Guénon further describes,

> Once [identification] has been achieved, there is in fact no longer any 'living soul' distinct from the 'Self', since the being is from that moment quit of the individual condition; that distinction, which never existed save in illusory mode (the illusion being inherent to the condition itself), ceases for the being from the moment it attains absolute reality; the individuality disappears together with all limiting and contingent determinations, and the personality [i.e the Self] alone remains in its fullness, containing all its possibilities in their permanent, unmanifested state, principially within itself.[79]

This realization, this knowledge of the Self, is at once a liberation, a liberation precisely from the constraint and particularization of the self. To be identified with the self is to be bound to the realm of contingency, change, limitation and suffering; to break from this identification is to break free from the 'prison and fallacy' of the self and enter into the principial freedom of the Self. As Coomaraswamy explains,

> He, and not this man So-and-so, is my Self, and it is not by any acts of 'mine', but only by knowing Him (in the sense that knowing and being are one), by knowing Who we are that 'we' can be set free. That is why all traditions have insisted upon the primary necessity of self-knowledge: not in the modern psychologist's sense, but in that of the question "which self" that of the oracle "Know thyself," and that of the words *Si ignoras te*, *egredere* [Song of Songs 1:8]. "By the Self one findeth manhood, by comprehension findeth immortality; great is the destruction if one hath not found Him here and now!" (*ātmanā vindate vīryaṃ*, *vidyayā vindate'mṛtam…na ced ihā'vedīn mahatī vinaṣṭiḥ*, *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* IV.19.4,5). "With himself he indwells the Self, who is a Comprehensor thereof" (*saṃviśaty ātmanātmānaṃ ya evaṃ veda¸ Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* XXXII.11). "What thou, Agni, art, that may I be!" (*Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 1.5.7.6).[80]

The call for "freedom from self" is a universal one, as Coomaraswamy further testifies,

> But it is precisely at this point that the fundamental importance of the traditional and often repeated injunction 'Know thyself' emerges: for the "reasoning and mortal man" "has forgotten who he is" (Boethius), and to those who have thus forgotten are applied the words of the Song of Songs, "if thou knowest not thyself, depart." The word of God, as St. Paul so trenchantly expresses it, is "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Heb. 4:12); as it must, if the way of return to God is to be stated; for if it be true that "whoever is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17), this can only be by "an elimination of all otherness" (Nicolas of Cusa). Therefore, as Eckhart says, "All scripture cries aloud for freedom from self," and here the word 'all' must be taken in its widest possible sense, for this is the burden as much of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Islamic scripture as it is of Christian.[81]

In one sense, the 'event' of realization is a temporal disjunction, for the sage necessarily passes from a state of ignorance and bondage to a state of knowledge and liberation; the liberative knowledge was not present for the man prior to this pregnant moment, nor is the binding ignorance present following it. In another, more profound sense, however, nothing has

happened, nor has anything been achieved, for the self has simply identified with That which it is, which is unchanging. As Guénon explains,

> It should be noted that this realization ought not strictly speaking to be considered as an 'achievement', or as "the production of a non-preexisting result," according to Shankaracharya's expression, for the union in question, even though not actually realized in the sense here intended, exists nonetheless potentially, or rather virtually: it is simply a matter of the individual (for it is only in respect of the individual that one can speak of realization) becoming effectively conscious of what really is from all eternity.[82]

The Self, as the participation of principial unity in manifest multiplicity, is the Self of no one thing, but necessarily the Self of All. The knowledge of one's Self is a unification at once with the Self, but through the unity of the Self, with the entirety of manifestation; this unification not only embraces but also transcends unity, reaching ultimately to the metaphysical Infinite Itself. To employ a spatial metaphor, to realize the Self is to place oneself at the Center which is everywhere. As Guénon describes,

> He has obtained the 'Great Peace', which is none other than the 'Divine Presence' (*as-Sakīnah*), the immanence of the Divinity at that point which is the 'Center of the World'; being identified, by his own unification, with the principial unity itself, he sees unity in all things and all things in unity, in the absolute simultaneity of the Eternal Present.[83]

The liberation into Self is necessarily an expansion of identification into the entirety of the manifest. The man so liberated is at once the Self and the All, at once the pivot of the four quarters and the four quarters themselves. Coomaraswamy, quoting Meister Eckhart, witnesses, "If I knew my Self as intimately as I ought, I should have perfect knowledge of all creatures."[84] As Coomaraswamy further demonstrates,

> "Now that I see in Mind, I see myself to be in the All. I am in heaven and on earth, in water and in air; I am in beasts and plants; am a babe in the womb, and one that is not yet conceived, and one that has been born; I am present everywhere" (Hermes Trismegistos, *Lib.* XIII.11B, cf. II.2.20B) and have realized "Pilgrim, Pilgrimage and Road, was but Myself toward Myself" (Farīdu'd-din Aṭṭar, *Manṭiqu't-Tair*).[85]

Ultimately, the one who sees the Self within sees the same Self in all. The witnessing of the Self in all existents and all existents in the Self is none other than the undivided division of unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity. As Coomaraswamy further expresses,

> …Meister Eckhart speaks of the man who knows himself as "seeing thy Self in everyone, and everyone in thee" (Evans ed., II,132), [just] as the *Bhagavad Gītā* speaks of the unified man as "everywhere seeing the same Lord universally hypostasized, the Self established in all beings and all beings in the Self" (VI.29 with XIII.28).[86]

To become the All is necessarily to become nothing, for the Self, free from particularization, can never be anything. Realization is precisely of All and nothing, the "todo y nada" of St. John of the Cross. The sage is necessarily anonymous, apart from "name and form," apart from any manifest determination. As Coomaraswamy asserts,

> Liberation in the fullest sense of the word is a liberation not merely from phenomenal becoming, but from any noumenal determination whatever….There "none has knowledge of each who enters, that he is so-and-so or so-and-so" (Rūmī); the prayer of the soul is answered, "Lord, my welfare lies in thy never calling me to mind" (Eckhart).[87]

The Circle Completed

Man's realization is at once God's return to Himself; in the words of St. Athanasius, "God became man that man might become God." The unfolding of the potentialities of the Infinite extends into universal Possibility, thence into Non-Being, into Being, and finally into manifest Existence. Yet this unfoldment is ever within the Infinite and can never depart from It. As such, this entire articulation of potentialities is a 'non-proceeding proceeding' in which the metaphysical chain of immediate principle-contingent relationships is ultimately subsumed in the Infinite Itself as the ultimate Principle. It is precisely because of the non-proceeding character of this apparent proceeding into existence that realization is possible for man. Even more pointedly, if realization were not possible, he could not exist; the same relation that that determines and supports his existence determines what he ultimately is. The realization of the sage marks a reversal of this extension into manifest becoming, man's re-membering of the undivided dis-membering of the Divine unity into multiplicity.

In the procession of the Infinite – from universal Possibility through manifest existence – the orientation of the contingent is always 'outward', away from its immediate principle. The realization of the sage is a turning inward toward man's principle, and as such is a unique movement of return, a true *metanoia*. As Guénon describes, "[It is] the movement of return toward the origin, that marks the way followed by the sage to reach union with the Principle: the 'concentration of his nature', the 're-assembly of all his powers'…"[88] This 'inward turn' may equally be described as an 'ascent', in which instance the Divine procession will be conceived not as outward, but as descending. Coomaraswamy equally speaks of this return, such that, "…the coming into being of the man presupposes a descent, and that the return to the source of being is an ascent."[89]

The Divine procession away from the origin and the human return toward this same origin may be understood in the language of sacrifice, literally a 'making sacred', in which the Divine sacralizes the many through its participation, and in which man resacralizes the Divine through unification. The Divine sacrifices itself into the many so that the many may *be*; man sacrifices himself into the One so that it may be whole. Yet man *qua* man can do nothing; it is only by virtue of the Divine principle – the Solar Hero within – that liberation may be accomplished. As Coomaraswamy trenchantly observes, "Liberation is for the Gods, *not for man*." In speaking of these two sacrifices, he further comments,

> In sacrificing himself in the beginning, the Solar Hero, having been single, makes himself – or is made to be – many for the sake of those into whom he must enter if they are to find their Way "from darkness to light, death to immortality" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3.28). He divides himself, and "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53); and as we have seen, he is swallowed up in us, like a buried treasure.…'We' are aggregates of the functional powers that are the offspring (*prajāḥ*) of Prajāpati (Brahma, Ātman, Prāṇa, Sun) and the names of his acts; it is the universal Self that operates in each of our many selves, seeing, thinking, etc., into which it is divided.…The second phase of the Sacrifice, then, and from our present position in the manifold the most essential part of it, consists in the putting together (*saṃdhā*) again of what had been dismembered, and the building up (*saṃskṛ*) of another and unitary Self that shall be our Self when this present self is no more. This unification and "coming into one's own" is at once a death, a rebirth, an assimilation, and a marriage. We must not, however, suppose that 'we' are the heroes of this cosmic drama: there is but One Hero, It is the God that "fetters himself by himself like a bird in the net"…and the God that breaks out of the snare.[90]

The procession of the Infinite and the return in the Infinite may also be understood in terms of two related knowledges, both Divine: that of procession and that of unification. Both descent and ascent, both outward and inward journeying are by knowledge. As Coomaraswamy elucidates,

> To the question, "what was it that Brahma [i.e the Infinite] knew, whereby He became the All?" it is replied, "In the beginning, verily this (Self) was Brahma. It knew just Itself (*ātmānam-evāvet*), thereby It became the All" (*sarvam abhavat*). And as to this Gnosis, "Verily, though he (who can say, 'I am Brahma') does not think (*na manute*) or know (*na vijānati*), yet is he one who thinks and knows, albeit he does not think or know (contingently). Forsooth, there cannot be a dissipation of the Knower's knowing, because of his imperishability. It is not, however, any second thing, divided from Himself, that he should know…That is his highest station, that is his Beatitude" (*ānanda*).[91]

The origin of procession and destination of return are necessarily the same, the foundation and source of all; the end of the Divine journeying and return must necessarily be identical with the beginning. Yet, more profoundly, there is never any journeying save in the end which is the beginning, for the Divine uniqueness precludes any other in which such journeying could occur. As Guénon untangles,

> When it [i.e. the Self as identical with the Infinite] has realized its total possibility, it is only to come back (though the idea of 'returning' or 'beginning again' is in no way applicable here) to the "end which is identical with the beginning," that is, to the primal Unity which contains everything in principle, a Unity which, being Itself (considered as the 'Self'), can in no wise become other than Itself (for that would imply a duality), and from which, therefore, when considered in Itself, It had never departed.[92]

Again, we must speak of an 'undivided division' and 'non-proceeding proceeding' of the Infinite, of the 'Supreme Identity' between the Infinite in Its essence and in all Its articulations, such that the last end of the Divine proceeding is none other than the first beginning. For Coomaraswamy,

> If what of the Supreme Identity is manifestable appears to us to be contrasted into variety and individualized, the doctrine of Exemplarism [i.e. the intelligible relation between the manifold phenomena and their noumenal ground], common to both the Eastern and the Western forms of a common tradition, exhibits the relation of this apparent multiplicity to the unity on which it hangs, and apart from which its being would be a pure nonentity; and furthermore, inasmuch as the last end must be the same as the first beginning, the way is pointed out that leads again from multiplicity to unity, from the semblance to reality.[93]

Again, there is only and ultimately Unity, only One that is or ever will be. Coomaraswamy, speaking of both the Divine Biunity and the two selves in man, reminds us that even these fundamental distinctions are nothing in the face of the Unity of God: "For as there are two in Him…so there are, as all tradition affirms unanimously, two in us; although not two of Him or two of us, nor even one of Him and one of us, but only one of both."[94] In the end, there is only the journey from the Infinite to the Infinite, the Self to the Self, or – to carry the words of Plotinus to their necessary conclusion – "the flight of the Alone to the Alone."

Conclusion

The intellectual vision into the Real is ever incomplete and must ultimately fail as words and thoughts fail; yet while necessarily incomplete, it may nevertheless prove adequate to its end,

which is none other than that vision may pass to the envisioned, knowledge pass to the known, the seer become the Seer of All. As the first word was given to Guénon, so the last shall be that of Coomaraswamy. In what was to prove his final public address, he wished at once for himself and his audience, and would no doubt wish the same for the present reader,

> …"*Svagā*," a salutation that expresses the wish "May you come into your own," that is, may I know and become what I am, no longer this man So-and-so, but the Self that is also the Being of all beings, my Self and your Self.[95]

References

1. Here, we understand the Traditionalist School as a school of thought concerned with matters pertaining to the sacred, as distinct from an initiatic spiritual lineage; the one perspective is intellective, the other operative. Both functions are present with respect to the Traditionalist School, but only the former concerns us presently.

2. Here, see the journal *Studies in Comparative Religion* (Bedfont, UK) v.1-17 (1967-87) as well as the anthology, Jacob Needleman (ed.), *The Sword of Gnosis: Metaphysics, Cosmology, Tradition, Symbolism* (London: Penguin Arkana, 1986), respectively. Strictly speaking, *Studies in Comparative Religion* is the foremost Traditionalist journal in English, the most significant being the French journal *Etudes Traditionnelles*.

3. Kenneth Oldmeadow, *Traditionalism: Religion in the Light of the Perennial Philosophy* (Colombo, Ceylon: Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies, 2000), pp.51-2.

4. That is, the "Perennial and Universal Philosophy" or, as Ananda Coomaraswamy expresses it in a private letter, *Una veritas in variis signis varie resplendeat* [One truth in various forms variously resplendent]; see Alvin Moore, Jr. & Rama Coomaraswamy (eds.), *Selected Letters of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy* (Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1988), p.106. This assertion assumes that there is such a philosophy: for a general discussion, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), pp.65-72; see also Frithjof Schuon, "The Perennial Philosophy" in Ranjit Fernando (ed.), *The Unanimous Tradition: Essays on the Essential Unity of All Religions* (Colombo, Ceylon: Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies, 1991), pp.21-4; in addition, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "The *Philosophia Perennis* and the Study of Religion" in his *The Need for a Sacred Science* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1993), pp.53-70 as well as his "Principial Knowledge and the Multiplicity of Sacred Forms" in Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, pp.280-308; further, see Frithjof Schuon, "*Religio Perennis*" in his *Light on the Ancient Worlds* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 1984), pp.136-44; also see Frithjof Schuon, "Axioms of the *Sophia Perennis*" in his *The Transfiguration of Man* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 1995), pp.63-8; also Frithjof Schuon, "Diversity of Revelation" in his *Gnosis: Divine Wisdom* (Middlesex, UK: Perennial Books, 1990), pp.25-9; also Frithjof Schuon, "Transcendence and Universality of Esoterism" in his *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* (Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 1984), pp.33-60; in a similar vein, see Marco Pallis, "On Crossing Religious Frontiers" in his *The Way and the Mountain* (London, Peter Owen Pub., 1991), pp.62-78; see also Martin Lings, "Do the Religions Contradict One Another?" in his *A Return to the Spirit: Questions and Answers* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2005), pp.20-8; also see Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Paths That Lead to the Same Summit" in his *The Bugbear of Literacy* (Middlesex, UK: Perennial Books, 1979), pp.50-67; also, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "Śrī Ramakrishna and Religious Tolerance" in Roger Lipsey (ed.), *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2: Selected Papers, Metaphysics (Bollingen Series LXXXIX)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp.34-42; also, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "On the Pertinence of Philosophy" in his *What is Civilization? and Other Essays* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1989), pp.13-32; also, Moore & Coomaraswamy (eds.), *Selected Letters*, pp.9-10; also, René Guénon, "*Sanâtana Dharma*" in his *Studies in Hinduism* (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), pp.76-85; in addition, for both traditional and modern perspectives on the Perennial Philosophy, see William W. Quinn, Jr., *The Only Tradition* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), pp.12-5,67-89; also, for a comparison of the Perennial Philosophy with modern philosophy, see Huston Smith, "Two Traditions – and Philosophy" in Seyyed Hossein Nasr & William Stoddart (eds.), *Religion of the Heart: Essays Presented to Frithjof Schuon on His Eightieth Birthday* (Washington, DC: Foundation for Traditional Studies, 1991), pp.278-96; in the specific context of Ananda Coomaraswamy's understanding, see Roger Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.3: His Life and Work (Bollingen Series LXXXIX)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp.274-80; in the specific context of

Seyyed Hossein Nasr's understanding, see Huston Smith, "Nasr's Defense of the Perennial Philosophy" and Nasr's reply in Lewis Hahn, et al. (eds.), *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Library of Living Philosophers, Vol.XXVIII)* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2001), pp.139-67; for an assertion and defense in a specifically academic context, see Huston Smith, "Is There a Perennial Philosophy?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, v.55,n.3, pp.553-66; for an assertion and defense in a specifically Christian context, see James Cutsinger, "Christianity and the Perennial Philosophy" in John Bowden (ed.), *Christianity: A Complete Guide* (Continuum Press, forthcoming) (see also www.cutsinger.net); for an accessible introduction, see E.F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); similarly see Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth: The Common Vision of the World's Religions* (New York: Harper Collins, 1976); as well as Huston Smith, "Perennial Philosophy, Primordial Tradition" in his *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind* (Wheaton, IL; Quest Books, 1989), pp.47-76; for an extended demonstration, one may refer to the entire body of writings on metaphysics by Ananda Coomaraswamy, both his text and extensive footnotes; see Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2* as well as Coomaraswamy, *What is Civilization?*; the most comprehensive demonstration available is the magisterial work, Whitall N. Perry, *A Treasury of Traditional Wisdom* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971); mention must also be made of the enduring work, Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1945), although its character is, in some respects, more idiosyncratic than traditional. Closely related terms to the *philosophia perennis* employed by writers of the Traditionalist School include: *sophia perennis*, *religio perennis*, First Philosophy, Tradition, *scientia sacra* and metaphysics; traditional terms closely allied to the sense of *philosophia perennis* include: *philosophia priscorium* (Latin), *sanatâna dharma* (Sanskrit), *al-ḥikmat al-khâlidah* (Arabic). For an extended demonstration of the concordance between the preeminent sages of Hinduism, Islam and Western Christianity, see Reza Shah-Kazemi, *Paths to Transcendence: According to Shankara, Ibn Arabi and Meister Eckhart* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2006); for another between those of Islam and Taoism, see Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1983); for a more limited demonstration between those of Eastern Christianity and Islam, see Peter Samsel, "A Unity with Distinctions: Parallels in the Thought of Gregory Palamas and Ibn al-`Arabi," in James Cutsinger (ed.), *Paths to the Heart: Sufism and the Christian East* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2002), pp.190-224.

5. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.3*, pp.271-2.

6. For extensive biographical treatments of Guénon and Coomaraswamy, see Paul Chacornac, *The Simple Life of René Guénon* (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2004); Robin Waterfield, *René Guénon and the Future of the West: The Life and Writings of a 20th-Century Metaphysician* (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2002); Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.3*. Also see additional references given in Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p.123,n.21 & p.124,n.30; Quinn, op. cit., p.56,n.8 & pp.56-7,n.10; and Jean Borella, "René Guénon and the Traditionalist School" in Antoine Faivre & Jacob Needleman (eds.), *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (World Spirituality Series, Vol.21) (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp.356-7. For overviews of their life and thought, see Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, pp.100-7; Oldmeadow, *Traditionalism*, pp.10-35; Harry (Kenneth) Oldmeadow, *Journeys East: 20th Century Western Encounters with Eastern Religious Traditions* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2004), pp.184-202; Gai Eaton, "Two Traditionalists" in his *The Richest Vein: Eastern Tradition and Modern Thought* (Ghent, NY: Sophia Perennis, 1995), pp.183-209; Whitall N. Perry, "The Revival of Interest in Tradition," in Fernando, op. cit., pp.3-16; Marco Baistrocchi, "The Last Pillars of Wisdom" in S. Durai Raja Singam (ed.), *Ananda Coomaraswamy: Remembering and Remembering Again and Again*, (Kuala Lumpur: privately published, 1974), pp.350-9; Marco Pallis, "A Fateful Meeting of Minds: A.K. Coomaraswamy and R. Guénon," *Studies in Comparative Religion* 12:3/4 (1978), pp.176-88; and Quinn, op. cit., pp.9-12.

7. See, for instance, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Essential Writings of Frithjof Schuon* (Amity, NY: Amity House, 1986), and the introduction and bibliography therein.

8. Regarding the larger participation in the Traditionalist School as well as the dissemination of its wider influence, see Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, pp.109-10; Nasr, *Essential Writings*, pp.55-6; Oldmeadow, *Traditionalism*, pp.44-55; Oldmeadow, *Journeys East*, pp.210-4; Borella, op. cit., pp.352-4; and Quinn, op. cit., pp.31-42. William Quinn's book, *The Only Tradition*, is both scholarly and focused particularly on the thought of Guénon and Coomaraswamy; although quite valuable in certain respects, it must be treated somewhat carefully, given the author's pervasive Theosophist agenda. The recent work, Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), is best avoided by the serious reader: among its many failings, apart from various factual errors, are a thinly veiled hostility to its subject matter, a disinterest and seeming incapacity to understand the intellective content of the figures studied, a deliberate ignoring of much of the primary and secondary literature associated with these figures, and a false imputation and conflation of political categories and figures that have no resonance with the Traditionalist School itself.

9. Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p.105.

10. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.3*, pp.171-2.

11. Baistrocchi, "The Last Pillars of Wisdom," p.358.

12. Whitall N. Perry, "The Man and the Witness" in S. Durai Raja Singam (ed.) *Ananda Coomaraswamy: Remembering and Remembering Again and Again*, (Kuala Lumpur: privately published, 1974), p.7.

13. Ibid., p.6.

14. For general overviews of their metaphysics, see Borella, "René Guénon and the Traditionalist School"; Peter Samsel, "The Logic of the Absolute: The Metaphysical Writings of René Guénon," *Parabola* 31:3 (2006), pp.54-61; and Peter Samsel, "Passing Through the Sun-Door: The Metaphysical Writings of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy," *Parabola* 30:1 (2005), pp.16-23.

15. René Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being* (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), p.7.

16. Ibid., p.9.

17. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.198.

18. Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, p.11.

19. Ibid., p.9.

20. Ibid., p.10.

21. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.198.

22. Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, p.8.

23. Ibid., p.10.

24. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.198, n.2.

25. Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, p.9.

26. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.202.

27. Ibid., pp.383-4.

28. Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, p.11.

29. Ibid.
30. Roger Lipsey (ed.), *Coomaraswamy, Vol.1: Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism (Bollingen Series LXXXIX)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), p.405.
31. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), p.28.
32. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.177.
33. Ibid., p.82, n.69.
34. Ibid, p.75, n.35.
35. Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, p.21.
36. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.231.
37. Ibid., pp.181-2.
38. Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, p.21.
39. Ibid., p.22.
40. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.208.
41. Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, p.24.
42. Ibid., p.26.
43. Ibid., p.86.
44. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.1*, p.409, n.5.
45. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.345.
46. René Guénon, *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta* (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), p.155.
47. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, pp.177-8.
48. Ibid., p.73.
49. Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, p.33.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.1*, pp.373-4.
53. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.538, n.41.
54. Ibid., p.167, n.5.
55. Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, p.33.
56. Guénon, *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, p.52.
57. Alvin Moore, Jr. & Rama P. Coomaraswamy (eds.), *The Selected Letters of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy* (Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1988), p.149.
58. René Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross* (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), p.8.
59. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.428.
60. Guénon, *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, p.23.

61. Ibid., p.29.
62. Coomaraswamy, *What is Civilization?*, p.36.
63. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p.31.
64. Moore et al. (eds.), op. cit., p.62.
65. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.428.
66. Moore et al. (eds.), op. cit., p.62.
67. This point has been argued in detail by Erwin Schrödinger; see his *What is Life?* with *Mind and Matter* and *Autobiographical Sketches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.129.
68. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.416, n.16.
69. Coomaraswamy, *What is Civilization?*, p.34.
70. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.86.
71. Guénon, *The Multiple States of the Being*, p.80.
72. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (ed. Robert Strom), *Guardians of the Sun-Door*, (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2004), p.144.
73. Guénon, *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, p.157.
74. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.13.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., p.32.
77. Coomaraswamy, *What is Civilization?*, pp.34-5.
78. Guénon, *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, p.35.
79. Ibid., p.141.
80. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, pp.137-8.
81. Coomaraswamy, *What is Civilization?*, p.91.
82. Guénon, *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta*, p.31.
83. Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, pp.52-3.
84. Coomaraswamy, *What is Civilization?*, p.78.
85. Ibid., p.79.
86. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.85.
87. Ibid., pp.196-7.
88. Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, p.47.
89. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.1*, p.396.
90. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.137.
91. Coomaraswamy, *What is Civilization?*, p.180.
92. Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross*, p.142.
93. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.2*, p.197.

94. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p.28.
95. Lipsey, *Coomaraswamy, Vol.3*, p.254.